



# VOTES WITHOUT VIOLENCE:

A Citizen Observer's Guide to Addressing Violence Against  
Women in Elections



**GENDER**   
**WOMEN**   
**DEMOCRACY**

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE



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in Elections

**By Caroline Hubbard  
and Claire DeSoi**

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This toolkit represents the commitment and collaboration of many people dedicated to ending violence toward women in elections. It was written by Caroline Hubbard and Claire DeSoi on the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Gender, Women and Democracy (GWD) team, with input from members of NDI's Elections team, including Michael McNulty, Richard Klein, Sarah Cooper, Amanda Pleasant and Sunila Chilukuri. The toolkit benefited from the overall guidance of GWD Director, Sandra Pepera, and Director of Electoral Programs, Pat Merloe. The Institute's Information and Communications Technology team members, including Chris Doten, Meron Menwyelet, Christine Schoellhorn, Jonathan Goodwin and Morgan Frost, also provided support throughout the program. Recognition is also due to colleagues on other NDI teams—both in Washington, DC, and around the world—who shared their knowledge and expertise with us, especially those supporting programs in Guatemala, Nigeria, Burma/Myanmar, Tanzania, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire.

The material for this toolkit was tested and refined through pilot programming that NDI implemented in five countries around the world over the course of a year. The piloting was conducted in collaboration with local partner organizations already engaged in domestic election observation, and this toolkit could not have been developed without the lessons and best practices shared by these partners, including: the Transition Monitoring Group (Nigeria), the International Federation of Women Lawyers (Nigeria), the STOP-VAWIE Coalition and Celebrity Ambassador Stephanie Linus (Nigeria), *Acción Ciudadana* (Guatemala), the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (Myanmar), *Phain Tee Eain* (Myanmar), *Organisation des Femmes Actives de Côte d'Ivoire* (OFACI), *Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire* (POECI) and the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform (TWCP). We would also like to acknowledge the Citizens' Elections Observers Network (CEON-U) (Uganda) for its role in this collaboration. We deeply appreciate these committed organizations for the input they provided, and for their important work to safeguard the ability of women to participate safely in electoral processes.

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### **About the National Democratic Institute**

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations and parliaments; safeguarding elections; and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

NDI is a leading organization working to advance women's political participation around the world. The Institute empowers women to participate, compete and lead as equal and active partners in democratic change. Mobilizing its global networks and drawing on three decades of experience in 132 countries, NDI supports women's aspirations for gender equality, and for inclusive and responsive government. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

# FOREWORD

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Elections are a cornerstone of democratic governance. Through genuine, periodic elections, citizens are able to express their will, choose the candidates they want to represent them and guide the direction of their country. Their power to do so is enshrined in international commitments and national laws alike, and recognized as a fundamental human right. Citizens are also able to compete to hold office and to manage or monitor their country's electoral processes to ensure they are transparent, accountable and inclusive. Yet, too often around the world women must overcome additional barriers to claim these rights: barriers that men do not have to contend with.

One of these barriers is violence, which can manifest itself as persistent harassment, psychological abuse - increasingly online - or as physical or sexual assault. Women around the world, regardless of their positions or affiliations, are attacked for daring to enter or aspire to participate in the political world. This violence is rooted in the social norms that dictate what the roles of women and men in a society should be. While its forms may vary, violence against women as political actors is not bound by region or creed; it can occur in countries that are experiencing or emerging from conflict, or in countries that have enjoyed peace for many years. Neither is it limited by a specific moment on a political cycle, rather affecting women regardless of the type or timing of their political engagement.

Women participate in electoral processes in many different ways, for example, as voters or candidates and, in some cases, winning contests to become elected officials. Violence against women because of their participation in electoral processes, in particular, can have a profoundly negative impact on the integrity of the exercise. This violence against women can be exacerbated by tensions that an election can stir up, and it can occur during elections where there is a context of wider violence that men are also experiencing. However, it is important to keep in mind that because it is rooted in gender norms, men's and women's experience of violence is different in intent, nature and impact. When women are targeted for violence the intent is to send a message—either to their community or to all women—that they should not participate. The nature of the violence will also be specific to women's gender, for example sexual assaults or explicit online abuse that undermines a woman's sense of safety. The net result is that women withdraw from participating thereby undermining the integrity of the electoral process.



Through this toolkit, NDI is continuing to build knowledge and contribute to advancements in the field of election observation around the world. It also furthers its commitment to promoting inclusive democratic processes, specifically women's active and equal participation in all aspects of politics, including elections. It builds directly on NDI's earlier work, and recognizes the work of many of our partner organizations that are promoting democratic elections in their own countries. All women should be able to vote according to their own opinions and beliefs, to administer or observe the processes that govern voting, to compete freely for others' votes and to take up their elected positions without fear of violence or threat of reprisal. We hope that this toolkit will be a welcome resource to the efforts of citizen observer groups around the world, and contribute to their work to uphold democratic processes and inclusive governance.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Executive Summary

As former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has so eloquently said, “Success without democracy is improbable; democracy without women is impossible.” When women are active in politics, communities prosper: women bring new perspectives, raise issues that others overlook and listen to those that others ignore. Their full and equal political participation in democratic processes—such as elections—brings real benefits to their countries. Yet despite the significant gains women have made in recent years, they still face significant and stubborn barriers to their participation in the political arena, including violence targeting them specifically during electoral cycles. **Violence against women in elections** (VAW-E), as this toolkit will discuss, is not only a grave threat to women who choose to raise their voices or exercise their civic rights. It also has a chilling effect on the potential of women at large and is a dangerous challenge to democracy itself.

Election monitoring, whether by citizen observation groups or international observers, can provide a significant opportunity to assess the quality of women’s participation throughout an election cycle, and identify barriers to their full and effective participation, including VAW-E. Citizen observer groups in particular may have extensive reach across their respective countries. Many maintain an established nonpartisan profile and are trusted by the public as independent and neutral stakeholders. They also often link diverse communities, including civil society women’s rights organizations, and may deploy long-term observers with increasingly systematic methodologies, resulting in robust and accurate assessments of election processes. As this toolkit will illustrate, this makes them well-suited and well-placed to play a key role in first identifying VAW-E, and then monitoring and mitigating it. With gender-sensitive assessment tools and training on how to identify and record VAW-E, citizen election monitors can not only raise awareness of the issue, but have the potential to produce better data on the phenomenon, which has historically been underreported and hidden.

This toolkit serves as a companion to existing guidance on monitoring electoral violence through gender-aware citizen observation. It is designed to help nonpartisan citizen election observer groups assess and mitigate the impact of violence against women throughout an election cycle. Specifically, the toolkit outlines the key information these observer groups will need to carry out a long-term observation (LTO) that combines violence monitoring with a prevention and mitigation component—a best practice to stop and address VAW-E. Because violence

manifests throughout an election cycle, not merely at one moment, and because it may appear in different forms or target different groups at separate points, an LTO gives an observer group the vantage point needed to assess VAW-E before, during and after an election and thus allow it to monitor and mitigate it most effectively.

## Women in Politics Bring Positive Change

For the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lives under elected governments.<sup>1</sup> Politics, then, and an investment in democracy can be the best ways to make lasting changes that can lead to long-term economic and social improvements, including advancements in quality of life, trade benefits and peace. Dedicated pursuit of democratic governance can bridge political divides, creating opportunities to solve problems and generate more stable societies that are less likely to devolve into conflict.

Women—as half of the world's population—are a key part of any democracy. Their full and equal participation is a human right and a measure of democratic integrity. Moreover, 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 policy-making that reflects the priorities of families, women and traditionally marginalized communities. In Argentina, despite making up only 14 percent of all deputies, women parliamentarians have introduced 78 percent of the bills relating to women's rights. In a survey of 187 women who held public office in 65 countries, researchers found that 90 percent of women believed they had a responsibility to represent women's interests and advocate for other members of society.<sup>2</sup> Another study found that in 31 democratic countries, the presence of more women in legislatures was positively correlated with improved perceptions of government legitimacy among citizens.<sup>3</sup>

These benefits are not limited to women in elected office. Growing evidence from India, for example, shows that women's participation in local government has not only led to better availability of public services, but has also positively changed parents' aspirations for their daughters.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, where women are able to participate in peace processes, the chances of reaching an agreement improve in the short-term—and in the long-term, the peace is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.<sup>5</sup> When women are able to take vocal roles in politics and elections as activists, voters, party members or government officials, their inclusion guarantees that a wide spectrum of voices will more accurately represent a broader range of citizens' concerns.

## Continued Barriers to Women’s Participation

Despite these benefits, women continue to face a wide range of barriers to their participation as equals in the political sphere. Globally, women make up only 22 percent of parliamentarians;<sup>6</sup> only 11 of the world’s heads of state are women. Women have been granted suffrage in almost every country, yet they still may face physical, structural, social and cultural challenges to exercising their right to vote. They may encounter legal, economic or institutional barriers to their political participation, or lack the confidence, capacity and connections to succeed—often because they do not have the same access as men to education, opportunities to gain experience, or networks of resources or power.

These institutional barriers can be as seemingly minute as the location, hours or conditions at polling stations, but even these hurdles can have an outsized impact on women. But institutional barriers can also include more fundamental obstacles: In Burkina Faso’s 2012 election, for example, significant numbers of women did not have a birth certificate—a requirement for voter registration—because parents were less likely to obtain one for their female children. Women, therefore, faced an undue burden that could have effectively disenfranchised them.

Socio-cultural expectations and norms can also dampen or prevent women’s equal participation. These might include social perceptions of politics as “dirty” and not appropriate for women to participate in, or beliefs that women’s “place” is in the private sphere, as a homemaker and caretaker.

A growing number of reports from around the world indicate that as women have stepped forward, making gains in political life, they have faced discrimination, harassment, psychological abuse—increasingly projected online—and physical or sexual assault.<sup>7</sup> Politically active women have been threatened for daring to run for office, and have been stripped, decapitated and stabbed.<sup>8</sup> Their vehicles have been damaged; their campaign materials have been destroyed.<sup>9</sup> They are targeted through sexist attacks, threatened with divorce for voting their conscience or banned from voting altogether.<sup>10</sup>

This phenomenon of **violence against women in politics** is one of the most serious barriers to women’s political participation around the world, regardless of country or context.<sup>11</sup> Although political violence can be experienced by anyone regardless of gender, the specific issue of violence against women in politics has distinct characteristics: first, it targets women because they are women and it can take a specifically gendered form (such as sexist threats or sexual violence). This kind of violence is shaped by deeper causes beyond political grievances, and is often rooted in attempts to deter women from engaging in public life at all. It



carries the additional impact of discouraging the political participation of women as a group, delivering a chilling effect on women's participation at large.

**Violence against women in elections** is a particular form of this violence, one that has grave implications for any democracy. This violence can be defined as any act of gender-based election violence<sup>12</sup> 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. 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. That is, violence can be specifically motivated to uphold gender norms or traditional female roles in society, and it can impact women in different or disproportionately harmful ways, discouraging them from being politically active during an election. Violence against women in elections can manifest in many forms, which fall into five key categories: physical violence, sexual violence, threats and coercion, psychological violence and economic violence.

All forms of violence against women are unacceptable. Indeed, violence against women in elections is a specific form of **violence against women** in line with the internationally recognized definition of this violence. It should be recognized as such, a fundamental violation of human dignity. But VAW-E also has effects that make it a concern for everyone dedicated to promoting strong, inclusive and democratic societies. As a direct threat to women's ability to participate in all phases of elections as voters, candidates, officials, administrators or observers, it is a critical barrier to building sustainable democracies. It denies women their full and equal civil and political rights, making it an issue that must be addressed in order to achieve gender equality. Ultimately, when women do not feel safe voicing their political beliefs or opinions, or judge that the benefits of political participation are outweighed by the dangers, this has a grave impact on the health and success of democracy.

## Elections as Transformational Events

Elections are, at heart, a peaceful way to transfer power, empowering citizens to make choices about the government that will lead them. They are critical to ensuring the continued functioning of democratic societies or to pave a path from non-democratic leadership to democratic governance, and they can provide a nonviolent way for a society to transition from a state of conflict to one of peace. But elections do not take place in a vacuum. As a process for transitioning power,

even a peaceful one, they can be contentious. Structural or contextual factors can exacerbate these tensions, pushing healthy political competition into more deeply rooted violence. As an important democratic process, elections must be transformative, not just transitional—they should be fundamentally empowering for the entire citizenry, especially in situations where a society is emerging from conflict.

Women's historical absence from political systems, however, means that too often they are *not* empowered by this process. 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.

The risks women face during elections can be especially high. First, they encounter structural barriers that keep them from gaining equal stature or access to power, even within processes intended to empower. They can also be more vulnerable than men to widespread violence, and experience disproportionate impacts in tense electoral situations, often because they occupy a subordinate status in society. These effects can be especially high in a post-conflict context, or during political transitions that follow conflicts, when social inequalities are already exacerbated, including the social inequality between men and women.<sup>13</sup> In addition, violence that prevents women's participation can also affect the success, stability and sustainability of the post-election period, or, in cases where elections are part of a transition out of conflict, in the post-conflict period overall. When electoral processes perpetuate instead of transform existing social inequalities, they lack a fundamental requirement needed for long-term peace and stability.

## The Role of Citizen Election Observers

Election observation—especially observation with a long-term methodology focused on identifying early warning signs of violence, monitoring for violence itself or mitigation— is of critical importance. Citizen election observation groups are uniquely placed to observe and document the democratic integrity of an election or mitigate violence that might occur. Their long-term observation can gather detailed data on VAW-E, which has historically been overlooked and underreported.

The lack of data is a critical barrier to proving that VAW-E exists and what forms it takes. It also impedes the search for solutions. There are many ways to improve data collection and knowledge of VAW-E: public opinion surveys, focus groups and interviews with key informants are also important methods, each of which can bring a different nuance to the topic. Some of these are covered in the



last chapter of this toolkit, which discusses additional data collection methods. Citizen election observation, however, offers a strategy to collect information in a comprehensive way throughout the election cycle, offering insight on how VAW-E impacts women in each phase of that cycle, and how it impacts the quality of the election itself. In the long term, this data can contribute to strategies to prevent violence and ensure that women are able to exercise their full and equal rights to participate in political processes. In the short term, and particularly in times of transition and tension, domestic election observation can help prevent violence. By identifying and raising awareness of violence as it happens, observation groups play a critical role in responding to and mitigating that violence.

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  [Violence Against Women in Elections Overview](#)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Presentation: Women and Politics \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Democracy and the Challenge of Change \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation \(NDI\)](#)
-  [How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide \(NDI\)](#)

# ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

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The purpose of this toolkit is to provide citizen election observation groups with the knowledge and tools to assess and mitigate the impact of violence against women in all phases of an electoral cycle. It is designed as a companion piece to existing guidance on citizen election observation, electoral violence monitoring and gender-aware election observation. Its focus is on the detailed information observers and observer groups will need to conduct a gender-aware observation that monitors and mitigates VAW-E, rather than providing extensive guidance on the underlying strategies for conducting observations. It focuses on the use of long-term observation by citizen groups as a key strategy for building awareness of, collecting data on and preventing violence against women in elections.

In monitoring and mitigating VAW-E, there is a need to assess violence before, during and after an election. This is of particular importance because violence may take on different forms in each electoral process, or be present only at certain points during the electoral cycle. For example, an observation that is focused only on the pre-election period will not be able to record any violence happening at or around polling centers on election day itself or during the post-election period, whereas observers operating only on election day will likewise be unable to identify any violence targeting women during the campaign period. A long-term observation that runs throughout the entire election period provides the best position for a citizen observation group to assess VAW-E thoroughly as well as mitigate it effectively.

## Methodology

The components of this toolkit were created and refined as NDI tested modules and tools over many months, learning and incorporating changes based on a series of citizen election observations supported by NDI programming. Pilot programming for this toolkit was implemented in observations in Côte d'Ivoire, Burma/Myanmar, Guatemala, Tanzania and Nigeria. The development of this programming was informed substantially by NDI's expertise in election observation and in monitoring and mitigating general electoral violence, and was developed to complement and extend the advances NDI has already made in the field of election monitoring.

In each country, NDI staff collaborated closely with local observers to develop and implement best practices for observing VAW-E. The pilot observations, besides being varied according to the context of each country, covered a spectrum of monitoring methodologies, from thematic observations to approaches

focused on a particular election process or long-term observation of the general election environment. The variation among the experiences allowed NDI to test the tools and strategies presented in this toolkit in multiple variations, continuously gaining knowledge that was integrated into each new iteration. Many of the findings are presented as case studies and examples in this toolkit.

Through this process, NDI and its local partners learned a great deal about the phenomenon of violence against women in elections. A crucial source of information was the input and first-hand experiences shared by grassroots activists and observers. Through the development of the toolkit, it became increasingly clear that VAW-E is a serious global problem in need of further investigation and data collection.

In addition to this ground-up approach, NDI also undertook a thorough study and review of existing resources. While not a new phenomenon, VAW-E has until recently been poorly defined and conceptualized. However, although VAW-E as a field of study is relatively new, the key theoretical concepts that underpin it are fundamentally rooted in existing research that has been conducted in adjacent fields, such as violence against women or electoral security. This toolkit has been informed by that existing scholarship. The methodology developed through the pilot programs has reflected many best practices from these fields, from election observation and electoral violence prevention to women, peace and security, international law and efforts to end violence against women.

Many of the external resources consulted for this toolkit are linked throughout the text, providing a quick reference for users. A more substantial annotated bibliography can be found in the tool box for this chapter.

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  [Annotated Bibliography: Violence Against Women in Elections](#)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Observation Missions \(OAS\)](#)
-  [Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections \(OSCE\)](#)
-  [Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence \(IFES\)](#)

## How to Use This Toolkit:

This toolkit has two parts: a manual and a set of “tools” in the form of documents and other resources. The manual guides users through the components of a gender-aware observation strategy to monitor and mitigate VAW-E, and presents much of the knowledge essential for undertaking such an effort. It takes a citizen observation group through each step of an election observation and indicates the information the group will need to make informed decisions about its methodology. The tools that accompany the manual provide guidance on specific aspects of VAW-E and the observation process. This includes information on key elements of an observation strategy to monitor and mitigate VAW-E, as well as examples, presentations and other materials that citizen observation groups may adapt for their own use. The manual and tools complement each other and are designed to be used together, but they may also be used separately.

Each chapter and section of the manual contain specific “tool boxes” that provide an easy way for observer groups to find and access relevant resources, including specific instructions, sample documents and other information. The tool boxes in many chapters include lists of additional resources, such as websites, research, and manuals or references with useful information about the mechanics of election observation.

For groups using an electronic version of this toolkit, these boxes will contain links that can be clicked to pull up the tools mentioned. For those using a printed copy, the boxes will provide the exact name of the tools, which are catalogued and can be located at [ndi.org/votes-without-violence](https://ndi.org/votes-without-violence).

All tools and resources that accompany this manual can be found at  
[ndi.org/votes-without-violence](https://ndi.org/votes-without-violence)



# KEY CONCEPTS

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There are several considerations nonpartisan citizen election observation groups (also referred to as domestic observation groups) should take into account when planning gender-aware, long-term violence monitoring and early warning system programs. Their choices will influence the methodology the group develops and the observation overall, and are therefore important to review and understand from the beginning of the process. More detailed information on each of these areas can be found in the additional resources contained in this section; some of these concepts will be expanded in later sections of the manual.

## Type of Observation

A citizen observer group should reflect carefully on its goals when choosing what type of observation to conduct. Although *this* toolkit provides information on an observation effort that both monitors and mitigates VAW-E, as best practice, there may be situations where groups choose to focus exclusively on monitoring and/or where factors make the inclusion of both components impossible. The choice to include only one or both components will have an impact on the final methodology and outcomes.

In any monitoring effort, observation groups must take gender into consideration, mainstreaming it throughout the observation methodology. A gender-aware election observation effort acknowledges and incorporates the experiences and socio-cultural context of women, recognizing that, as half the population, they must be fully integrated into any election monitoring. It also considers the separate strengths and vulnerabilities of women and men throughout an election cycle. In addition, a gender-aware election observation will reflect principles of gender equality throughout its structure and organizational principles, maintaining a gender balance in its observation force and leadership positions, and ensuring that its activities and organizational approach are also designed to be gender-aware.

As mentioned in the previous section, a long-term observation spanning the electoral cycle from the pre-election period through election day and the post-electoral period provides the best vantage for a citizen observation group to identify any VAW-E. Even if citizen observation groups do not choose to focus their entire observation on violence, or are also running or supporting separate violence-focused activities, they should integrate attention to VAW-E as part of any gender-aware long-term observation. In some instances, due to specific interest or limited resources, citizen observation groups may choose to narrow

the focus of an observation to look specifically at electoral violence, instead of a broad look at electoral cycle processes. These focused observations must also remain gender-aware. Any election observation that is focused, in whole or in part, on monitoring electoral violence must incorporate monitoring VAW-E as an essential component. While VAW-E should be considered a specific kind of violence that requires a certain approach, it should not be seen as a separate phenomenon that can be tacked on or left off; observer groups must take the time to consider how women and men are impacted or targeted differently by electoral violence.

Some types of observations are listed below. Groups should consider the following information when deciding on their focus:

### **Strictly monitor VAW-E**

- » A thematic observation that prioritizes the experiences of women in an election cycle provides the opportunity to assess more thoroughly the ways in which violence impacts women's participation. This allows a group to collect important data on the issue—a critical part of addressing it—but does not give it the scope to address concerns or mitigate violence that is reported.
- » Groups undertaking a thematic observation such as this should explore possibilities for information-sharing mechanisms and/or partnerships with other stakeholders, groups or institutions that may have the capacity to use the information on violence in short- and long-term mitigation efforts.

### **Monitor electoral violence with a VAW-E component**

- » Any monitoring effort that includes attention to electoral violence must examine how women and men are targeted or impacted differently, and include violence against women as a specific kind of violence to monitor.
- » Observer groups must build an observation methodology that allows them to examine and account for these differences in order to build a fuller understanding of the ways violence impacts the credibility of elections.
- » Without a mitigation component in the observation, observer groups should consider information-sharing mechanisms and strategic partnerships with stakeholders that might be able to use the information to mitigate any violence.

### **Monitor and mitigate electoral violence, including VAW-E**

- » Many citizen observation groups choose to both monitor and mitigate as part of their objectives for an observation.

- » Monitoring electoral violence throughout an election cycle, including electoral violence against women and the different manifestations or impacts it may have, allows groups to collect necessary and underreported data on the effects violence can have on citizens and an election overall.
- » Incorporating a mitigation objective allows citizen observation groups to develop a strategy for acting on the information gathered, and to contribute to response efforts taking place—either directly or by advising other stakeholders.
- » Mitigation can require significant resources, especially in terms of time and personnel, and observation groups will need to take this into account.

### **Monitor electoral process with electoral violence component, including VAW-E**

- » A group may choose to monitor the credibility of one or more electoral processes more broadly, while retaining a focus on electoral violence.
- » While violence may not be the primary focus of the observation, citizen observation groups pursuing this methodology should pay close attention to the effects of gender and the different manifestations of violence throughout the process, ensuring the observation remains aware of the different challenges that women and men may face during an election.

### **Monitor electoral process and mainstream gender and VAW-E**

- » In any monitoring effort, citizen observation groups should ensure that they take the different experiences of men and women into account throughout the development of their methodology.
- » While not focused specifically on electoral violence or VAW-E, observers should still take into account root causes or triggers of violence when developing their methodology.

## **Citizen Election Observation Methodologies and Data Collection**

Citizen observation groups will also need to determine the observation methodology that best enables them to achieve their goals for the electoral process. The method the group chooses could also be influenced by other factors, such as available resources, the electoral context, the group's internal capacity and other external constraints. Each method has important implications for the type and quality of VAW-E data that can be collected; observation groups should consider the attributes of each carefully.

As mentioned throughout this guide, election observation can play an important role in the pre-election and post-election phases of the electoral cycle, as well

as on election day. In the pre-election period, the observation methodology will be largely dictated by the process under observation (campaign period, media monitoring, voter registration, candidate nominations, etc.) and by the electoral laws of the country. Similarly, the scope and target of the observation effort in the post-election period (tracking campaign promises or reforms, electoral dispute resolution, violence monitoring, etc.) will predominantly determine the appropriate methodology. A list of resources has been provided at the end of this section with more in-depth guidance on developing a comprehensive election observation strategy.

Details on methodologies, including methodologies specific to election day, and their implications for collecting VAW-E data, are reviewed in greater detail below. The methodology chosen for election day observation in particular should always result from a consideration of the group's goals for the electoral process, as well as of any relevant external limiting factors (time, resources, organizational capacity, etc.).





## Sample-Based Observation (SBO) and Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT)

- » SBO and PVT methodologies are specifically **election day methodologies**.
- » *What it is:*
  - » An SBO involves deploying observers to a nationally representative, random sample of polling stations that allows groups to accurately project trends regarding the quality of election day processes. SBO methodology allows groups to gather truly representative data on the process nationwide through rapid data collection using information communication technologies and reports based on first-hand observation.
  - » A PVT (sometimes called a Quick Count) is an SBO that includes rapid reporting and vote count verification. The methodology uses rapidly transmitted quantitative and qualitative observer data from a statistically sound, representative random sample of polling stations to produce a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the quality of the election day process and to project election results within a margin of error.
- » SBOs and PVTs can provide critical, statistically robust information about ways violence may impact women during the voting process as voters, polling station staff, observers or party poll watchers. The data can also provide groups with an assessment of the extent to which VAW-E is occurring across the country on election day.
- » Because of the importance of gathering complete and accurate data through SBOs and PVTs, the total number of questions observers gather data on should be limited.
- » SBOs and PVTs require a high level of organizational capacity, including the capacity for internal data analysis.
- » SBO and PVT observers are always stationary within polling stations, which limits the scope of what they can observe; it is therefore important to focus SBO and PVT information-gathering on what might occur inside a polling station or in its immediate surroundings.

### **Proportional Deployment**

- » Proportional deployment is a type of **systematic election observation**, also used on election day, where observers are deployed proportionally according to the distribution of polling stations. The number of observers deployed in a particular region as a percentage of all observers is roughly equal to the number of polling stations in that particular region as a percentage of overall polling stations.
- » Data collected using proportional deployment is more representative of the whole country, and can be helpful in understanding the extent to which VAW-E is occurring. However, as with all forms of election observation, there are limitations on the kinds of VAW-E data observers can collect in a proportional deployment, as some incidents or acts of violence are not easily observable in public. Moreover, only sample-based or comprehensive deployment provide truly representative data on the electoral process.
- » In addition, proportional deployment requires more advanced planning in order to recruit, train and deploy observers at polling stations that are less convenient and accessible.

### **Targeted Deployment**

- » Observers in a **non-systematic monitoring effort** are sometimes deployed in a targeted method to prioritize the most vulnerable or at-risk areas to highlight a particular issue. These targeted or “hot spot” observers are deployed to the geographic areas predicted to be most affected by the issue of concern.
- » Provided that observer groups are able to identify problematic zones accurately in advance of the election period, targeted deployment can deter violence, fraud or other irregularities where they are most likely to occur. It can help build public confidence in targeted areas and highlight the issue of concern to build awareness of its negative impact or to demonstrate progress made.
- » This type of observation allows observers to gather anecdotal data from the targeted areas. Targeted deployment poses greater security risks for observers, yet having observers present could deter potential perpetrators from the issue of concern, such as committing acts of violence against women. While the findings cannot provide a full, nationwide assessment of an election’s credibility and are usually only relevant in the limited geographic area, it can help mitigate VAW-E in targeted areas where there is a higher likelihood of VAW-E occurring.



### Convenient Deployment (General/Traditional Observation)

- » Convenient deployment involves letting observers decide which areas or polling stations they will observe (typically those that are easiest to reach from their homes). During an election day observation, observers may be **stationary**, meaning they remain at the same polling station from opening to closing and counting of ballots on election day, allowing them to assess the credibility of election day procedures at one polling station. On the other hand, observers may be **mobile**, meaning they travel among several polling stations in the same area on election day and are present at each particular polling station for only a limited time.
- » The findings from mobile observation efforts are far more impressionistic and limited than other observation techniques, since election observers cannot attest to the credibility of the election procedures at those polling stations during the times when they were not present.
- » **Crowdsourcing** is another type of convenient deployment strategy, where groups receive reports from citizens (via phone, Internet, applications, etc.) on incidents they witnessed. This type of observation can result in biases toward urban areas or negative reports in the data; however citizens are able to become engaged in the election and can contribute reports in new and innovative ways with the rise of new communication tools and technologies.
- » Convenient deployment methodology encourages citizens to volunteer and become engaged in the electoral process. It also familiarizes them with observation procedures that may be used in subsequent, systematic election observations. Convenient deployment also helps to deter fraud that may occur on election day at polling stations where observers ultimately deploy.
- » Non-systematic observation can provide valuable anecdotal data on the quality of the process, although the data cannot be considered nationally representative and may have an urban bias. Groups must take precautions to present and caveat their data as anecdotal and non-systematic. However, this data can nevertheless be a useful source of information about how incidents of VAW-E may present themselves in different country contexts.

Other types of data collection beyond direct election observation can also provide valuable information; for more information about these methods, please see the chapter on additional methods for data collection. In particular, these methods can help to gather **qualitative** data about VAW-E and women's electoral participation. Because VAW-E often happens out of sight of election observers, qualitative data about it is often easier to collect than quantitative information,

and takes on extra importance. For this reason, when observation groups believe it is likely that violence will be happening in protected spaces, it is often useful to connect election observation with other methods of data collection, supplementing the information gained through formal observation with other techniques. Especially during the pre-election period, citizen election observation groups can gather qualitative data through a combination of interviews, focus groups, and other methods as part of a broad strategy to gain a full picture of violence that may be occurring. In any monitoring effort that combines qualitative and quantitative data, observer groups should carefully consider how they use each type of data in their analysis and reports, and pay close attention to the limits of each type in their conclusions. More information on data collection and analysis can be found in the chapter on documenting and storing data, and in the chapter on alternate forms of data collection.



## CASE STUDY: MYANMAR

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In Myanmar's 2015 national elections—an important milestone in the ongoing reform process—the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) designed and implemented an observation that incorporated a focus on VAW-E with the support of NDI. In addition to a long-term observation and a short-term systematic election day observation, PACE deployed nearly 500 volunteers to conduct interviews with thousands of voters and candidates during the pre-election period, and included a question about whether they had experienced violence or harassment. Men and women alike reported that they did not face intimidation, and PACE found that the general campaign environment was smooth.

Although its systematic observation efforts did not reveal a pattern of violence, PACE heard of isolated incidents outside the context of its formal observation. These included slanderous comments made against specific women candidates: for example, that one unmarried woman candidate became pregnant and had an abortion.<sup>14</sup> While the election overall was calm and free from violence, according to observer reports, PACE found that a structured observation in some ways made it difficult to uncover further details beyond the specific questions that had been included in the forms. This is often a challenge

that groups face when monitoring VAW-E, which frequently occurs in private or in protected spaces such as political parties, where observers are unable to enter and monitor—though it is important to note that none of the citizen observation groups in Myanmar, including those supported by NDI and by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, found evidence that VAW-E was happening outside of isolated attacks.

PACE's main goal was to provide a statistically valid assessment of the overall election process, which informed its decision to implement a systematic observation. Monitoring VAW-E, while important in the observation, was a secondary goal; its methodology was focused on tracking trends, and not tailored to capture specific anecdotes or incidents. The structure of this methodology also prevented PACE from following up with women who reported other types of problems, outside of threats or intimidation. The decision about methodology was one that PACE considered carefully. When analyzing results of an observation in any country, it is important for observers to keep in mind the particular challenges they face in observing VAW-E, and the effects their chosen methodologies may have on their ability to observe a phenomenon that is often hidden from view.

# TOOL BOX

## TOOLS

-  Key Definitions

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)
-  Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (OSCE ODIHR)
-  Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation (NDI)
-  Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections (NDI)
-  Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation (WAEON)
-  The Quick Count and Election Observation: An NDI Guide for Civic Organization and Political Parties (NDI)

## Which Aspects of the Electoral Process to Monitor

In a democratic election, all citizens should be able to take part freely in each phase of the electoral process without fear of violence. Within each phase, there are specific processes that election observers can assess to determine whether violence is preventing full and equal participation by all citizens.<sup>15</sup> Citizen observation groups will need to identify which of the processes and actors to focus on during each phase of the electoral cycle. Context is a critical part of this decision; each country may vary in terms of which processes or actors may be most vulnerable to violence. Observation groups will need to determine the greatest risks for violence through a needs assessment that includes consultations with relevant stakeholders. This process is described in greater detail in the context analysis section of this guide.

Processes that citizen observation groups may consider observing include:

### Pre-Election:

-  Legal framework
-  Electoral boundary delimitation
-  Voter registration
-  Voter education
-  Candidate and party nomination

- ✓ Electoral management body formation and operation
- ✓ Campaign environment
- ✓ Campaign finance
- ✓ Media

#### **Election Day:**

- ✓ Opening of polls, voting, closing of polls
- ✓ Vote counting

#### **Post-Election:**

- ✓ Results tabulation
- ✓ Announcement of results
- ✓ Electoral dispute resolution
- ✓ Seating of elected officials
- ✓ Electoral tribunals

## **What Does Full Participation by Women in an Election Look Like?**

Ultimately, election observers are monitoring the democratic nature and overall credibility of an election. At the heart of this exercise, observers are monitoring whether all citizens, women and men alike, can fully and equally participate through each phase of the election. Women's full and equal participation means they have complete freedom and access to the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as their fellow male citizens, and can participate without fear as voters, candidates and election administrators. This means that:

#### **Women Voters Can:**

- ✓ Receive voter education
- ✓ Register to vote
- ✓ File complaints
- ✓ Access polling stations
- ✓ Cast a ballot in accordance with their freely determined choices

#### **Women Candidates Can:**

- ✓ Register to be a candidate
- ✓ Receive nomination
- ✓ Campaign
- ✓ Receive equitable access to public or party funds and resources

- ✓ Receive equitable access to media and balanced, objective coverage
- ✓ Access position if won, without reversal of results
- ✓ File electoral disputes, if warranted, and track the process of adjudication

#### **Women Election Workers Can:**

- ✓ Participate as commissioner or staff in election commission
- ✓ Lead election commission
- ✓ Participate as poll workers
- ✓ Lead polling station staff

#### **Women Election Observers Can:**

- ✓ Participate as leaders, trainers and staff of observer groups
- ✓ Participate as election observers



# UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS

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It is critical to understand how violence against women can impact women's participation as voters, candidates, election administrators and officials when making decisions about the observation methodology. This chapter begins with a framework for assessing VAW-E throughout the electoral cycle and should be the first point of reference when considering risks for violence against women and important vulnerabilities that should be considered when determining how to monitor the election. The chapter provides guidance and tools that can build observers' understanding of the phenomenon and its impact on elections. It ends with targeted guidance on how to gather the necessary context-specific information—for example, the effects of sociocultural norms—to develop an observation methodology for a particular country.

## Assessing the Democratic Quality of an Election through a VAW-E Lens

While electoral practices vary around the world, democratic elections are founded on the principle that they belong to the people—that all citizens, women and men alike, have the right to participate in their government and choose who will represent them. A credible election is inclusive of all citizens, transparent and accountable, in addition to being competitive. Together, these measures are taken into account when conducting any assessment of an election's credibility or democratic nature, and it is critical to incorporate into each an understanding of the gender dynamics that affect them. This understanding includes an examination of the potential ways violence against women—as voters, candidates, and election administrators and officials—can impact each of them, seriously affecting women's participation and the integrity of the election overall. An election is not competitive or democratic if violent or unfair tactics are used to prevent or control women's participation. Some of these tactics can appear obvious, but many are difficult to identify without a thorough assessment of how legal norms, institutions, electoral practices or other structures account for or respond to gender and violence during the entire electoral cycle.

This section of the toolkit provides guidance on evaluating each phase of the electoral cycle as an initial step in the observation process. An assessment of this nature helps citizen observer groups think deeply about the ways that violence impacts the democratic quality of an election and women's electoral participation. By evaluating and identifying the risks and vulnerabilities women face, this assessment enables observation groups to think critically about what questions

to ask, or issues to monitor and assess during the observation, and from there, to determine whether an election is democratic. Following this process, a citizen observation group is better placed to decide the priorities of its observation efforts.

## Assessing the Democratic Quality of an Election

Citizen election observers should evaluate the democratic quality of each phase of an election cycle through a gender-sensitive lens, including an evaluation of the ability of women to participate equally and without fear as voters, candidates and election administrators.<sup>16</sup>

### Inclusivity

A democratic election must first be inclusive—that is, all citizens, regardless of their gender, must be able to exercise their full and equal right to participate as voters and candidates, as well as election officials and administrators. The principle of inclusiveness stems from international norms and legal frameworks, which spell out specific civic and political rights, including requirements for universal and equal suffrage.<sup>17</sup> While restrictions on the right to vote or run for elected office may exist (for example, setting a minimum age requirement), observers must assess whether all citizens have a genuine opportunity to exercise their rights to participate. This assessment can include:

- » Whether women and men are equally able to exercise their right to vote, stand for elected office or participate in election administration
- » Whether there are institutional, legal or socio-cultural barriers that prevent women from meeting participation requirements, or which place an undue burden or restriction on their participation as voters, candidates or election officials
- » Whether there are positive measures in place to overcome those or other barriers blocking women's ability to participate on an equal footing with men

### Transparency

Likewise, transparency is an essential component of a democratic election, and is also based on internationally-recognized human rights.<sup>18</sup> All steps of an election must be open for scrutiny and verification, showing citizens that it is being conducted honestly, that it accurately reflects their choices, and that any hidden barriers to women's or men's participation are brought to light and addressed. Citizen election observers play a critical role in ensuring the transparency of

the electoral process and in calling attention to discrepancies. In conducting an assessment of the democratic framework, observation groups should consider:

- » Whether information about the election and election processes is freely available to all citizens, both women and men
- » Whether all citizens are able to access or distribute information about their rights within an electoral process, and whether this information is made available in forms that are accessible for women
- » Whether women and men are equally able to access the knowledge they need to make informed choices about their participation as voters, candidates or election officials
- » Whether there is freedom of the press to engage in and encourage public debate, without contributing to violence toward or marginalization of women

### **Accountability**

Accountability is critical in democratic elections: governments must be accountable to their constituents, and elections are a key mechanism for creating this accountability.<sup>19</sup> Elections themselves must also be accountable, and reflect the will and equal participation of women and men. Violations of citizens' electoral rights must be identified and addressed in a timely manner, both in the short and long term, and perpetrators must be held accountable for their acts. This becomes particularly important when incidents of VAW-E occur: often, violence against one woman or group of women can have a far wider effect, discouraging other women from being active in politics or elections. Other considerations for ensuring the accountability of an election include:

- » Whether women voters' preferences are respected
- » Whether women and men are assured of the secrecy of their ballot and are free from pressure or manipulation during voting, or as candidates during campaigns
- » Whether mechanisms and other accountability measures are in place to ensure the integrity of election processes
- » Whether violations of women's electoral rights are investigated and prosecuted in a timely manner
- » Whether there are differences in the number of cases prosecuted and concluded for men and women during and after elections

Taken together, these fundamental principles must be met for all people for an election to be democratic. All citizens must be able to compete and participate

fully and equally, and any assessment of an election's credibility must take into account the ways in which barriers to or interruptions in these principles create different circumstances for women and men. The laws, policies and activities that occur throughout the election cycle must be examined for gaps that might leave women vulnerable to violence, and therefore restrict their ability to exercise their full civic and political rights—affecting the overall democratic nature of the election. The assessment framework included in this toolkit is designed to help election observers conduct such an evaluation, which should guide them to:

- » Evaluate violence or risk factors from past election cycles
- » Identify any risk factors that should be a focus for the observation
- » Inform a methodology that will identify and measure the most critical risk factors impacting the democratic integrity of the election
- » Develop checklist questions based on assessment indicators

In assessing the electoral cycle, observers should:

- » Identify the sources that are needed to evaluate the indicators for democratic elections
- » Evaluate each phase of the electoral cycle using the indicators of a democratic election to identify any risk factors for VAW-E
- » Identify further indicators that may need to be considered based on the context and research
- » Organize findings to identify election processes or types of victims that appear to be most vulnerable



## CASE STUDY: GUATEMALA

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Guatemala's national elections in 2015 came amidst public demonstrations for better, more transparent government, a turbulent time for the country. Guatemala has one of the highest rates of violence and violent crime in the region, and even without the additional political tensions, which focused on high-level corruption, Guatemalans face gang violence, extortion and widespread impunity.<sup>20</sup> The country also has the third-highest rate of femicide in the world.<sup>21</sup> Against this backdrop, the election monitoring group Acción Ciudadana (AC; "Citizen Action") undertook an observation focused on illuminating not only the realities of campaign finance and corruption, but also electoral violence, with a particular focus on violence against women in elections as well as violence targeting LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) and indigenous communities.

Their observation effort, which ran under the name "Más Inclusión, Menos Violencia" (More Inclusion, Less Violence), began with AC conducting trainings to build its leadership's understanding of the experiences of women in political life and elections, and the way gender impacted electoral processes in Guatemala. During

these sessions, with the support of NDI, AC staff brought in key stakeholders, including representatives from organizations working to end gender-based violence and LGBT rights activists, to gain a deeper understanding of gender and violence. The sessions were also supplemented by consultations, facilitated by NDI, with the women's rights community (with groups such as Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres), and government institutions, including the Guatemalan LGBTI Ombudsman, to help AC better assess the electoral context.

AC's leadership used the discussions as a starting point to determine the barriers to women's electoral participation, as well as the risks for violence that women faced. For example, they identified as a concern the use of violence to influence people's behavior and voting choices, especially those of women who were more vulnerable to pressure and control. They also identified discrimination as a potential concern; for example, the sexual exploitation of women by having them dance provocatively during political party events. From these discussions, AC was able to develop a clear sense of what they would observe in the pre-election period, in addition to how they would observe it.

El día de la elección

OBSERVACIÓN  
Nacional

# TOOL BOX

## TOOLS

-  [Violence Against Women in Elections: Assessment Framework](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [What are credible elections? \(Open Election Data Initiative\)](#)
-  [Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Electoral Observation Missions \(OAS\)](#)
-  [Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections \(OSCE/ODIHR\)](#)

## Understanding Gender and Election Observation

Observer groups have a number of factors to consider when developing violence monitoring and mitigation strategies, all of which should incorporate an understanding of the gender dynamics in an election.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is critical to build an understanding among citizen group leadership and observers of the way gender impacts electoral processes *and* the way it influences women's experiences, including their experience of violence, in the electoral cycle. This must be done as early as possible so as to inform decisions adequately regarding how to monitor the impact of violence on the quality of an election and how to mitigate it at each stage.

This section of the toolkit provides guidance on building this knowledge within an observer initiative and includes links to relevant training materials. While the guidance provides information needed to understand VAW-E, it is important to take into account the specific country circumstances gleaned through a needs assessment on VAW-E. A member of the observer group or an external expert on how gender norms impact women's electoral participation and electoral violence should share relevant knowledge about the country in the initial knowledge building stages, as well as during any subsequent follow-on or cascade trainings.<sup>23 24</sup>

## Understanding gender and election observation

When it comes to the ability of women to participate in electoral processes, a variety of political, legal, social, economic and cultural barriers stand in their way.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>26</sup> As the goal of domestic election observation is to maximize the opportunities

for elections to help advance democratic progress,<sup>27</sup> observation groups, when designing monitoring initiatives, should consider obstacles and discrimination keeping women from full participation. Not incorporating a gender perspective could potentially reinforce inequalities and counter efforts to engender inclusive democratic practices.<sup>28</sup> Citizen observation groups and observers should have the following knowledge to ensure their initiative is gender-sensitive:

- » Understand the importance of monitoring both men's and women's participation to assess the democratic quality of the election.
- » Understand how gender impacts women's participation and the democratic quality of the election.
- » Understand and be able to identify potential barriers to women's participation as voters, candidates and election administrators in every process taking place in each phase of the electoral cycle, including voter registration, voting, campaigning and operating polling stations.
- » Understand how to incorporate this knowledge into the design, implementation and evaluation of a country-specific election monitoring initiative.

Election observation groups and observers should be aware of the particular way gender should be considered when assessing the quality of pre-election, election day and post-election processes. In some cases, it is pre-election conditions that directly impact women's participation on and after election day. However, election day can also present gender-related issues and possible irregularities to monitor, and in the post-election period, there may also be gendered barriers to women's full participation. Some key areas observers should understand include the following:

### **Pre-Election:**

- ✓ Whether women are disproportionately affected by problems with the voter registration process or errors on the lists. Observers should request registration data disaggregated by sex and region to determine if the number of women registered is disproportionately low.
- ✓ The percentage of women represented in the election administration at the central, regional and polling station levels, as well as the number who are in leadership and decision-making roles
- ✓ The election administration bodies' awareness of gender issues and responsiveness to related issues.
- ✓ The percentage of women candidates who are nominated and registered to compete in elections (when relevant to the given electoral system)

- ✓ Voter education programs conducted prior to elections, to determine who is responsible for them, what the key messages are, whether they are sufficient to address the specific needs of the electorate and whether they are effective in reaching women throughout the country, or whether any are specifically targeted at women. Observer reports should highlight any gaps or recommendations for improved education to ensure all segments of society have access to information about the process. They should also determine whether marginalized groups such as women have particular voter education needs and if so, how they can be addressed.
- ✓ Whether the media's campaign and election coverage fairly portray women candidates

### **Election Day:**

- ✓ The atmosphere inside and outside of the polling station and whether there is evidence of intimidation
- ✓ The security arrangements for the polling station and whether unauthorized persons are present
- ✓ The number of women on the polling station committee and the sex of the chairperson
- ✓ The representation of women among party poll-watchers
- ✓ Women voters' level of understanding of the procedures
- ✓ Sex-disaggregated data on those who have voted, if available
- ✓ Whether any voters have been turned away from the polling station and for what reasons, including how many women
- ✓ Whether the voting arrangements protect the secrecy of the vote
- ✓ Any incidents of "family voting" and the reactions of officials to such incidents
- ✓ Any incidents of "proxy voting" and the reactions of the polling officials
- ✓ Any instances of gender-based electoral violence
- ✓ At the central level, election observer groups should request the participation rates disaggregated by sex and, if it's available, check for discrepancies, including at the regional level. They should also report the number and percentage of women candidates elected to office.

### **Post-Election:**

- ✓ The number and percentage of women who do not take the elected position they won
- ✓ The number and percentage of women who leave their elected seat after taking it

- ✓ Whether existing gender quotas have been fulfilled
- ✓ Election observer groups should examine the procedures for filing electoral complaints and determine whether there are obstacles affecting women's awareness of or access to electoral dispute resolution mechanisms. They should also assess whether electoral dispute mechanisms are being used to remove women from elected seats.
- ✓ The difference between the percentage of women elected in previous elections and the current election
- ✓ The difference between the percentage of women who voted in previous elections and the current election
- ✓ The difference between the percentage of women who registered to vote and who actually voted in the current election

By building knowledge within an observer group of specific barriers that women face, and highlighting key questions about women's participation, observer groups will be better prepared to pursue information on women's participation as part of their methodology, and to include such analysis when assessing the quality of each stage of the election process.

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  Presentation: Gender and election observation throughout the electoral cycle
-  Presentation: Gender and election observation, pre-election
-  Presentation: Gender and election observation, election day
-  Sample agenda for gender and election observation and VAW-E

### EXAMPLES

-  Training presentation: Gender and election observation during voter registration, Côte d'Ivoire (French)
-  Training presentation: Gender and election observation, Guatemala (Spanish)
-  Training presentation: Gender and election observation, Myanmar (English)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  Integrating Gender into Election Observations (NDI)

## Understanding Violence Against Women in Elections

Violence against women is one of the most significant barriers to women's electoral participation resulting from social and traditional gender norms. It is used as a targeted and destructive tool in various ways throughout the electoral cycle to prevent women from participating as candidates, voters, election officials, observers, poll-watchers, party agents or activists. This has serious implications for the integrity of the electoral process and must therefore be included in any election monitoring. For observers to adequately incorporate VAW-E into their monitoring and mitigation efforts, they need to first understand the phenomenon, including what it is, why it occurs and how it impacts the democratic quality of an election. Citizen observation groups should have the following knowledge to ensure their violence monitoring and mitigation effort is sufficiently gender sensitive:

- ✓ Understand what constitutes VAW-E and how gender norms shape women's experience of electoral violence, including what types of acts are pursued to curtail or influence their participation.
- ✓ Understand the difference between VAW-E and general electoral violence.
- ✓ Understand the potential root causes of the factors that contribute to VAW-E.
- ✓ Understand the different categories of VAW-E, including physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and threats and coercion, as well as the specific incidents of violence that manifest within these categories.
- ✓ Understand the different victims of this type of violence and actors who perpetrate it, including within the private and public spheres.
- ✓ Understand how violence manifests to prevent women from participating during each phase of the electoral cycle, including during processes such as voter registration or campaigning.
  - » The VAW-E assessment framework is a useful tool to determine how violence manifests in each phase, once observers understand the issue.
- ✓ Understand the critical role citizen observers play in recording, mitigating and assessing the impact of VAW-E on electoral processes in their countries, and the key steps and best practices for integrating VAW-E into their monitoring effort.

Violence against women in elections is defined as:<sup>29</sup>

- » 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 (for example, working as election officials or attending campaign rallies) or simply their commitment to vote

- » 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

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. That is, violence can be specifically motivated to uphold gender norms or traditional female roles in society, and it can also impact women in a different or disproportionately harmful way, discouraging them from being or becoming politically active during an election. VAW-E can manifest in many forms, which fall into five key categories, though the types of incidents in each category can vary greatly depending on the country context, and potential incidents should be identified in consultation with in-country stakeholders:

### Five Primary Categories of VAW-E

<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.
<b>Sexual</b>	Sexual violence includes any sexual act or attempt to carry out or obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or attempts to sexually exploit a person by force or coercion.
<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, incapable, guilty or helpless. This includes online attacks, such as cyber-bullying.
<b>Threats and Coercion</b>	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.
<b>Economic</b>	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>30</sup>

These definitions and examples should be used to train observers to become experts on recognizing VAW-E when it occurs in the communities they are monitoring. 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. If possible, include examples of what each category of violence may look like in the context in which observers will be working.

# CASE STUDY: NIGERIA

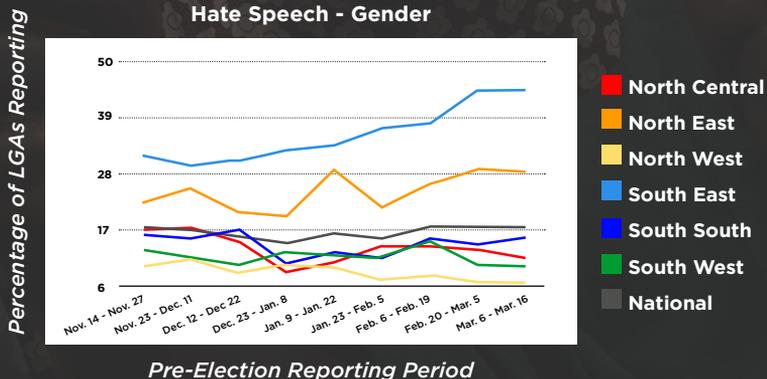
In Nigeria's 2015 elections, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) observed two separate electoral processes: the first was national elections in the spring, followed by state elections later in the year. While TMG included observation of VAW-E in both monitoring efforts, its national-level observation investigated VAW-E primarily in the form of hate speech, which it had identified as a concern for several groups based on age, origin, disabilities and religion, in addition to gender, as follows:

BQ		
Have you witnessed or heard of hate speech, violence or intimidation against candidates or their supporters because of their <u>gender</u> (women)		
Yes, witnessed (1)	Yes, heard of (2)	No (3)

During this observation, TMG gathered information about the presence of gender-based hate speech, including capturing data that allowed it to present regional differences in the presence of this form of hate speech. TMG also engaged in ongoing discussions about the issue with other organizations, including NDI, and continued to build its leadership's knowledge in preparation for the second, state-level elections. This sustained capac-

ity-building, which deepened TMG's understanding of VAW-E, also sparked new and expanded ideas for incorporating VAW-E into its monitoring efforts for the state elections, despite the challenges of having its observers, even for the state elections, spread over a large area.

Drawing from the experiences of other groups—including NDI's partner in Côte d'Ivoire, Plateforme d'Observation des Élections en Côte d'Ivoire (POECI)—TMG's leadership adopted an expanded focus on VAW-E as they designed their methodology, which included collecting more detailed, gender-disaggregated data on a wider spectrum of incidents. They accomplished this by implementing changes in the forms observers used so they could collect more specific data on critical incidents. For the national election, the forms asked for data on the type of incident, while the forms developed for the state-level elections also included a clear way for observers to indicate the gender of both victims and perpetrators. This resulted in TMG having more detailed data and a way to measure violence or intimidation of candidates because of their gender, vandalism or destruction of properties belonging to candidates or their supporters, and the use of derogatory language aimed at women candidates, in addition to hate speech.



## Remember That it is Key to do the Following:

- ✓ Knowledge should be built on the specific way violence impacts women in the different phases of the electoral cycle so that observers know what to look for.
- ✓ A local expert should be part of knowledge- and awareness-building each time a training occurs.
- ✓ Country-specific information should be incorporated into the observation group's understanding of the phenomenon.
- ✓ Citizen observation initiatives must build the knowledge necessary at the very beginning to ensure that all decisions regarding the goals and methods of the monitoring and mitigation initiative are gender-sensitive.

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  Presentation: Violence Against Women in Elections, Pre-Election
-  Presentation: Violence against Women in Elections, Election Day
-  Sample Agenda for Gender and Election Observation and VAW-E
-  Talking Points on VAW-E

### EXAMPLES

-  Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Election Day, Tanzania (English)
-  Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Myanmar (English)
-  Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Voter Registration, Côte d'Ivoire (French)
-  Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Guatemala (Spanish)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  Violence Against Women in Elections Overview
-  Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Electoral Observation Missions (OAS)
-  Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (OSCE/ODIHR)
-  Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (UN Women)

## Pre-Observation Context Analysis

### Introduction

Once observers have a deeper understanding of how gender and violence can impact women's participation and the democratic quality of an election, it is necessary to gather context-specific information before determining what to monitor in each phase of the electoral cycle. Unlike some other data regarding the electoral process, information on VAW-E has *not* been systematically collected and disseminated for most countries. This is why it is important to combine any existing research, including media coverage and previous election observation data, with stakeholder interviews.

A pre-observation context assessment for an LTO early warning systems<sup>31</sup> program will have information related to the different phases of the election, especially since it will be used to develop a strategy for the pre-election, election day and post election period. Because resources and time may be limited, it is important to focus on the specific information necessary to conduct a successful monitoring and mitigation program.

### How to Conduct a Pre-election Context Assessment

The goal of a pre-observation context analysis is to understand how VAW-E manifests in a particular country and determine how it might be a barrier to women's participation at the same level as men throughout the electoral cycle.<sup>32</sup> It is also important for identifying the root causes of VAW-E and potential indicators of pending violence. Because VAW-E is a type of gender-based violence (GBV) as well as a type of electoral violence, it is necessary to reach beyond the organizations, institutions and individuals who are traditionally engaged for a pre-election assessment and consult those that would likely have nuanced information on gender and violence, its causes, perpetrators and mechanisms for treatment and prevention. Identifying nontraditional stakeholders early and building a relationship with them throughout the observation process will be key to improving gender-aware mitigation and strategies for connecting victims to services within the observation effort. A pre-observation VAW-E context analysis can be conducted on its own or as part of a larger needs assessment<sup>33</sup> to determine what aspects of the election process require priority attention from observers.

### ***Non-Traditional Stakeholders to Interview:***

- ✓ International nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or bilaterals with a focus on gender



- ✓ Domestic women's rights NGOs with a focus on women's political participation
- ✓ Domestic women's rights NGOs with a focus on GBV, including those providing services or running shelters
- ✓ Government ombudsman or ministries of gender
- ✓ Former and current women in politics

Readers should refer to the toolbox in this chapter for a full pre-observation VAW-E context assessment guide.

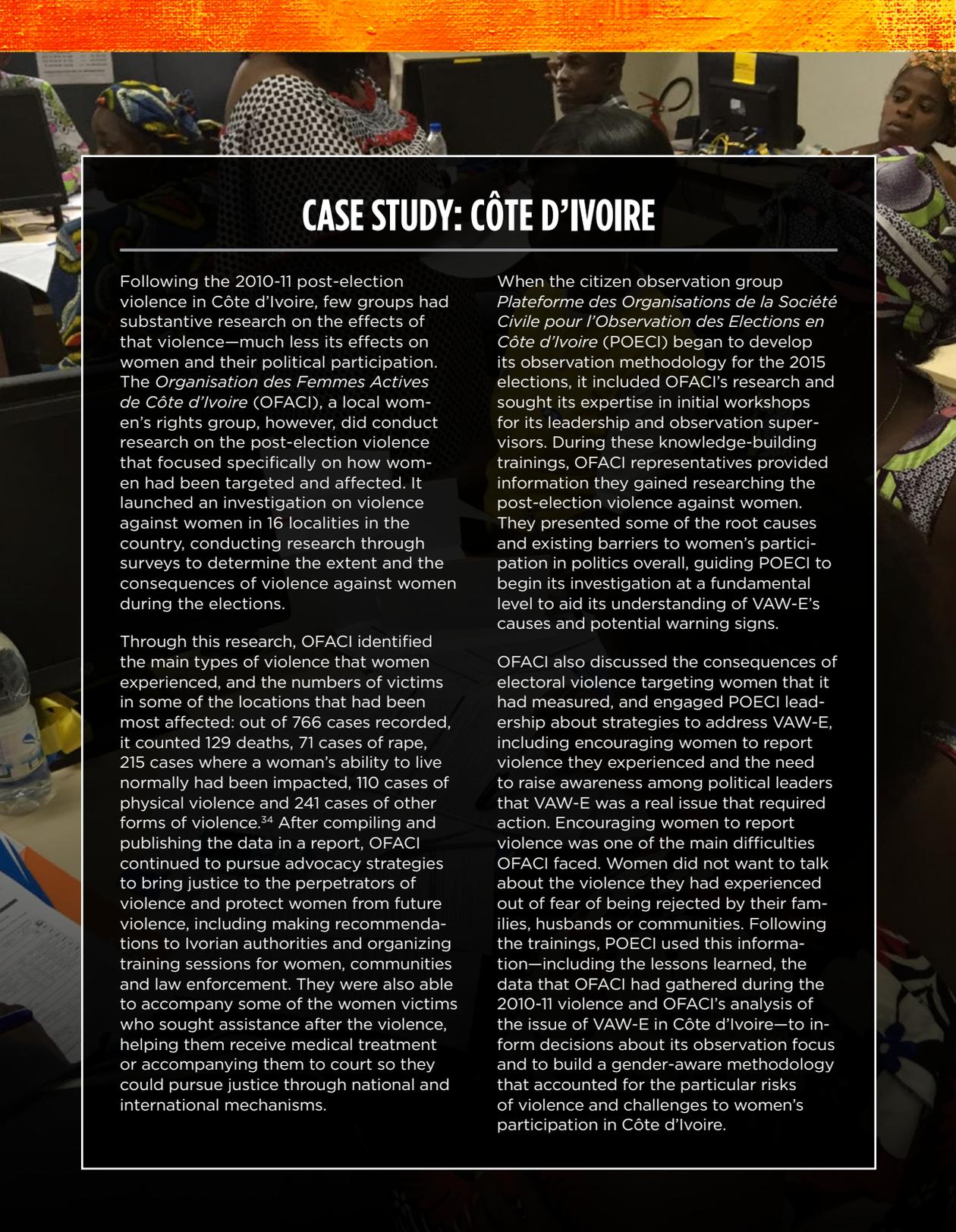
## PRE-OBSERVATION CONTEXT ANALYSIS

### TOOLS

-  Violence Against Women in Election: Pre-Observation Context Analysis
-  Draft Agenda for In-Country Stakeholder Interviews
-  Talking Points on VAW-E to Engaging Stakeholders

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  A Field Guide for Domestic Election Monitoring Groups in the Southern African Development Community: Planning for Election Observation (NDI)



## CASE STUDY: CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Following the 2010-11 post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire, few groups had substantive research on the effects of that violence—much less its effects on women and their political participation. The *Organisation des Femmes Actives de Côte d'Ivoire* (OFACI), a local women's rights group, however, did conduct research on the post-election violence that focused specifically on how women had been targeted and affected. It launched an investigation on violence against women in 16 localities in the country, conducting research through surveys to determine the extent and the consequences of violence against women during the elections.

Through this research, OFACI identified the main types of violence that women experienced, and the numbers of victims in some of the locations that had been most affected: out of 766 cases recorded, it counted 129 deaths, 71 cases of rape, 215 cases where a woman's ability to live normally had been impacted, 110 cases of physical violence and 241 cases of other forms of violence.<sup>34</sup> After compiling and publishing the data in a report, OFACI continued to pursue advocacy strategies to bring justice to the perpetrators of violence and protect women from future violence, including making recommendations to Ivorian authorities and organizing training sessions for women, communities and law enforcement. They were also able to accompany some of the women victims who sought assistance after the violence, helping them receive medical treatment or accompanying them to court so they could pursue justice through national and international mechanisms.

When the citizen observation group *Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire* (POECI) began to develop its observation methodology for the 2015 elections, it included OFACI's research and sought its expertise in initial workshops for its leadership and observation supervisors. During these knowledge-building trainings, OFACI representatives provided information they gained researching the post-election violence against women. They presented some of the root causes and existing barriers to women's participation in politics overall, guiding POECI to begin its investigation at a fundamental level to aid its understanding of VAW-E's causes and potential warning signs.

OFACI also discussed the consequences of electoral violence targeting women that it had measured, and engaged POECI leadership about strategies to address VAW-E, including encouraging women to report violence they experienced and the need to raise awareness among political leaders that VAW-E was a real issue that required action. Encouraging women to report violence was one of the main difficulties OFACI faced. Women did not want to talk about the violence they had experienced out of fear of being rejected by their families, husbands or communities. Following the trainings, POECI used this information—including the lessons learned, the data that OFACI had gathered during the 2010-11 violence and OFACI's analysis of the issue of VAW-E in Côte d'Ivoire—to inform decisions about its observation focus and to build a gender-aware methodology that accounted for the particular risks of violence and challenges to women's participation in Côte d'Ivoire.

# DEVELOPING GENDER-AWARE LONG-TERM OBSERVATION EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

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## Preventing and Mitigating the Impact of Violence on Women in the Electoral Cycle

In addition to monitoring and collecting data on incidents of violence against women, observers have a critical role to play in preventing and mitigating violence and ensuring treatment for victims. There is a danger that data collection becomes a purely extractive exercise, but citizen observers are uniquely placed to alleviate that danger; they not only collect data but also report their findings in a timely, proactive manner across the country, throughout the electoral cycle. This positions them to quickly communicate incidents to election stakeholders, promoting a rapid response aimed at stopping violence or mitigating its impact on women's willingness and ability to participate as voters, candidates and election administrators.<sup>35</sup>

Early prevention of violence can facilitate women's participation, and even increase it, as it shows them that it is *safe* to do so and that efforts to stop them violently will not be ignored. Treatment for victims can also help to ensure women are not disempowered by an incident and instead are physically and psychologically able to participate. The application of early warning methodologies, which have been used historically in conflict situations, to electoral violence prevention and mitigation has been increasingly recognized as necessary to ensure peaceful and democratic electoral processes.<sup>36</sup> Several organizations supporting or monitoring elections, including NDI, have begun to create tools to assist in developing electoral violence early warning systems (EWS).<sup>37</sup> However, these methodologies often reflect a lack of understanding for how to incorporate a women's rights perspective into conflict prevention strategies, including early warning systems.<sup>38 39</sup>

The benefits of including women in EWS has been upheld in numerous international instruments,<sup>40</sup> including UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which emphasizes the role of women and the importance of a gender perspective in conflict prevention.<sup>41</sup> Gender-blind EWS efforts often ignore gendered indicators of increasing tension, such as a rise in levels of domestic violence or other violations against women. These kinds of violence tend to be seen as "normal," viewed as unrelated to armed conflict,<sup>42</sup> and treated as private, non-political matters,<sup>43</sup> when in fact they are often an indication of increasing tensions in a country overall.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, they are actual forms of electoral violence. Thus, the absence of a gender-aware election observation EWS can result in a lack of understand-

ing and attention by observer groups to how violence impacts women and what is needed to prevent it.<sup>45</sup> Although men and women can both be victims of electoral violence like murder, harassment and coercion, traditional definitions do not capture additional acts and threats perpetrated against women *because they are 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. Additionally, non-gender-motivated electoral violence can still have a disproportionately high impact on women because of their subordinate status in society and increased vulnerability. An observation that is blind to these effects can lead to a less effective prevention and mitigation effort, as violence preventing the full participation of half the population will not be addressed, and indicators of impending violence will be ignored.

If women do not figure in the data collected → Women do not figure in response efforts → Women are not empowered to participate in the electoral process<sup>46</sup>

## Gender-Sensitive Early Warning Systems

To ensure that violence against women in elections is integrated into violence prevention and mitigation efforts, it is critical for observer groups to develop *gender-sensitive early warning systems*.<sup>47</sup> Long-term observation as a component of an EWS entails the collection and analysis of information on actual or potential drivers for electoral violence over time, and the communication of indicators as well as acts of violence to relevant stakeholders for short-term rapid response and longer-term preventative measures. This requires several steps, including understanding underlying tensions and the root causes for such violence, and determining specific triggers. This chapter provides guidance on how to develop an EWS for each of these situations in a gender-aware way.<sup>48</sup> For more comprehensive information regarding electoral violence, early warning strategies, and gender and violence prevention, please see the resources listed in the literature review.<sup>49</sup>

### Gender Sensitive Election Observation Early Warning Systems Must Have Several Distinct but Related Components:<sup>50</sup>

- ✓ Include equal participation of men and women in all early warning observation processes from start to finish. (See leadership and recruitment strategy section for guidance on ensuring equal participation.)
- ✓ Identify root causes and underlying reasons for violence targeting women in the electoral cycle, including structural barriers causing social exclusion and marginalization of women.

- ✓ Develop gender-sensitive indicators of electoral violence, which can include indicators that violence is occurring or has the potential to occur.
- ✓ Identify potential acts of violence against women voters, candidates, party agents, observers and election administrators.
- ✓ Conduct outreach and build awareness to engage responsible stakeholders for rapid-response, including building an understanding of the value of women's participation in elections and the impact of VAW-E on the democratic process.
- ✓ Use data collection and gender-aware analysis using specific indicators by election observers.
- ✓ Employ gender-sensitive verification processes that recognize challenges in verifying acts of violence against women, especially in the private sphere or other "protected" spaces.
- ✓ Include victims' services as part of a response mechanism so that data collection is not just an extractive exercise but also a responsive one

### Identifying Gender-Sensitive Indicators<sup>51</sup> of Electoral Violence

To ensure that violence targeting women voters, candidates and election administrators is properly identified and integrated into a monitoring and prevention effort, an observation group's understanding of the root causes for electoral violence must first be gender-aware. This is because gender norms and inequalities directly impact *why* violence targets women in the electoral cycle, *what forms* of violence are used against women and *how* violence impacts women. These factors, often external to elections but directly linked to women's status in society, forewarn of the likelihood of violence being used to prevent women's participation as voters, election administrators and candidates, as well as the probability that women will be disproportionately or differently impacted by violence due to their increased vulnerability and marginalized status. Women experience violence within and distinctly as members of ethnic, racial, religious and other minorities, and as diverse individuals with a wide spectrum of backgrounds and access to resources. This diversity of experiences can affect the ways in which they experience violence and in some cases magnify the underlying causes of VAW-E. It is these underlying causes that will require a long-term, extended effort to prevent such violence in future elections.

Unless this is understood, entire indicators of existing or potential violence could be left out of election monitoring and EWS.<sup>52</sup> As mentioned earlier in the toolkit, it is critical that this be done in consultation with local women's rights organizations, including those focused on gender-based violence and women's political participation, as well as female and male members of the election observation initiative who understand the underlying factors in a country and how they

impact women's political participation. Although it is difficult to identify global root causes of violence against women in elections, structural inequalities that lead to women's marginalized status are important to consider because they can increase the likelihood that women will experience violence.<sup>53</sup> The goal of such violence may be directly aimed at upholding gender norms and traditional female roles. Further, such inequalities can be exacerbated by elections, which can transform dormant social conflict into violent outbreaks.<sup>54</sup> Below is an illustrative—but not exhaustive—list of potential root causes for violence targeting women in elections.

### **Illustrative Root Causes of Violence against Women in Elections<sup>55</sup>**

- ✓ Opposition to women's leadership
- ✓ Economic dependency of women
- ✓ Illiteracy/lack of education of female population
- ✓ Discriminatory social and cultural attitudes toward women
- ✓ Culture of violence
- ✓ Culture of political violence
- ✓ Absence of supportive administrative and judicial structures including inadequate rule of law and governance institutions
- ✓ Weak enforcement of existing laws on violence against women
- ✓ Absence of any rules or formal structures addressing violence against women in elections within political institutions, such as parties and election management bodies (EMBs)
- ✓ Low or non-existent presence of women in elected office at the national and/or local levels
- ✓ Lack of female-headed political parties
- ✓ An environment recently emerging or still emerging from a conflict (for example, as seen in the Côte d'Ivoire case study)
- ✓ History of gang violence and ongoing prominence of gangs
- ✓ Prevalence of social norms that condone violence against women
- ✓ Prevalence of sexual violence (including rape)
- ✓ Prevalence of domestic violence
- ✓ Impunity for perpetrators of violence against women (e.g. number of cases reported, investigated, prosecuted and/or resulting in convictions)
- ✓ Existence and quality of legislation on gender-based violence, including gender-based political or electoral violence
- ✓ Equality and protection of all citizens under the law, regardless of gender



- ✓ Female suffrage levels
- ✓ A security sector that lacks gender-awareness and/or inadequately/inappropriately responds to violence against women, *including in past elections or against women in politics generally*
- ✓ Myths or traditions linking sex with a virgin to gaining power
- ✓ Low levels of awareness of VAW-E
- ✓ Lack of social services designed to support and rehabilitate victims of VAW-E

“Elections are instrumental in ensuring democratic transitions and functioning democratic societies, but they are also intrinsically conflictual processes. Confrontations of political views and competition for power are important pillars of credible electoral processes that can make deeply rooted conflicts more visible, increase tensions and trigger violence.”<sup>56</sup>

—Sead Alihodžić, Electoral Violence Early Warning and Infrastructures for Peace

### **Documenting Early Warning Signs of Violence against Women in Elections**

After assessing the context and determining if there are underlying causes for violence against women in elections, observers need to narrow and prioritize the specific indicators they will monitor during each period of the electoral cycle.<sup>57</sup> It is difficult for observers to monitor everything, so it is important to prioritize exactly which indicators to include. This process should be done in close consultation with members of the observer group who understand gender and women’s political participation issues, as mentioned above; groups should also keep in mind the information gathered during the needs assessment. More guidance on how to prioritize early warning signs can be found in the chapter on developing forms.

Gender-sensitive indicators are signs that taken together or individually indicate the existence of violence against women in elections or the potential for such violence. Election observers should keep in mind that an indicator of existing violence, such as the murder of a female candidate, can simultaneously be an early warning sign of the potential for greater violence against women.

Below is an illustrative—but not exhaustive—list of potential indicators of impending violence against women in elections.<sup>58</sup>

#### **Gender-Sensitive Early Warning Sign Indicators:<sup>59</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
- ✓ Increase in reports or knowledge of physical or sexual assault against a female family member
- ✓ Threats to politically active women and their children
- ✓ Reports of sexual abuse by security forces (relatedly: impunity for perpetrators who are members of an arm of the government)
- ✓ Reports of sexual abuse by law enforcement agencies
- ✓ 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)
- ✓ Use of sexist or derogatory rhetoric by political leaders when referring to women's participation in public life or in the election or to a current female candidate or leader
- ✓ Rhetoric blaming women for political or cultural upheaval/scapegoating them or their behavior
- ✓ Disruption of women's cross-border trade activity
- ✓ Threats made by political party leaders to physically, sexually assault or rape women who do not vote correctly
- ✓ Late hours for voter registration and/or polling stations
- ✓ Long distances to travel to register to vote and/or vote
- ✓ Increase in number of security personnel on election day to secure polling stations
- ✓ Incidents of women dropping out as candidates after winning the nomination but before the election
- ✓ Avoidance of large political gatherings/rallies by women
- ✓ Vandalism or destruction of properties directly targeted at women political candidates or their supporters
- ✓ Decrease in number of women as election administrators

### **Documenting Incidents of Violence against Women in Elections**

While violence can affect all citizens, violence targeting women in elections has effects that are often broader and stronger than the impact that might be expected from one violent act. In addition to monitoring early warning signs, observers will want to identify actual incidents of violence against women, not only for data collection but also as a preventative measure. It can be difficult to differentiate between an indicator that an environment is becoming increasingly

inhospitable to women's participation, as opposed to an actual incident resulting from an already hostile environment. In fact, violence against women in elections can be a signal of potential, impending or ongoing violence against women more generally. For this reason, indicators of each type should be included in an LTO effort focused on monitoring and mitigating VAW-E. This ensures early response to incidents aimed at preventing women from participating; if done correctly, that response can stop future acts and contribute to women's full participation and a more democratic electoral process.

More guidance on how to create questions for election monitoring checklists can be found in the chapter about developing forms. The chapter on knowledge building for VAW-E goes into great detail about how to categorize and identify incidents of VAW-E as well.

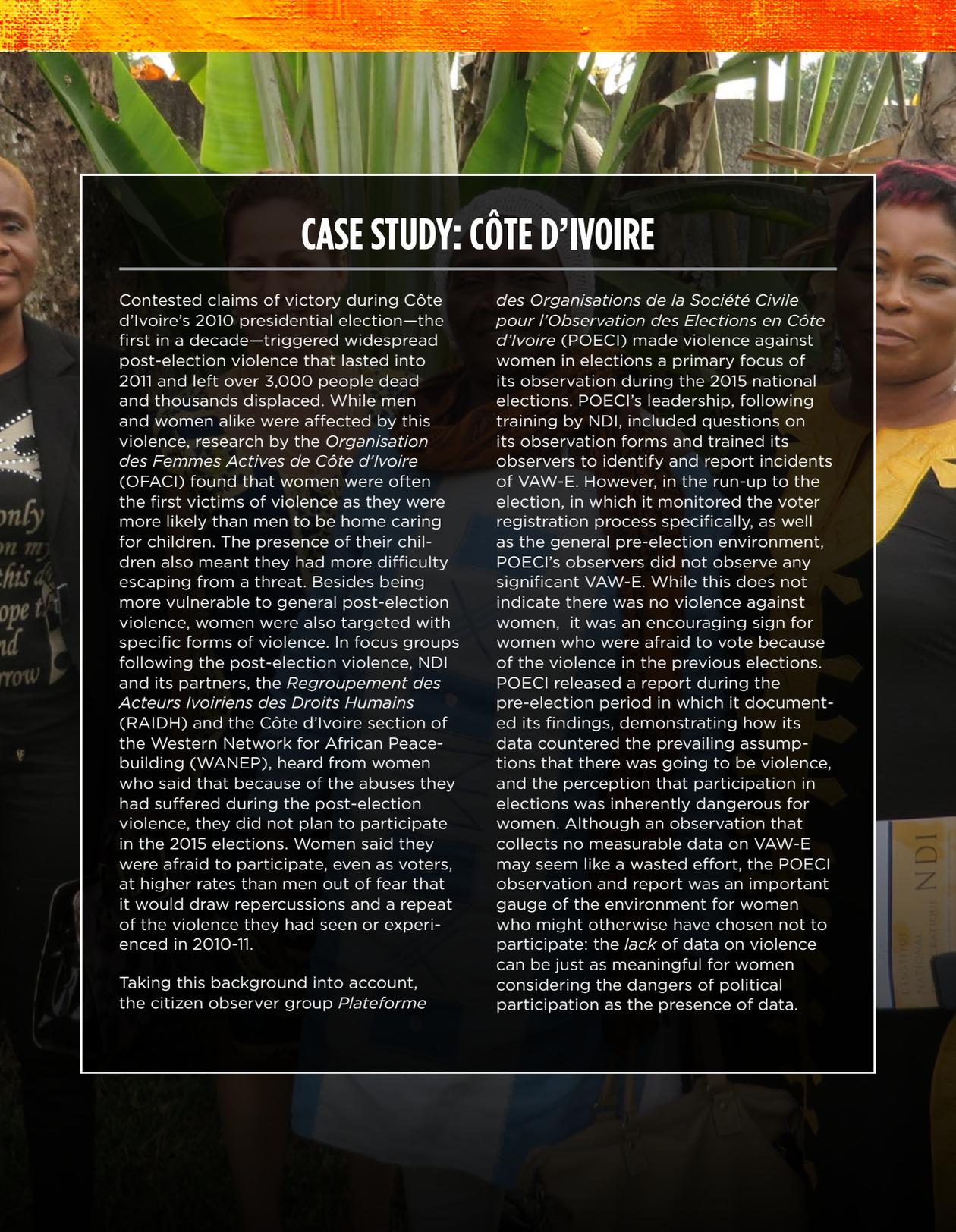
### **Examples of Incidents of Violence against Women in Elections:**

- ✓ Murder of a woman candidate
- ✓ Women voters being dragged away from polling stations
- ✓ Kidnapping of a woman candidate, her family or campaign staff
- ✓ Rape of women voters or party supporters
- ✓ Women voters being sexually harassed or molested while in line to vote
- ✓ Sexually exploiting women (for example, forcing them to wear revealing or sexual outfits or dance provocatively) at campaign events
- ✓ Sexist verbal abuse of women candidates or voters
- ✓ Portrayal of women candidates in the media as puppets of male leaders
- ✓ Insults equating women's political participation with immoral practices
- ✓ Hate speech targeting women candidates because of their gender
- ✓ Threat of divorce, deprivation of resources or physical/sexual violence by a husband to force his wife's preference for voting or to give up her candidacy
- ✓ Verbal harassment from party supporters toward women voters at a polling station
- ✓ Warnings or threats of violence from traditional authorities toward women who attempt to vote or run for office
- ✓ Blackmail of a woman candidate from her own party to give up her candidacy in favor of a man
- ✓ Economic control of women
- ✓ Denial or delay by parties in providing financial resources to women candidates that are otherwise available to men

- ✔ Property damage committed against women candidates, such as targeting women's campaign posters when male candidates' are left untouched

Once a list of gender-sensitive early warning signs and incidents of violence against women in elections has been established, observers will need to identify the most important. They must also determine, particularly for incidents of violence, in which phase of the electoral cycle they are most likely to occur or where observers may be able to see them, and to categorize them based on this information. The toolkit will provide additional guidance on this point in the chapter on developing forms.





## CASE STUDY: CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Contested claims of victory during Côte d'Ivoire's 2010 presidential election—the first in a decade—triggered widespread post-election violence that lasted into 2011 and left over 3,000 people dead and thousands displaced. While men and women alike were affected by this violence, research by the *Organisation des Femmes Actives de Côte d'Ivoire* (OFACI) found that women were often the first victims of violence as they were more likely than men to be home caring for children. The presence of their children also meant they had more difficulty escaping from a threat. Besides being more vulnerable to general post-election violence, women were also targeted with specific forms of violence. In focus groups following the post-election violence, NDI and its partners, the *Regroupement des Acteurs Ivoiriens des Droits Humains* (RAIDH) and the Côte d'Ivoire section of the Western Network for African Peacebuilding (WANEP), heard from women who said that because of the abuses they had suffered during the post-election violence, they did not plan to participate in the 2015 elections. Women said they were afraid to participate, even as voters, at higher rates than men out of fear that it would draw repercussions and a repeat of the violence they had seen or experienced in 2010-11.

Taking this background into account, the citizen observer group *Plateforme*

*des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire* (POECI) made violence against women in elections a primary focus of its observation during the 2015 national elections. POECI's leadership, following training by NDI, included questions on its observation forms and trained its observers to identify and report incidents of VAW-E. However, in the run-up to the election, in which it monitored the voter registration process specifically, as well as the general pre-election environment, POECI's observers did not observe any significant VAW-E. While this does not indicate there was no violence against women, it was an encouraging sign for women who were afraid to vote because of the violence in the previous elections. POECI released a report during the pre-election period in which it documented its findings, demonstrating how its data countered the prevailing assumptions that there was going to be violence, and the perception that participation in elections was inherently dangerous for women. Although an observation that collects no measurable data on VAW-E may seem like a wasted effort, the POECI observation and report was an important gauge of the environment for women who might otherwise have chosen not to participate: the *lack* of data on violence can be just as meaningful for women considering the dangers of political participation as the presence of data.

## Rapid Response

### Establishing an LTO EWS Rapid Response Platform

A successful gender-aware long-term observation EWS response mechanism will include several elements:

- » First, election observers will rapidly communicate indicators and/or incidents of VAW-E to relevant stakeholders who have the ability to take action in response.
- » Second, these stakeholders will attempt to resolve incidents or warnings and alleviate risk factors contributing to the violence to prevent it from continuing or escalating.

This will include establishing a referral system to provide female victims of electoral violence with information about victims' services. Ideally, stakeholders will use information gathered during an observation to repair underlying causes of gender-based electoral violence<sup>60</sup> to avoid repetition during the next election cycle.<sup>61</sup> Because a range of actors is needed to carry out such an effort,<sup>62</sup> election observers will need to identify who to engage and how, a process that should be part of their initial strategic planning.

### Who to Engage and How to Overcome Obstacles to Engagement

VAW-E is a type of gender-based violence as well as a type of electoral violence. Therefore, observers need to engage actors who can address election-related conflict and those who can treat victims of GBV and create long-term solutions to stop it. Initially, traditional election or security stakeholders may not understand or be convinced of the need to direct attention and resources to VAW-E. Often, stopping gender-based violence such as rape or sexual harassment is not considered relevant for promoting electoral integrity. Initial outreach will require targeted education and awareness-raising on what VAW-E is and why it is relevant for democratic elections. This outreach should include discussions on the appropriate response by individuals and institutions to prevent, mitigate and treat victims. Women reporting violence often face significant barriers to receiving fair, safe and accurate responses from security forces, election management or governing officials. Observers must take care not to cause harm, even inadvertently, by reporting incidents of violence to hostile stakeholders.

Similarly, although GBV actors will recognize that violence against women is a problem, they may not see the link between violence targeting women in elections and other forms of GBV. It may be necessary for observer groups to build an understanding of their role in responding to this type of violence and coordinate the linkage to existing services for victims and the reports that come



in during the election observation. Observers will want to ensure that both traditional and nontraditional actors will address this issue adequately, in a timely manner and correctly.

## CASE STUDY: NIGERIA

During Nigeria's 2015 elections, with the support of NDI, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), a civic education group in the country, launched a "Stop Violence Against Women in Elections" (Stop-VAWIE) campaign to identify, document and report data on VAW-E during state elections. This campaign included an important outreach component, in addition to its focus on general awareness-raising and prevention. Stop-VAWIE ran radio and video campaigns, and made use of social media, to generate awareness of and interest in the issue, which extended the reach of its message.

As an essential part of the Stop-VAWIE campaign, FIDA and NDI also coordinated targeted outreach to specific stakeholders, including the election

management body, national police and political parties in addition to civil society groups. As a result of this outreach, the Stop-VAWIE campaign built awareness of VAW-E among key stakeholders. It also generated support for prevention and mitigation efforts, including the rapid response efforts designed for the campaign, which drew on the expertise, abilities and resources of a wide spectrum of stakeholders. At the formal launch of the campaign in Kogi state, for example, the commissioner of police announced publicly that all electoral violence targeting women would be given high priority by the police force, and directed the police officer assigned to support the campaign to ensure that all VAW-E incidents were reported to the police for resolution.



## Key Stakeholders:

An illustrative list of key stakeholders to include in such a platform is below. However, it will vary by country, and observers should map their available and relevant critical responders in the beginning. Guidance on how to engage with various stakeholders is included within the tools that can be found in this chapter's tool box.

### **Security actors:**

- ✓ Police
- ✓ Peacekeepers
- ✓ Temporary election police
- ✓ Military

### **Political actors**

- ✓ Political party leaders at national and local level
- ✓ Election management bodies/officials
- ✓ Government officials, including heads of state and other elected leaders at local and national level

### **Civil society**

- ✓ Women's rights groups
- ✓ Election observer groups
- ✓ Issue-based CSOs
- ✓ Groups organizing voter education
- ✓ Peace activists
- ✓ Religious leaders
- ✓ Community leaders

### **Media actors**

- ✓ Print journalists
- ✓ Radio and television news reporters
- ✓ Social media

### **International actors**

- ✓ Multilateral organizations and foreign diplomats
- ✓ International election observers

## **Gender-based violence**

- ✓ Victim service providers
  - » GBV shelters
  - » Medical services
  - » Legal assistance
  - » Psychosocial service providers
  - » GBV CSOs

### **Rapid Response Communication Strategy**

A clear plan for communicating incidents or signs of violence to relevant stakeholders should be in place well before an observation begins.<sup>63</sup> Once stakeholders are engaged, the citizen observer group should work with them to develop a plan for reporting and responding to incidents in a timely manner. This should include specifying which responders to contact, according to the type of incident and the response needed, as well as the method for verifying whether action was taken, if the problem was resolved and which authorities addressed it. Each actor will have a different role that will correspond to the types of responses available to her or him, and observers will need to understand who the most appropriate actors are in each case. Observation groups will also need to consider and plan for any additional resources (whether funding, staff, time, training or technical capacity) that might be needed for the response strategy.

In addition, VAW-E communication protocols should have clear guidelines for how to report incidents of violence to security forces or other authorities for prosecution. Priority should always be given to the safety and security of the victim, which in cases of violence against women can be threatened when the violence is reported. Depending on the type of violence and who the perpetrator is, victims may not want to report it, and observers must respect that. When possible, observers must request permission from the victims before reporting the incident to authorities. Whether or not the incident is reported, it can still be included within the data collection, and victims should still be referred to services should they wish to use them. However, the victim's anonymity and confidentiality must be ensured in all incident reporting. Below are some key guiding principles for dealing with incidents of violence against women during an election<sup>64</sup>.

## **Responding to Victims of VAW-E**

### **Guiding Principles for Dealing with Victims of VAW-E**

- ✓ Permission of survivor is required to take action.
- ✓ Safety and security of a survivor must be prioritized.
- ✓ Ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

- » Keep the number of people who know about the case to a minimum.
- » Do not use a survivor's real name or face (for example, in any media coverage or communications).
- ✓ Provide a space that is safe and confidential for survivors if they want to report or discuss the incident.
- ✓ Follow child protection guidelines and principles when victims are under 18.<sup>65</sup>
- ✓ Ensure a trusted caregiver accompanies survivor if under 18.
- ✓ Do not force a survivor to report.
- ✓ Offer survivors as many options as possible—and support them throughout the process.
- ✓ Be survivor-centric; that is, what works best for survivors of violence should guide your actions.

### **Observer Responsibility to Victims of VAW-E: Developing a Comprehensive Referral System<sup>66</sup>**

Before observers start any activity that may involve recording or having individuals disclose information about their gender-based violence experiences, they must develop a comprehensive system for referring cases to services that provide help to survivors. Referral systems are critical for coordinating service delivery and facilitating survivors' timely access to high quality services. It is the responsibility of those collecting data on violent acts targeting women in elections to connect women to such services. However, once referrals are made, it should be left up to the victims to make their own decisions about accessing services.

Election monitoring initiatives have a responsibility to map basic services and care available at the national and local level for victims of GBV. This will require engaging individuals, civil society organizations and government institutions with knowledge of how to access these services, as election observers will not be in a position to provide them. In some countries, comprehensive services may not be available to victims of GBV, while in others there may be established referral systems that observers can engage directly. Either way, an observation group's response platforms should include referral to as many services as possible.

### **Key Steps in Establishing a Monitoring and Mitigating Violence Victims Referral System<sup>67</sup>**

- ✓ Collect information about services available at the local and national levels for victims of GBV, including:
  - » Health

- » Psychosocial support
  - » Shelters
  - » Safety and investigation
  - » Legal aid
  - » Justice/judiciary
- ✓ Map existing services, including where they are available and who is providing them so that rapid response platforms have the appropriate names and contact information.
  - ✓ Engage existing service providers to participate in the LTO EWS rapid response platform through outreach and education on VAW-E.
  - ✓ Confirm that the election observer rapid response platform is able to refer victims to service providers and that these providers are able to effectively and safely refer clients for additional support if needed.

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  Indicators and Root Causes of Violence Against Women in Elections
-  Example Discussion Guide: Identifying Non-Traditional Stakeholders
-  Talking Points on VAW-E
-  Presentation: VAW-E Victim Referral Systems
-  Example Guidance: Protocols for Election Day Incidents

### EXAMPLES

-  Response Protocol and Stakeholders: Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria
-  Response Team Incident Report Form: Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies (World Health Organization)

## Releasing Information

### Communicating Findings to the Public:

In addition to rapid response mechanisms, observers must develop a comprehensive plan for communicating their findings to the public and key stakeholders during and after elections. External communication is critical to grow support among citizens and electoral actors for action to mitigate VAW-E in both the short and long term with the goal of stopping it and leveling the playing field for

women to participate in all electoral processes. More information on how to use observation findings in post-election advocacy can be found in the chapter on advocacy and opportunities for action.

In addition to interviews, social media outreach, briefings and in-person events, communication strategies often include release of periodic statements on the data observers have collected, as well as final reports with an in-depth analysis of data on violence and its impact on the quality of the election.<sup>68</sup> This should always include information about the different constraints and opportunities that men and women face, and in particular the different ways violence manifests and affects them. It is recommended that observer groups include an expert on gender issues and gender-based electoral violence as a core member of the team analyzing the data and helping to write the reports. This section of the toolkit includes guidance to assist observers in writing gender-aware reports and statements, as well as examples from other election observer groups. Some key things to include in statements and final reports are listed below.

### **Election Observation Statements and Final Reports Should Include:**

- ✔ Information assessing the participation of women in the election process *and* making recommendations for immediate and long-term actions to improve it
- ✔ The participation rate of women as voters (if available), the percentage of women elected (compared to previous elections) and the prevalence of women in all levels of the election administration
- ✔ Particular barriers women faced as voters, candidates and election administrators
- ✔ Data on findings of violence against women, including the type of violent act, the type of victim (voter, candidate, election administrator) and the perpetrators of various incidents

## **Visualizing data**

For both internal analysis and public reporting, data visualization can be an important tool to explore and analyze data and present the results in an easily accessible way. Election observations gather a large amount of data, which citizen observation groups must often analyze very quickly under a great deal of pressure.<sup>69</sup> Some of this pressure can be offset by creating a database and collection system before the election that automatically generates some basic analysis of the incoming data. Data visualization through different technological platforms can be a powerful tool for identifying trends and answering important questions about the presence of VAW-E and the quality of election processes;

the same data, portrayed in a graphic as opposed to lists or sets of numbers, can allow citizen observation groups to see trends more quickly. It can also be useful for public outreach. Charts, pictures and graphs are easier for readers to absorb and understand, which helps the observation group to tell the story it has identified out of the data. Visualizations can strengthen the group's efforts to raise awareness about VAW-E and contribute to advocacy efforts during and after the election.



## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

- 🔗 [Guidance for Writing Reports](#)

### EXAMPLES

- 🔗 [Second Pre-Election Report: \*Acción Ciudadana\*, Guatemala](#)
- 🔗 [Final Report: \*Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire\*, Côte d'Ivoire](#)
- 🔗 [Final Statement: NDI International Observation Mission, Nigerian presidential elections<sup>70</sup>](#)
- 🔗 [Final Pre-Election Statement from State Elections: Transition Monitoring Group, Nigeria](#)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 🔗 [Reporting Observation Findings: A Field Guide for Domestic Election Monitoring Groups in the Southern African Development Community \(NDI\)](#)
- 🔗 [Outreach and External Communication \(WAEON\)](#)
- 🔗 [How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide \(NDI\)](#)

# DEVELOPING FORMS

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The previous sections lay out the necessary knowledge-building to help observers understand VAW-E and why this is important to the democratic quality of an election. To identify what to observe, citizen observation groups need to first build their understanding of the impact violence can have on women voters, candidates and election administrators. As explained in the VAW-E assessment framework, observation groups should always include questions to assess the impact of violence on women's ability to participate in all phases of the electoral cycle, including processes such as campaigning in the pre-election period and working in polling stations on election day. However, observers may also be able to ask more specific and targeted questions. Before designing any data collection system, an observer group should use the information gathered during the in-country needs assessment and past observations to identify the specific root causes, early warning signs and incidents of VAW-E that would threaten an election in their country. This will help them determine the top priorities for what to monitor during each phase of the election.

Observers can collect data from a variety of sources using different methods. They do not have to witness warning signs or incidents directly to record and respond to them; they may hear about them from witnesses through interviews, the media or other sources.<sup>71</sup> However, no matter the source, standard forms should be developed for recording the data—although the structure of these forms will differ depending on the source and the observation methodology. Forms are not only important for ensuring the uniformity of data collection but also because they ensure the collection of key information necessary to document and report on indicators and acts of VAW-E in each phase of the election. How and what data is collected has a direct impact on the response mechanism used to prevent and mitigate VAW-E, as well as the choice of long-term strategies to address it. Forms should be developed using best practices for categorizing warning signs and incidents of VAW-E.<sup>72</sup>

## Early Warning Sign Indicators and Incidents of VAW-E

### Documenting Early Warning Signs and Incidents of VAW-E:

There are core variables that should be included and measured when collecting data on VAW-E to ensure observers capture who was involved, including the victim and the perpetrator, what specific form of violence the incident took and what impact that violence had on the democratic process. Documenting this information is important for identifying response strategies during the election

and solutions to address VAW-E in the long term. These categories are carefully developed based on theory and best practice to capture and present a full picture of the impact and types of VAW-E and should be used as guidance when developing data collection methods.

### Key Variables of VAW-E:

<b>Victim</b>	A person who is suffering from an act of violence and who is harmed directly by the perpetrator. Examples of victims of violence against women in elections include women voters, candidates, activists, administrators, observers or elected women. Victims can be of different ethnic, religious and other backgrounds. They may also be considered youth.
<b>Perpetrator</b>	A person who is committing any act of violence against another person or group of people. Perpetrators can be political party members or leaders from within the victim's own political party or from other parties, politicians, political competitors, family members, security forces, media outlets or others. Perpetrators can be men or women and of different ethnic, religious and other backgrounds. They may also be considered youth.
<b>Impact</b>	The direct impact of violence varies depending on the type of violence being perpetrated, but the intent of it is often to discourage, intimidate or otherwise prevent women (or men) from exercising their right to participate fully and equally in an electoral process. Data collection should identify which process was impacted and how.

<b>Category of Violence</b>	There are five major categories of violence: physical, sexual, psychological, threats and coercion, and economic. Any violence-monitoring questions included on observation forms should connect to one of these categories. <sup>73</sup>	
	Any of these types of violence can occur in the <i>public</i> or the <i>private</i> sphere:	
	<p><b>Public sphere:</b></p> <p>This refers to any violence that occurs in public life or through a platform open to a public audience. This includes public political activities like 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 refers to any violence that occurs in closed or private spaces. It includes violence within the home or family, as well as violence that occurs within parties, such as intimidation or harassment behind closed doors, private messages or calls.</p>

## Prioritizing Early Warning Signs and Incidents to Monitor

Once a list of potential gender-sensitive early warning sign indicators and incidents of violence against women in elections has been established through a needs assessment and observer knowledge of the context, observers should use the variables listed above to understand and organize this information. By categorizing all of the potential acts, perpetrators, victims and impacts for each type of violence, observers can begin to determine which warning signs or incidents are the most important and feasible to monitor. When it comes to monitoring VAW-E, many questions could be asked. Because very little information about the phenomenon has been documented in any country, there is a need to collect comprehensive information regarding all variables. However, for the data collection to be manageable, observers must prioritize the questions to include. This prioritization will also have an affect on the data collection methods observation groups employ as well, as different methods will be more effective depending on the indicators they choose to inform their observation questions.

Additionally, observers can use the information to determine in which phase of the electoral cycle indicators and incidents are observable and most likely to occur. Separate forms should be developed for each phase, as well as for different processes within the same phase, such as campaigning and voter registration in the pre-election phase. Observers should also clearly separate the list of variables for incidents from warning signs; different forms should be created for reporting early warning signs that would focus on violence indicators rather than confirmed incidents.<sup>74</sup>

## Organizing Early Warning Signs and Incidents of VAW-E

Observer groups can plug information into a spreadsheet like the one below in order to organize indicators of the existence of or potential for violence:

Incident/Act	Category	Perpetrator	Victim	Impact	Phase	Process	Private/ Public
Threat of divorce if woman voted	Threats and coercion	Husband/ man	Wife/ woman	Prevented from voting	E-Day	Voting	Private

Indicator/ Warning Sign	Category	Perpetrator	Victim	Impact	Phase	Process	Private/ Public
Witnessed or heard of a candidate withdrawing from the race after she was nominated but before registration	Threats and coercion	Party leader from same party/ woman	Candidate/ woman	Withdrew after winning nomination democratically	Pre-election	Campaign	Public

### Prioritizing Early Warning Signs and Incidents to Monitor

Determining where it is easiest and most practical to gather certain information will be important since checklists with too many questions can exhaust observers and hinder how quickly they report incidents of violence.<sup>75</sup> Several factors can be used to prioritize indicators and incidents to include in the final data collection to ensure the most important warning signs and incidents are reported in a timely manner, including the following:

-  Which warning sign indicators and incidents have the strongest impact on women's participation as voters, candidates and election administrators and thus on the democratic quality of the election? (Observers should refer to the VAW-E assessment framework when making these final determinations.)
-  Which warning sign indicators and incidents are most likely to occur?
-  Which /warning sign indicators and incidents are observable? This is a particular challenge for VAW-E, which often occurs in protected spaces and the private sphere. For observation on election day, this will depend on whether observers are allowed inside polling stations.
-  Which indicators/incidents are observable in the pre-election period, on election day and in the post-election period? Remember that observers will be able to observe different incidents in different phases of the electoral cycle. For example, violence against women attempting to register will be observable in the pre-election phase, whereas violence against women voters would be on election day.

## CASE STUDY: GUATEMALA

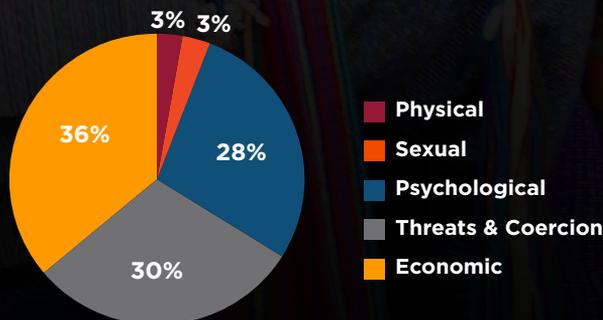
In Guatemala, the citizen election monitoring group *Acción Ciudadana* (“Citizen Action”; AC) conducted a thoughtful discussion during the development of its methodology on the specific types of violence that were most likely to be present and observable during 2015 national elections. During the initial workshops in which its leadership determined its priority indicators and focus for the observation, AC staff discussed VAW-E specifically. They invited Guatemalan experts on sexual and gender-based violence—the levels of which are extremely high even without the added political tension of an election—and women’s rights groups to participate as well, to contribute their knowledge of the types of violence that would be of most concern.

These discussions allowed AC’s leadership to identify and weigh the different variables they needed to consider in constructing their observation methodology, including the difficult task of prioritizing what they considered most important to observe: for example, the sexual exploitation of women as a way to attract people to political party events,

which is prohibited in Guatemala. In the decision-making process, AC staff had to grapple with challenging decisions, not only with what indicators of violence to measure on their checklists, but also how their observers would be able to identify and measure those indicators. In one example, after identifying sexual harassment against women voters and candidates as a priority concern, they then had to consider how they would train their observers to recognize and report this kind of violence, as sexual harassment is often considered “normal” nonviolent behavior. In the end, they agreed that the issue was too important to leave aside, and that they would define key concepts and acts like harassment in training workshops and materials for observers.

By undertaking this process, AC was able to narrow the focus of its long-term observation and develop a shorter list of targeted indicators to prioritize on the checklists it created for its long-term observation. This allowed AC to develop a methodology that considered VAW-E throughout, in particular *what* and *how* it would observe the pre-election period.

**Incidents of Pre-Election Violence in Guatemala, as observed by Acción Ciudadana**



## Developing Questions

### Developing Questions to Include on Critical Incident Forms (CIF) and Checklists<sup>76</sup>

Once the list is narrowed and citizen observation groups have a final set of key early warning sign indicators and incidents, as well as the potential variables (e.g.: categories, victims or perpetrators of violence) relating to them, this information can be used to guide the crafting of questions to include on forms. As a group decides what and how questions will be included on a checklist, members will also draw on the priorities and indicators they have identified to determine what information can be more practically gathered on a critical incident form. Critical incident forms will help observers capture information on violations that may not be highlighted on the checklists. The critical incident form can be an important tool for gathering details on specific indicators and/or acts of violence, including its type, severity, and the gender and age of victims and perpetrators. However, not every question can trigger a critical incident report. Observation groups must prioritize which questions to include on an incident form.

For example, observers may decide, based on their needs assessment and other discussions with key stakeholders, that certain acts of violence could have a significant impact and are likely to be perpetrated, and should therefore be included in a targeted question. For example, it might emerge that women in past elections were often seen being dragged or physically removed from polling stations by their male family members, in which case observers may choose to include the following question:

Did you witness a female voter a <i>female voter</i> being <i>physically</i> removed from the <i>polling location</i> ?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This question is clearly asking about a particular victim and category of violence during a specific process; however, it does not provide details about the specific act, perpetrator or impact on the process. Nor does it disaggregate the female victim by other factors that may be a cause of this violence, such as whether she is young or old, of a certain ethnicity or related to the victim. However, these additional details could be gathered on a critical incident form or through a follow-up call to the observer. In other contexts, there may not be enough information from past elections to understand the likelihood of specific acts, perpetrators or victims, and thus an even more general question would be included, and all of the important variables would need to be captured on the incident form. For example:

Did you witness a female voter experiencing violence at the polling station?

Yes

No

***\*If yes, please fill out a critical incident form***

Observers should always assess whether and how violence impacts women's ability to participate, even if they think it is unlikely to occur or there is not enough understanding of the issue to know what specific incidents to ask about. General questions—for example, about election processes—should still be included according to the goals and priorities of the observation group. Finding out that there were very few or no incidents of violence is important information and can have a positive impact on women's willingness to participate in the current and future elections. On the other hand, observers should be cautious and not assume that simply because they have not observed violence it has not occurred. There are barriers to observers' ability to capture all the ways in which VAW-E may impact women. This is discussed further in the chapter on additional data collection methods along with some ideas on how it could be addressed.

More detailed guidance on how to craft checklists and critical incident forms can be found in the toolbox for this chapter, including sample questions for data collection in each phase and for the various processes.

### **When Developing Data Collection Methods for Monitoring and Mitigating VAW-E, Keep in Mind the Following:**

-  When possible and relevant, indicators should be sex disaggregated to allow for analysis of the differences between men and women.
-  Violence likely to target women or impact them disproportionately should be specifically addressed through dedicated questions on the checklist and the critical incident forms.
-  Critical incident forms and/or follow up calls are an important tool for gathering additional necessary information on indicators and incidents of violence and ensuring rapid and appropriate response.
-  When possible and relevant, indicators should be disaggregated by subgroups, such as ethnic minorities, religion, age or persons with disabilities, etc. Determining which subgroups to prioritize and include should be based on the needs assessment. However, this must also be balanced with the need to keep data manageable.

- ✔ Methods of collecting and reporting the data should ensure that the identity and confidentiality of the individuals involved are protected, including the identity of the victim, the perpetrator and the witness.
- ✔ Checklists should be kept to a size that is manageable and practical for data collection and rapid response.
- ✔ All incident reports should be verified if possible. Additional guidance on verifying incidents of gender-based violence can be found in the chapter on early warning systems.

### **Example:**

During the 2015 national elections in Tanzania, the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform (TWCP) conducted a thematic observation focused on VAW-E on election day. In preparation for developing its checklist of questions, NDI supported TWCP in a two-day discussion. This discussion included experts on women's political participation and the ways VAW-E appeared in Tanzania, and was designed to help TWCP determine what to include in its data collection effort. This included an analysis of what it thought would reasonably be observable, a factor that it weighed while designing its methodology and prioritizing the indicators and questions to include on the forms that would be provided to observers.

For several years, women's rights activists, academics and experts in Tanzania have been raising awareness and working to end "sextortion," a term that was coined to describe a certain form of VAW-E that women candidates began to report, in which women who seek election or nomination face the extortion of sexual favors within their own political parties by party leaders. TWCP itself had contributed to raising awareness about the phenomenon in the past. However, although it considered "sextortion" an important form of VAW-E—one that was likely to occur—it was not included on its final form because it would be happening before the actual day of the elections, which was when the observation would be conducted.

# TOOL BOX

## TOOLS

-  Variables Template
-  Definitions for Categories and Variables

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

-  Sample Pre-Election Questions
-  Sample Election Day Questions
-  Sample Post-Election Questions
-  Sample Critical Incident Report Questions

## EXAMPLES

-  Pre-Election Observation Checklist: *Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire*, Côte d'Ivoire
-  Pre-Election Observation Critical Incident Report: *Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire*, Côte d'Ivoire
-  Monitoring and Incident Report Forms: *Acción Ciudadana*, Guatemala
-  Pre- and Post-Election Thematic Checklist: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, Tanzania
-  Election Day Thematic Checklist: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, Tanzania
-  State Election Quick Count Checklist: Transition Monitoring Group, Nigeria
-  Election Day Verification Box: *Phan Tee Eain*, Myanmar
-  Voter List Monitoring Checklist: People's Alliance for Credible Elections, Myanmar

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  Materials for Professional Election Observation: Designing Forms, Manuals and Trainings (WAEON)
-  How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

# DOCUMENTING AND STORING DATA

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As discussed in the previous chapter, the development of standard forms is a significant step in any citizen election observation. These forms are the main vehicle by which a citizen observation group gathers the data that will be essential for its analysis, reporting or mitigation efforts. Data is important in any election observation to monitor whether there is transparency, accountability and integrity in electoral processes. Its importance is further underscored when observers are reporting on an under-researched issue such as VAW-E.<sup>77</sup> Proper data collection, documentation and storage is therefore critical to a mission's success, and there are several kinds of technology platforms that observation groups can explore.

Data collection and management systems should be considered during the development process for observer forms. The chapter above outlines the most critical considerations for developing these forms. Before or at the early stages of designing any data collection systems, observation groups should have determined the incidents and warning signs their monitoring effort will focus on. During the development of questions based on these indicators, and the decision-making process around general forms as well as critical incident forms, citizen observation groups should keep in mind their goals for the data. Decisions made during this phase will impact the group's ability to collect the data quickly and efficiently, as well as the data's usefulness in the short and long term.

## Designing Data Collection Methods for VAW-E

As discussed in previous chapters, any data collection must account for the key variables for measuring VAW-E. The questions that observer groups include in the forms they design to capture data must reflect these variables; additionally, data collection systems as a whole should be able to sort relevant incidents according to those variables, making it easy to compile and analyze the data according to:

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Victim
- ✓ Perpetrator
- ✓ Category of violence
- ✓ Impact of violence

All data collection methods should allow for easy categorization of raw data to facilitate analysis. Form design will directly influence how observer groups categorize their data, so groups should consider this carefully when creating their

forms. When developing VAW-E specific questions for the forms, they should be clear on the categories that will apply to the data collected through these questions. These categories, especially for the types of violence, must be broad enough to capture critical data, but narrow enough to be useful for specific analysis. The data collected should be complex enough to serve the goals of the observation and provide enough depth for analysis, but the forms should not be so overly-complex as to slow the data collection and make it more difficult to analyze or determine results.

The method of data transmission will affect both data collection and management, including the structure and development of the database. The transmission method will influence what the data looks like when it arrives from observers, as well as the speed at which it can be analyzed. Some of the most common transmission methods are:<sup>78</sup>

- ✓ Text message (SMS)
- ✓ Phone call (via mobile phone, landline or satellite phone)
- ✓ Smartphone app
- ✓ Internet (for example, via a Google Form)
- ✓ Paper with hand delivery (slowest method, often now used as a back-up rather than as primary method)

When choosing a method, it is important to consider the resources that will be available to observers. If forms are to be submitted via the Internet or phone text or app but observers will be in rural communities with limited access to the Internet or spotty coverage, this will have implications for how quickly the data is received. In addition, where possible, observer groups should design forms in a way that will allow them to code the data easily or automatically as it arrives, regardless of the transmission method. Streamlining the system for data categorization and sorting will facilitate analysis and help observer groups process data and release results more quickly.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue patterned dress, is looking towards the camera. She is standing in a field of coffee plants. The background is a lush green landscape with many coffee trees. The text is overlaid on a dark, semi-transparent rectangular box.

## CASE STUDY: GUATEMALA

In its observation of the 2015 Guatemalan national elections, *Acción Ciudadana* (AC) conducted an observation throughout the pre-election period, as well as election day, the day of the run-off presidential election, and the period between the initial election day and the run-off. In this time, they were able to collect a great deal of information, in large part because they had created their forms with an intent to capture data that was disaggregated in a number of ways, including gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In doing so, they created an observation that allowed them to see the effects of several types of marginalization—including the marginalization of women through VAW-E—and analyze their data through an intersectional perspective.

However, in a post-election assessment of the observation that AC leadership conducted with NDI, they also reflected on the extra complexities this approach added. In particular, they identified the complications they faced with processing the volume of data they collected over the course of the observation, which made it difficult for them to be nimble in verifying and analyzing the data, passing particular information and recommendations to a partner stakeholder, or providing public reports. At the end of the assessment, they agreed that in future observations they should narrow their indicators and questions to hone in on specific priorities to streamline the observation's data collection, management and analysis.

Other considerations to include when determining data collection systems are:<sup>79</sup>

### **Reliability:**

- ✓ Data collection systems should be designed to minimize the potential for errors in the data submitted. This is a separate matter from verifying incidents, though they are related.
- ✓ Data collection systems should ideally include built-in error checking; many tools can be modified to prevent errors, or to detect them and prompt observers automatically to correct errata and inconsistencies.
- ✓ Including simple mechanisms such as logical checks in the reporting systems and database can help ensure the overall quality and reliability of the data.
- ✓ Additionally, the number of steps required to process data should be considered: if an election observer reports via a paper form to a supervisor, who enters the data into an online form, which then feeds into the main observation database, groups should consider checks on the accuracy of the data submitted. The speed at which information is received and the security of the original paper forms submitted by the observers may also need to be considered.

### **Simplicity:**

- ✓ For larger observation efforts with more complicated or longer forms, groups must take extra steps to ensure they have adequate capacity to process and manage the amount of information that comes in and the more complicated analysis it can require.
- ✓ Standardizing response options (and where possible, assigning numerical values to responses, e.g. “yes”=1; “no”=0) can save time-consuming steps in data analysis.

### **Consistency:**

- ✓ Keeping the format consistent between forms (such as between a checklist and the related critical incident form) is important on two fronts.
- ✓ First, standardized and streamlined forms are easier for observers to understand and use correctly, enhancing the quality of the data that comes in. In particular, standardized forms can help observers capture information correctly on the key variables of VAW-E.
- ✓ Second, consistency in format on the front-end forms has a direct impact on the back-end data management and analysis. If forms are inconsistent, the data that comes back will be messy and difficult to use, which in turn

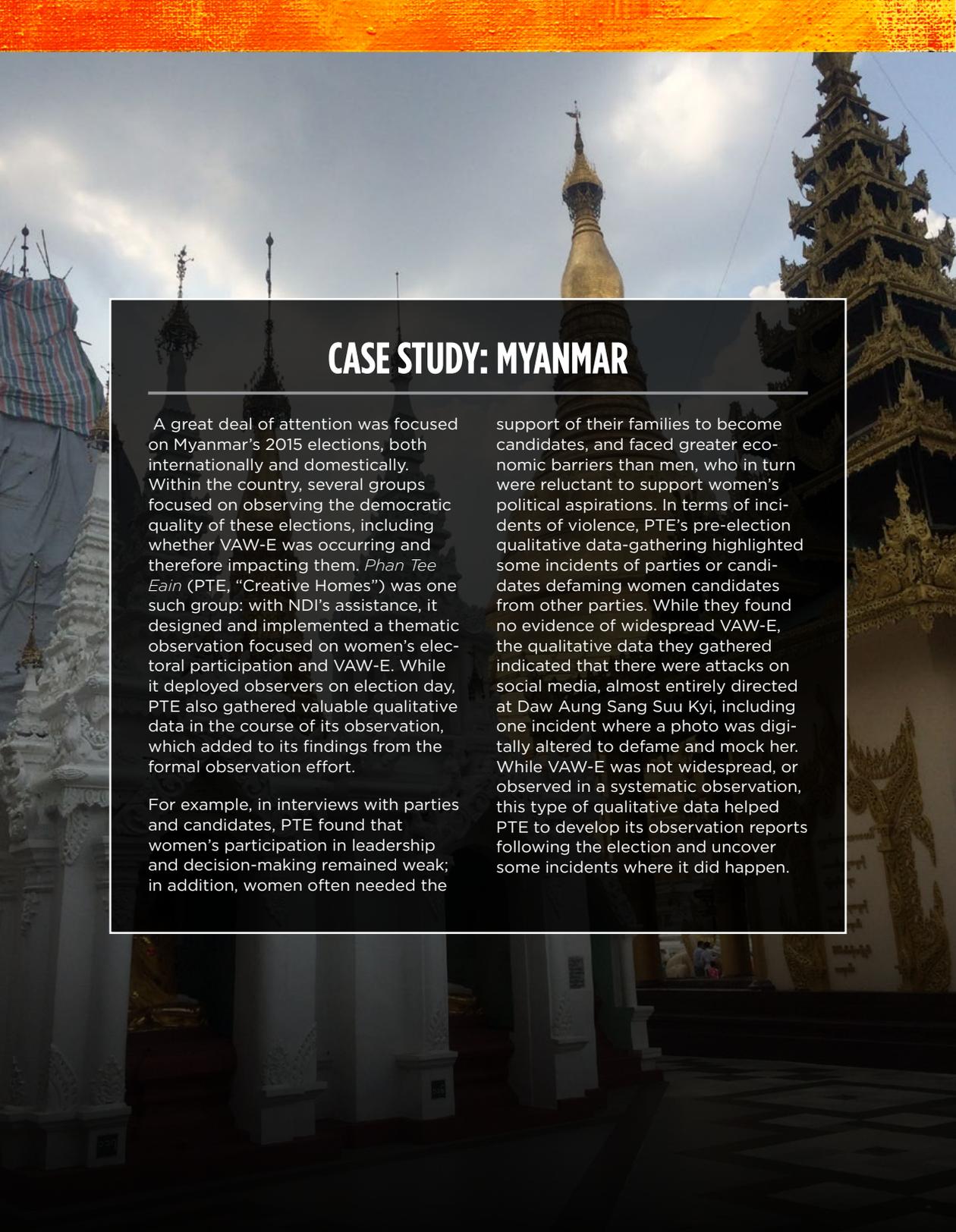
interferes with the end-result data analysis of the variables and indicators of VAW-E.

### ✔ Clarity:

- ✔ The key variables and categories, identified in the process of creating questions and forms, should be clearly identified throughout data collection and analysis.
- ✔ Where possible, depending on the data transmission method, the database should be pre-set with these variables, allowing the observation analysis to identify and visualize any trends quickly.

Qualitative data (descriptive data such as responses to open-ended questions) also requires extra consideration. Whereas quantitative data (data that can be expressed as a number, such as responses to close-ended questions) can be easily entered and analyzed, qualitative data can be more time consuming to collect and analyze, especially if an observation group must code it as it comes in to categorize it properly under the different variables of VAW-E. For qualitative data, observer groups should consider structuring data collection methods to do as much of this work as possible before the observation begins; for example, by establishing predetermined categories, codes and visualization techniques to feed data into as it arrives. Observer groups should also consider how they will use and view qualitative and quantitative data together: while different data types should not be combined, a data management structure that allows for both types of data to be inputted and analyzed can be more useful and efficient than a structure that requires two systems for data management.





## CASE STUDY: MYANMAR

A great deal of attention was focused on Myanmar's 2015 elections, both internationally and domestically. Within the country, several groups focused on observing the democratic quality of these elections, including whether VAW-E was occurring and therefore impacting them. *Phan Tee Eain* (PTE, "Creative Homes") was one such group: with NDI's assistance, it designed and implemented a thematic observation focused on women's electoral participation and VAW-E. While it deployed observers on election day, PTE also gathered valuable qualitative data in the course of its observation, which added to its findings from the formal observation effort.

For example, in interviews with parties and candidates, PTE found that women's participation in leadership and decision-making remained weak; in addition, women often needed the

support of their families to become candidates, and faced greater economic barriers than men, who in turn were reluctant to support women's political aspirations. In terms of incidents of violence, PTE's pre-election qualitative data-gathering highlighted some incidents of parties or candidates defaming women candidates from other parties. While they found no evidence of widespread VAW-E, the qualitative data they gathered indicated that there were attacks on social media, almost entirely directed at Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi, including one incident where a photo was digitally altered to defame and mock her. While VAW-E was not widespread, or observed in a systematic observation, this type of qualitative data helped PTE to develop its observation reports following the election and uncover some incidents where it did happen.

## NOTE ON CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Critical incident forms are important sources of data. They provide information on acts of violence that often have a severe impact on an electoral process and women's ability to participate freely and equally. Therefore, incident forms are often filed by observers immediately, as soon as they have recorded the information about a violent event or act. For this process to be agile and to avoid disruption to the standard reporting and data collection systems, citizen observer groups should consider establishing a separate mechanism to process and share these reports with responders, though they should remain part of the same overall data collection system the group has established. This mechanism should be linked to whatever response and mitigation mechanisms the group establishes, whether through its own operations or through connections to other stakeholders that can provide responses and assistance to victims who choose to take action.

## Protecting Data and Victims

Within the key variables, observers will often be collecting sensitive data or information about difficult, personal situations. Before any data is collected, observer groups must evaluate internal and external risks to the data, and develop a plan to protect it. They must also ensure that they do no harm to those victims or the observers who have collected the data, which includes taking precautions to protect the identities of victims and observers. To provide this protection, observation groups should evaluate:<sup>80</sup>

- ✓ Who will have access to the observation findings internally? When?
- ✓ What information, in what form, will be provided to outsiders?
- ✓ To whom will observation data be released? When?
- ✓ Who controls data ownership?

Much of the data may be politically sensitive, but beyond that, observers will collect personally sensitive data, including the experiences of women who may be speaking out about violence they have experienced for the first time. All of this data should be treated and protected with great care. Protections for data collection systems should be in place well before observers collect and submit any data to protect it from malicious attacks. In addition, observer groups must put in place “do no harm” protocols to protect victims and guide observers when collecting information about violence. Any observer group must adhere to these protocols when responding to incidents. Observer groups should also be clear that they are taking precautions to protect data and victims in their public communications about the observation: this is a crucial factor to encourage victims

of VAW-E to report incidents, reassuring them of their security if they choose to do so. More information on victim response can be found in the chapter on early warning signs.

## Developing the Database

A database developed to house information collected during an election observation should be simple but well-organized from the outset to facilitate sorting information into proper categories according to victim, perpetrator, category of incident or its impact. Its design will be influenced by the needs of the observation and the kind of information tracked. Generally, large or complicated database systems are not necessary, even with the large amount of information that is collected during a long-term observation. The most important factor for managing and storing data on VAW-E is to select a database that makes sense for the type (or types) of data collection system in place, and that will allow observation groups to track and analyze the variables that are important to monitor and mitigate VAW-E as clearly and simply as possible.

Databases that citizen election observer groups may consider using include:

### **DemTools: Elections and DKAN**

- ✓ DemTools is a suite of open source software that activists and organizations such as citizen election observation groups can use to engage with their governments and strengthen their democracies.
- ✓ Two tools in this suite can be useful for managing an election observation and the data collected in it: *Elections* and *DKAN*, which can be used separately or can be combined to complement each other, depending on the needs and resources of an observer group.
- ✓ *Elections* provides a platform for aggregating, organizing and managing the data, allowing groups to identify and act on emerging trends or irregularities quickly
- ✓ *DKAN* allows citizen election observation groups to warehouse and analyze the data they collect, including creating visualizations for quick internal analysis.
- ✓ Microsoft Access, while not open source, is another type of database platform that observer groups may consider, as is SQL. Both are relatively user-friendly, though would require some pre-existing knowledge or training to use.

## **Google Forms**

- ✓ Google Forms can provide a simple way for citizen observation groups to set up a back-end database and for observers to report their data, especially if Internet access is not a concern.
- ✓ If they have adequate Internet, observers can report directly via the online form, and their answers will be automatically recorded in a spreadsheet.
- ✓ Once the information is recorded, observer groups can explore and analyze the data as needed.

Creating a single database that will capture and convert observers' information, even if an observation group is using different forms of data collection, allows an observation group to analyze information easily.<sup>81</sup> While this may not always be feasible, (as it requires more effort at the beginning to set up), and should differentiate between types of data (for example, between crowdsourced and systematic data), it can allow for a broader analysis, and subsequently a more holistic picture of the factors that might be affecting the democratic quality of an election. For this type of database, consistent categories, according to the established indicators and variables, are critical; the source of the data (for example, whether it was from a hotline or systematic observation,) should also be catalogued or tagged for easy reference. This will help to keep the database organized.

## **TOOL BOX**

### **TOOLS**

-  [Guiding Questions on Data Management](#)
-  [Example Data Categories: Key Variables for VAW-E](#)

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

-  [DemTool: Elections](#)
-  [DemTool: DKAN](#)
-  [Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation \(WAEON\)](#)
-  [Presentation: Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation \(WAEON\)](#)

# TRAINING OBSERVERS

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After the forms for an observation have been developed, election observer groups will need to train all of their observers in the skills, knowledge and conduct relevant for a violence monitoring and mitigation effort. Training programs for election monitors vary in scope, method and format, and observers should refer to additional resources for more guidance.<sup>82</sup> However, in most cases, training programs will include the development of a manual and materials that can guide in-person training sessions for observers. The majority of observers will not have previous experience with gender and elections or monitoring violence against women in elections. Careful consideration must be given to developing the training program content in a way that ensures observers gain the needed knowledge to monitor incidents and recognize early warning signs of such violence. In addition, gender should be considered when choosing the format of the training and who facilitates the sessions.

## Content and Materials

### Training Content

All observers should receive comprehensive training on gender and election observation and on monitoring early warning signs of violence against women in elections as part of their overall training. This training should build observers' capacity to analyze situations that unfold and identify gender-sensitive indicators of VAW-E and levels of women's participation through the checklists they are provided. Training materials can be based on tools used to build this same understanding among observer leadership.<sup>83</sup> Training sessions, as well as materials, should include context-specific examples of violence against women from past elections and in the electoral process in order to convince observers of its existence and to build their capacity to recognize it. 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," so go unrecorded as acts of violence. When possible, training sessions should include an in-country expert in women's political participation. If this is not possible to do at the training sessions with observers, it should be done when training the supervisors and the trainers who will do the step-down trainings so they have the examples and in-country understanding to share.<sup>84</sup>

## Manuals

A training manual is often used as a complement to in-person trainings and can be an important resource for observers once they start monitoring. For an observation that includes a focus on monitoring and mitigating violence—in particular, violence against women—the manual should include information on how to identify incidents or warning signs of VAW-E. That information should be included throughout, from the introduction to more detailed guidance for each form. Manuals should reflect the information shared on gender and VAW-E in the training, including detailed information on the definition for each type of violence to be included in the observation. If possible, include written 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.

Manuals should include detailed guidance to help observers understand how to fill out each question regarding VAW-E on the observation forms, including the importance of identifying the variables discussed in the chapter on creating forms, such as the perpetrator and victim category. This chapter's tool box includes suggested content and language to include in manuals drawn from best practices identified from previous domestic election observation initiatives.

## Facilitation

### Identifying Trainers

In addition to developing a manual and other training materials, groups will need to identify trainers and provide them with materials. Facilitators should include a balance of men and women who are knowledgeable about gender dynamics and how they can impact men and women's participation in the training session, as well as their acceptance of gender based violence as relevant to the quality of an election. Trainers should be prepared to navigate discussions about how and why this type of violence is political, electoral and relevant.

### Gender-Sensitive Facilitation Techniques

Session facilitators will need to take gender norms into consideration when designing and conducting the training to ensure that both men and women participate and benefit equally. In many countries women are either less inclined to speak or are expressly discouraged from doing so within a group of men. This may vary within a country depending on certain factors, such as whether the training is taking place in an urban or rural location or in a more religiously conservative part of the country. Each country and location may be different so it is important for observer groups to understand this when planning each session. Facilitators should adjust their technique to accommodate such issues.

Some suggested strategies for ensuring trainings support women’s participation include:

- ✓ Create a welcoming environment where participants feel comfortable expressing, listening to and learning from one another’s experiences and views. This means redirecting discussions away from insults, placing blame, misunderstandings and stereotypes toward facts, views and values. Ensure that both women and men listen to and respect one another.
- ✓ Ensure both women and men are included in initial discussions regarding their objectives and expectations for the training.
- ✓ Give examples that reflect the experiences of both women and men.
- ✓ Women are often less confident about voicing opinions than their male counterparts. Trainers may wish to encourage women to share by asking questions such as, “*Could we hear a woman’s perspective on this issue?*” or by directing questions to particular women participants.
- ✓ Validate women’s experience by encouraging them to speak as subject-matter experts in the room on topics such as violence against women in politics and elections, women’s electoral participation or the experience of women as election observers.
- ✓ Encourage men to share examples of how different forms of violence have been used to prevent women in their community or family from participating. Sometimes it is necessary to have a man speak up in support of these issues to convince other men that it is a “real” problem. It is also important that all participants feel that VAW-E is an issue for everyone—for democracy—and not just an issue for women.

### **Key Things to Keep in Mind for Training Sessions and Materials for LTO EWS Observers:**

- ✓ The importance of monitoring both men’s and women’s participation and the particular barriers that disadvantaged women face, as well as how to monitor these issues during each phase of the election process
- ✓ Background information on the overall situation of women in the country, including how violence against women has impacted their ability to participate in past elections
- ✓ How to assess women’s participation and gender equality when monitoring each phase of an election process, including the particular impact of VAW-E on women voters, candidates and election administrators
- ✓ Rules for reporting incidents of violence against women, including guidance for seeking the consent of the victim before reporting to authorities

- ✔ How the observation initiative is connecting victims to referral systems for treatment and services
- ✔ An observer code of conduct, specifically guidelines for behavior such as sexual harassment of co-observers or civilians
- ✔ Security protocols, including those addressing the particularly vulnerable status of female observers when applicable and strategies for staying safe

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  Guidance for Creating Training Manuals for Observers
-  Definitions for Key Variables of VAW-E

### EXAMPLES

-  PVT Observer Training Manual: *Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire*, Côte d'Ivoire
-  Observer Training Guidelines: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, Tanzania
-  Observer Training Manual: *Acción Ciudadana*, Guatemala

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

# MEDIA MONITORING

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Media plays an important role during elections, providing information that allows citizens to make free and informed decisions about their governments and about who they choose to represent them. Yet exactly because media plays this role, observers should consider the quality of that information and its impact on the quality of the election. To determine whether the media is presenting fair, accurate and comprehensive information, or whether it is perpetuating bias or overt violence against women candidates in particular, observers may choose to conduct media monitoring during the election cycle.

Media monitoring takes on additional importance in the context of violence against women during elections. The media are often a leading perpetrator of psychological violence, or an amplifier of others' violent messages. While this can have broader implications and influence general electoral violence or violence targeted along ethnic, religious or racial divisions, it is often targeted at women, and can have a significant and disproportionate negative impact on women voters, candidates and election administrators. New technologies and new media, including social media platforms, play an increasing role in election monitoring efforts; while these spaces provide an open forum for political conversation and opportunity for discussion, they can also amplify and magnify violent language and psychological abuse, especially of women.

## **Key Reasons for Incorporating Media Monitoring in an Observation**

Media monitoring complements a larger observation effort, allowing observers to gather data that would otherwise fall outside the scope of their observation and give them a more comprehensive understanding of violence that is being perpetrated. Citizen monitors can also play a role in keeping the media accountable to provide fair and accurate information during an election and ensure that significant political events are covered in a conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive manner.

Through media monitoring, citizen election observation groups can capture indicators and incidents of VAW-E that would otherwise not have been seen by their observers. Some of these indicators and incidents could include:

- ✓ Different or unequal treatment of women candidates and voters by media covering an election

- ✓ The *absence* of women in election coverage, including lack of coverage of women candidates when compared to their male counterparts; this can compound other barriers they face in their campaigns.
- ✓ Perpetrating or amplifying psychological violence directly, including threats to or coercion of women voters, candidates or administrators.
- ✓ Portrayal of women with sexist or disparaging coverage—this can contribute to existing violence and has a more significant impact on women than on men.
- ✓ Biased portrayal of women, which can have measurable negative effects on women candidates' chances of being elected.

### Methods of Media Monitoring

Observers can monitor the media in one or more ways, depending on their resources and context analysis. Some examples of what a citizen observer group may choose to monitor include:<sup>85</sup>

- ✓ Traditional media, including newspapers, posters and advertisements, both online and printed
- ✓ Television and radio coverage
- ✓ Online social media networks
- ✓ Observers can monitor national media for a broader picture of any violence occurring, or focus on local media, for a deeper understanding of the violence and its impact.

With the advent and rapid growth of social media as a powerful forum for discussion and its increasing prominence in political life, observation groups may wish to consider a **sentiment analysis tool** alongside their observation. This kind of tool tracks media outlets and social media platforms for keywords and sorts positive, negative and neutral coverage; for example comparing women candidates to men. This allows citizen observer groups to identify patterns and topics that citizens or news outlets are discussing. Sentiment analysis can be performed on traditional news sources such as articles or opinion pieces published in local or national newspapers; it can also include analysis of social media networks and online discussion about candidates and topics important or related to the election. While social media is an increasing source for citizens to gather information and voice their opinions, it can also be a platform for hate speech, misinformation, abuse and harassment. These forms of violence are then further compounded by the anonymity and scale that online media platforms provide. By using keywords as proxies for violence, ICT<sup>86</sup> tools such as sentiment analysis can help observation groups draw correlations and build a more comprehensive

picture of VAW-E, including gauging early warning signs and any driving forces behind negative sentiment and VAW-E.

Each method of monitoring brings its own opportunities and challenges. Whereas bringing on a dedicated media monitoring firm or team can provide the most comprehensive coverage, it can also be expensive. Similarly, sentiment analysis can be less resource-heavy, but it requires observers to be very specific about the keywords they have identified as indicators of violence, and will require close attention to refining and developing those keywords to provide accurate and comprehensive monitoring. Because sentiment analysis tools draw heavily on social media content, this presents a few other challenges observer groups should keep in mind and plan for, including:

- ✓ Access to social media differs widely between and within countries, so it should not be conflated with an analysis of sentiment in a country *overall*.
- ✓ Social media users often disable geo-tagging features that would allow an observer group to pinpoint specific regions of the country where violence may be occurring, which hampers the group's ability to make actionable recommendations to policy makers.
- ✓ Many sentiment analysis tools have automatic sorting mechanisms, but these are generally keyed to English words, making it trickier to deploy those mechanisms in countries where English is not the primary language on social media.

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  [Guidance on Monitoring Media and Violence Against Women in Elections](#)
-  [Presentation: Monitoring Media and Violence Against Women in Elections](#)

### EXAMPLES

-  [Training for Journalists on VAW-E: Stop VAWIE, Nigeria](#)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections \(NDI\)](#)
-  [Handbook on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions \(OSCE/ODIHR\)](#)
-  [Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective: A Media Monitoring Manual \(International IDEA and UN Women\)](#)
-  [Media and Elections \(The ACE Encyclopaedia\)](#)

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: COMPOSITION AND APPROACH

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Since a citizen election observation initiative speaks for *all* citizens, its composition should reflect all the people of a given country, including women and men. Additionally, ensuring women's participation in an observation effort impacts whether it is effectively gender-aware in its methodology, including whether the way electoral violence impacts women differently from men is reflected. There are organizational and logistical decisions that have an impact on whether an observation effort achieves this. These include decisions around leadership criteria and composition of leadership structure and personnel, recruitment strategies, as well as content of codes of conduct and guiding principles for the monitoring effort.

## Citizen Election Observer Group Leadership and Personnel

There are several organizational approaches that domestic election observer groups can take. The most common difference is that they are either a coalition of various organizations whose members will work together to monitor elections, or they are a single organization (whether pre-existing or formed specifically for an election observation) with a focus on election monitoring.<sup>87</sup> Coalition structures can vary, ranging from a formal, unified single organization of groups to a loose, informal network that comes together only to observe an election. The chosen structure will depend on many factors, including the pre-existing structure and capacities of the observer group. (Readers can find additional information on how to make this decision in the toolbox resources for this chapter.) Whichever structure is chosen, the group must reflect the gender equality imperative of a democratic election in its decisions regarding leadership and personnel.

Election observer groups and coalitions should have a decisionmaking body, such as a board,<sup>88</sup> and a chairperson to direct strategic decisions about the monitoring effort, including what to monitor, how to monitor and when to monitor. Because the decisionmaking body will be responsible for determining the overall objectives and guiding principles of the observation effort, steps should be taken to ensure it has the right people with the requisite knowledge and experience to execute a gender-sensitive electoral violence monitoring effort.

## Gender equality and awareness in leadership structure

- ✓ The decisionmaking body (board, executive committee, etc.) should have a balance of male and female members, with approximately no more than 50 percent of either gender.
- ✓ A commitment to gender equality in all election-related activities should be a criterion for the chairperson of the executive committee.
- ✓ In situations where it is difficult to identify a chairperson (either a woman or a man) with the requisite knowledge and understanding of women's role in elections and electoral processes, require that the position be shared by a man and a woman.
- ✓ Require the participation on the executive committee of organization or coalition members (men and/or women) who have experience working for women's rights or women's priority issues to ensure the committee has members who can share knowledge of the barriers and opportunities women face.
- ✓ Include a gender expert to act as the gender focal point and focus exclusively on how election procedures will affect women's participation.

## Gender equality in staff:

- ✓ Gender parity should be a requirement for personnel recruitment.
- ✓ The staff of a citizen election observation group has a balance of men and women in leadership and support positions, including but not limited to:
  - » Administrative staff
  - » Field coordinators: It is important to ensure gender equality in this role because field coordinators impact recruitment strategy, which in turn has significant impact on parity in observers.
  - » Public information officers
  - » Logistics officers
  - » Social media officers
  - » Master and step-down trainers
  - » Ensure gender equality and knowledge is a criterion when choosing an executive director to oversee and manage operations of the election monitoring effort.
  - » Take into account the differences in barriers to and opportunities for participation between men and women when creating criteria for staff recruitment.

## Gender Aware Election Observer Recruitment Strategy

Once a citizen election observation effort has identified its leadership and core staff, it must recruit election observers. Observer recruitment depends on the type of observation being conducted. However, in all observations, it is essential to have a gender balance among the observers so as to remain credible as an initiative that represents all citizens. Men and women can face different barriers and opportunities to becoming an election observer, with women often facing significantly greater challenges, and these should be considered when developing a recruitment strategy. Additionally, violence against female election observers, either while observing or as a strategy to prevent them from volunteering, is a form of violence against women in elections that should be assessed at this stage and if it is preventing women from volunteering to observe, it should be addressed by the observation initiative.

“A gender balance equity should be respected at all the levels of the network. If not, this will communicate a bad message as an organization working on VAW-E towards the public opinion and the key stakeholders.”

– Anis Samaali and Manel Lahrabi, Mourakiboun election observation network, Tunisia

### A Gender-Aware Recruitment Strategy:<sup>89</sup>

- ✓ Will include an understanding of the material barriers women face to participating as election observers and incorporate that into the recruitment plan and criteria, including access to computers, phones, transportation and identity cards.
- ✓ Is prepared to address concerns of male family members and community leaders to gain support for women’s participation and counter social-cultural norms regarding women’s participation in public life.
- ✓ Will target women’s rights and women-run organizations, majority-female professions, market women and other entities and locations where women are traditionally present.
- ✓ Will include a gender quota requiring parity in observers and provide guidance on how to address challenges for filling it.
- ✓ Will take into consideration the barriers women face regarding freedom of movement, available time, access to education and previous political experience when determining the skills and criteria for observers.
- ✓ Will account for the fact that violence against female election observers may be used as a strategy by male family, party or community members to prevent them from volunteering,

- ✓ Will include mechanisms to ensure women observers feel and are safe when observing.

Potential differences to consider between men and women, along with steps observer groups can take to ensure their recruitment strategy addresses these differences and results in a balance of male and female observers, are expanded on in this chapter's toolbox.<sup>90</sup>

## TOOL BOX

### TOOLS

-  [Guidance on Gender-Aware Election Observation Recruitment Strategies](#)

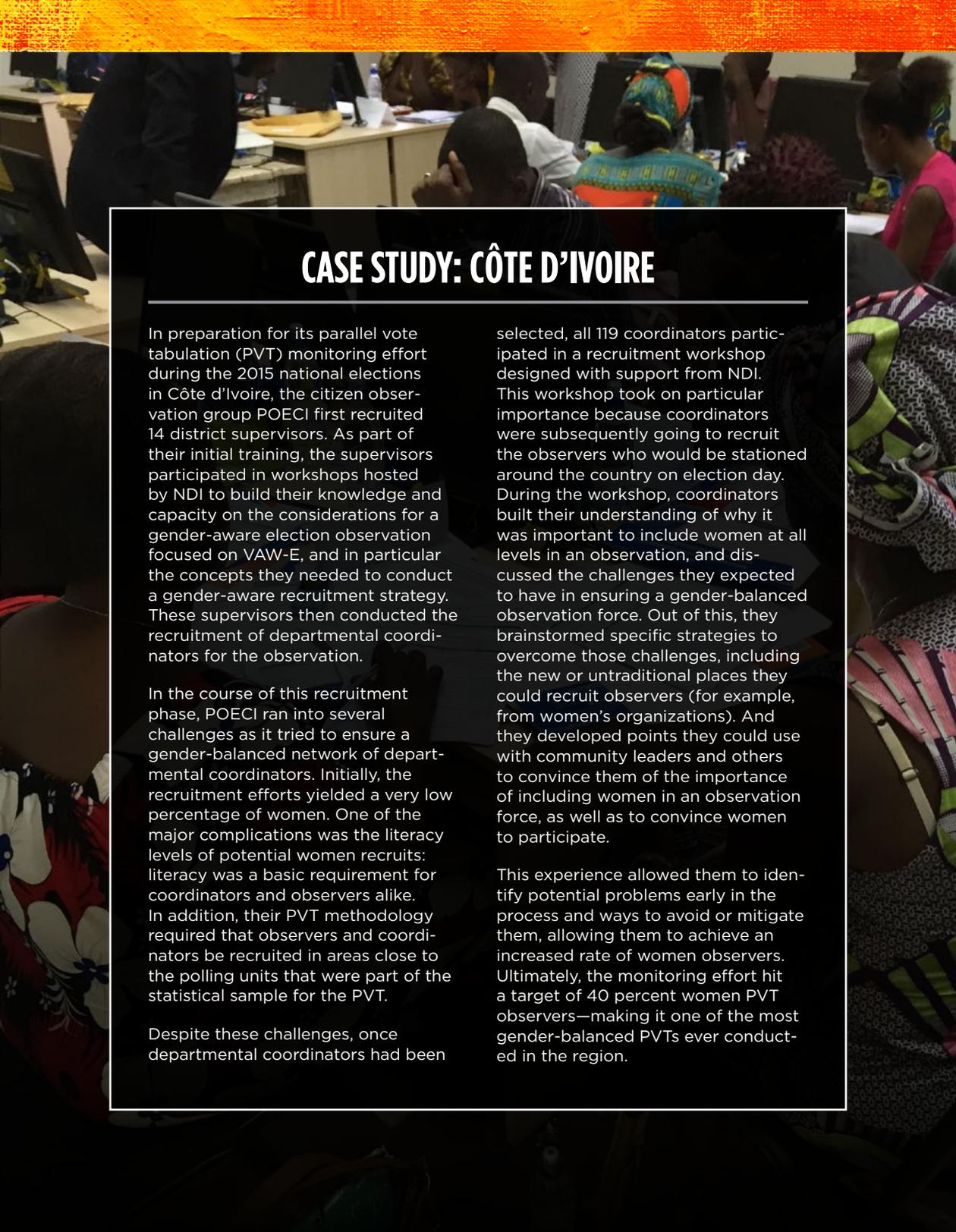
### EXAMPLES

-  [Sample Presentation for Training Recruiters: French](#)
-  [Sample Presentation for Training Recruiters: English](#)

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide](#)



The background of the page is a photograph showing a group of people, mostly women, in a workshop or training session. They are seated at desks with computers. The image is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the text overlay. The text is presented in a white, sans-serif font on a dark, semi-transparent rectangular background.

## CASE STUDY: CÔTE D'IVOIRE

In preparation for its parallel vote tabulation (PVT) monitoring effort during the 2015 national elections in Côte d'Ivoire, the citizen observation group POECI first recruited 14 district supervisors. As part of their initial training, the supervisors participated in workshops hosted by NDI to build their knowledge and capacity on the considerations for a gender-aware election observation focused on VAW-E, and in particular the concepts they needed to conduct a gender-aware recruitment strategy. These supervisors then conducted the recruitment of departmental coordinators for the observation.

In the course of this recruitment phase, POECI ran into several challenges as it tried to ensure a gender-balanced network of departmental coordinators. Initially, the recruitment efforts yielded a very low percentage of women. One of the major complications was the literacy levels of potential women recruits: literacy was a basic requirement for coordinators and observers alike. In addition, their PVT methodology required that observers and coordinators be recruited in areas close to the polling units that were part of the statistical sample for the PVT.

Despite these challenges, once departmental coordinators had been

selected, all 119 coordinators participated in a recruitment workshop designed with support from NDI. This workshop took on particular importance because coordinators were subsequently going to recruit the observers who would be stationed around the country on election day. During the workshop, coordinators built their understanding of why it was important to include women at all levels in an observation, and discussed the challenges they expected to have in ensuring a gender-balanced observation force. Out of this, they brainstormed specific strategies to overcome those challenges, including the new or untraditional places they could recruit observers (for example, from women's organizations). And they developed points they could use with community leaders and others to convince them of the importance of including women in an observation force, as well as to convince women to participate.

This experience allowed them to identify potential problems early in the process and ways to avoid or mitigate them, allowing them to achieve an increased rate of women observers. Ultimately, the monitoring effort hit a target of 40 percent women PVT observers—making it one of the most gender-balanced PVTs ever conducted in the region.

## Observation Initiatives Guiding Principles and Codes of Conduct

Guiding principles for an observation initiative must reflect the commitment of the effort to ensure that both men and women have the ability to participate in all electoral processes as observers, administrators, voters and candidates without fear of violence. Gender equality and women's empowerment should be clearly understood as the goal. This commitment should be reflected in the code of conduct that observers sign,<sup>91</sup> which ensures they act in a way that reflects the objectives of the observation effort. It is equally critical to reflect this requirement in the criteria by which personnel are removed.

### Codes of Conduct Should Include:

- ✓ A requirement that all observers behave in a respectful way toward each other
- ✓ A requirement that all observers must not commit acts of verbal or physical violence toward each other or individuals participating in the proceedings being observed
- ✓ 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 commitment to execute observation duties in an objective and gender-equitable manner, paying attention to the ability of both men and women to participate fully when recording and recounting on election proceedings

## ADDITIONAL DATA COLLECTION METHODS TO COMPLEMENT LTO EWS

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While domestic election observers must be willing and able to collect data on incidents and early warning signs of VAW-E, relying solely on observation to adequately track and document incidents can be challenging. This is due to the characteristics of VAW-E as a form of gender based violence and a form of electoral violence. As with other forms of GBV, it often takes place within the private sphere, such as inside a home, or in other protected spaces, such as political parties, which means that much of the violence occurring against women will not be within sight of an election observer. Additionally, this type of violence is often the result of gender discrimination and unequal power relations between the victim and perpetrator or between men and women,<sup>92</sup> thus creating significant barriers to and repercussions for reporting incidents of violence.

Below are some reasons why incidents of violence occurring in private or protected spaces are likely to go unreported:

- ✓ Such violence is viewed as a normal aspect of electoral participation and not something women can complain about; rather, it is viewed as something they have to endure.
- ✓ Victims fear retaliation from the perpetrator of such violence if they or anyone else report it, whether it is a male family member or a member of a political party.
- ✓ Victims don't think authorities will do anything about it if they do report it.
- ✓ The negative repercussion outweigh any benefits victims might get from reporting it.
- ✓ Victims may fear reprisal by their family or harm to their reputation if the form of violence they experienced holds a stigma, such as rape or other forms of sexual violence.
- ✓ When this violence is committed within the private sphere, the victim or witness may view it as simply another incident of GBV that women experience regularly, and as unrelated to the electoral process, even if it is aimed at controlling or stopping the victim's electoral participation.
- ✓ The victim may blame herself for the incident of violence and therefore not see any reason to report it.
- ✓ The victim may be embarrassed by the incident of violence, either because of the stigma attached to a particular form of violence (i.e. rape), or

because she thinks it will cause her to appear even weaker and unable to withstand the difficulties of electoral participation. This is especially true when the victims is a potential or existing candidate.

## Crowdsourcing

Bearing these constraints in mind, observers should consider additional methods of collecting information on VAW-E that can complement direct observation and improve data collection and rapid response. Crowdsourcing, including social media platforms, anonymous hotlines and SMS-based citizen reporting mechanisms, can be used by election monitors to augment their data collection on violence. Crowdsourcing has certain limitations that observers should understand if they are including it as part of a LTO EWS.<sup>93</sup> One challenge is that the information can be difficult to verify, especially if female victims experienced the violence inside their homes. Additionally, data does not comprehensively reflect the conduct of an election and reported incidents will have a bias toward negative incidents and areas of the country where citizens are better informed about the crowdsourcing effort. However, crowdsourcing has been shown to be a key method for overcoming barriers to collecting information on gender-based violence.<sup>94</sup> It allows victims or witnesses to report incidents that have occurred in private or protected spaces. It enables these reports to be made anonymously, thus removing the fear of retaliation by perpetrators or the fear of being stigmatized for being a victim of violence, especially sexual violence. Used in tandem with information gathered by trained observers, crowdsourcing can strengthen the effectiveness of VAW-E long-term observation early warning systems.

## VAW-E Hotlines

Methods for crowdsourcing data on VAW-E must be developed with an understanding of the best practices for dealing with victims of gender-based violence. Thus, as with systematic election monitoring of VAW-E, data collection should not be solely extractive but also provide referrals to victim services. This is why an in-person hotline is recommended. Having a trained person respond to calls, as opposed to other forms of crowdsourcing, such as text-in or online web forms, is one of the best ways to ensure victims receive care while still being able to trace the type, frequency and location of attacks. In some instances, it may be possible to partner with an already-operational VAW hotline with existing referral networks and trained operators. In many countries, however, such hotlines do not exist. Before establishing one, observer groups should meet with local women's organizations working on GBV or other women's rights issues to determine what services are already available to victims of VAW, including a hotline, and to ensure it is developed in line with established guidelines. Please see the chapter on early warning systems for additional information on establishing a referral

system for victims. Some general best practices for establishing a VAW-E hotline are listed below.

### **Key Components of an In-Person Hotline for VAW-E:**

- ✓ Hotline services must include the provision of information on available services such as temporary shelters, medical services including voluntary counseling and testing services, as well as legal protection.
- ✓ VAW-E hotlines should coordinate with existing rapid response mechanisms established to deal with incidents or signs of electoral violence, such as a UN Women Situation Room.<sup>95</sup>
- ✓ Violent acts against women can occur during the night so having a 24-hour hotline is crucial in documenting and preventing violence against women in elections.
- ✓ Hotline services should be free so that all victims can access them, especially since women tend to have fewer financial resources.
- ✓ Hotline operators should be trained in communicating with victims of violence.
- ✓ Extensive awareness raising and outreach should be conducted to ensure the public knows about the hotline and how to use it, including its number and purpose. If possible, observers can put up posters or other advertisements at polling locations or other election focal points where violence is likely to break out.
- ✓ Awareness raising regarding the hotline should be conducted with local and national election and security stakeholders who can follow up and take action based on the information, including police, community leaders, EMBs, political parties and polling officials. Ideally these relationships are already in place for the LTO EWS rapid response platform.

## CASE STUDY: NIGERIA

Although limited data has been collected regarding gender based electoral violence in Nigeria, it is widely acknowledged by the Nigerian population and the international community that women were disproportionately victimized by the electoral violence surrounding elections in 2011. In the lead up to the 2015 polls, women expressed a fear of violence as a deterrent to their participation as voters, election administrators and observers<sup>96</sup>. In addition, activity by Boko Haram—a terrorist group based in northeast Nigeria—has increasingly taken on a gendered dimension, contributing to an insecure environment for women that may not be conducive to political participation. The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), which monitored the 2015 Nigerian elections, for example, had difficulty recruiting women monitors due to their fear of violence in certain regions, particularly the north.

To improve understanding of VAW-E in Nigeria, NDI and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) organized a multi-pronged approach in the run-up to the Nigerian state elections in the autumn of 2015. Under the “Stop Violence Against Women in Elections” (Stop-VAWIE) campaign, FIDA and NDI designed an information-gathering effort that drew on focus group discussions and a citizen hotline, in addition to election observation data. The campaign informed policy recommendations and a report issued to legislators, civil society activists and other stakeholders that contributed solutions to mitigate and stop VAW-E.

The focus group discussions were held before the elections to inform the overall methodology and approach of the campaign. In these discussions, women candidates and voters shared their own experiences, as well as those of their women neighbors or fellow community members, identifying the kinds of violence they had faced and the ways their participation had been impacted. They reported sexual

harassment and assault, rape, intimidation, name-calling, hate speech, character assassination and threats from fellow community members. During the focus groups, they also shared their fear of violence against not only themselves, but also their loved ones. At the same time, they highlighted the role of traditional stereotypes, and the pressure placed on women by family or community members to conform and to avoid public life, reporting that this pressure, in combination with the fear of violence or repercussions, often dissuaded women in general from full political participation.

This information helped FIDA and NDI prepare the hotline, developing a reporting form and a methodology that best fit the context of the Nigerian state elections. The goal of this hotline was to ensure a real-time response by security agencies and other stakeholders to all reported incidents of VAW-E during the state elections. The hotline was a toll-free number, but the first hurdle that Stop-VAWIE faced was to raise awareness among citizens of the hotline’s existence, as well as its purpose. To do so, FIDA and NDI ran an awareness-raising campaign, publishing posters and communicating to citizens what the hotline was for and how they could use it. In addition, FIDA and NDI created a response mechanism for the hotline, delegating a small team to follow up on incidents immediately as they were reported. As the hotline was developed and implemented in several state elections, the Stop-VAWIE campaign leadership was able to refine and improve their methodology, which ultimately included protocols for verification, which ensured not only that the details of the reported incident and its impact were confirmed, but also that the appropriate stakeholders for victim response and support had been contacted—although the decision on whether to use any of the available services was left strictly to the victims of violence to decide for themselves based on their own needs.

## Data collection and storage

Information gathered through a hotline should be collected and stored in a database and categorized and tagged within the same taxonomy used for the LTO EWS, including by perpetrator, victim and type of violence. This is important for analyzing the information coming in through the two different methods of data collection. Although data from different methods cannot be combined, they can be used together for a greater understanding of the violence that occurs. Standard forms can be used to ensure operators always collect the same core data; an example of how this has been done can be found in this chapter's tool box.

### EXAMPLE: NIGERIA

During the 2015 elections in Nigeria, both the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) conducted observations in the state elections in Bayelsa and Kogi states. While the observation efforts by TMG and FIDA were entirely separate, and did not overlap, overall data was collected using three methods (which are listed below). Even though the methods were different, because TMG and FIDA used the same categories in their data collection, it is possible to examine all three sets of data to create a more complete analysis of the impact VAW-E had on women's participation in Bayelsa and Kogi.

Data collection methods:

**I. Critical Incident Forms and Election Day Checklists:** TMG conducted a quick count in addition to pre-election monitoring and incident reporting. The reports released by TMG were gender-disaggregated, and their observation methodology collected data on VAW-E in the pre-election period, election day and post-election period of the Kogi and Bayelsa elections.

**II. Hotline:** A citizen's hotline was set up at FIDA's national office, and a Stop-VAWIE desk officer was tasked with the responsibility of responding, verifying and documenting calls made to the hotline, creating a complete register of incidents reported by victims or witnesses calling in. While not systematic, the hotline provided snapshots of information about VAW-E, including the identities of perpetrators. According to information documented from the hotline, 60 percent of perpetrators of VAW-E were men, while 3 percent were women. VAW-E acts perpetrated by a group of both men and women comprised 37 percent. Categories of perpetrators based on the hotline data are further summarized in the table below:

Category	Family/ Community	Political Party	Political Thugs	INEC	Security Personnel
Percentage	19%	18%	26%	22%	15%

**III. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** FGDs were conducted by NDI in Bayelsa and Kogi states to gain an understanding of the different forms of VAW-E perpetrated in the private sphere and to generate baseline data for the project implementation. The reports produced by these discussions contained detailed information on past experiences women had themselves or witnessed, providing added depth to the understanding of how VAW-E manifested in Nigeria.

## Data verification

When possible, attempts should be made to verify reports coming in via a hotline, as they may lack the same level of quality assurance as those coming through trained observers. However, verification protocols should be developed with an understanding of best practices for ensuring victim safety. Some things to keep in mind when creating a protocol for verification of VAW-E hotline reports are:<sup>97</sup>

- ✓ Before calling a victim or witness back to ask for further information regarding the incident, operators should request permission to call them back and if so whether it would be at the same number or a different number. Operators can also ask the victim/witness if she would prefer to call the hotline back. This is to avoid the perpetrator seeing the hotline number on the victim's phone or answering the call when the hotline operator calls back.
- ✓ Before sending authorities or another observer to the location of the incident to verify and respond to it, operators should confirm that this is okay with the victim/witness.
- ✓ Once the operator has confirmed who will be responding and verifying, he/she should let the victim know who will be coming, if possible.
- ✓ Female victims of electoral violence are unlikely to make official reports to police or other security agents, so the lack of legal documentation should not be automatic proof of the absence of a crime.

## Focus Groups on VAW-E

Focus groups can also be used to enhance a citizen observer group's understanding of the way VAW-E impacts women's participation in a country's electoral process. In addition to providing a secure environment for participants to discuss the different forms, perpetrators and victims of VAW-E likely to occur in private or protected spaces, focus groups can also allow for a nuanced conversation regarding the contextual dynamics around this phenomenon, such as citizen attitudes on women's electoral participation and how this might lead to incidents of violence. When done in advance of an observation, this information can augment an observer group's ability to monitor and prevent the issue. It can also be combined with data from the LTO to contribute to the post-election analysis of the issue and the assessment of its impact on the election. Any information gathered in focus groups before and after the election would increase the ability of the group to design targeted interventions to combat gender-specific forms of electoral violence between elections.

## Goals for VAW-E Focus Group Discussion Before and After Elections:

- ✓ Discover the specific forms, perpetrators and levels of violence against women voters, aspirants/candidates, party activists and election administrators encountered during previous elections.
- ✓ Investigate the root causes of VAW-E and understand its potential impact on women's ability to participate in the electoral process as voters, aspirants/candidates, party activists and election administrators, as well as on the democratic credibility of the election.
- ✓ Understand potential triggers or warning signs of VAW-E that should be monitored.
- ✓ Gauge citizen attitudes about women's participation in the electoral process—especially male citizens—and their perspective on violence as an acceptable method to control women's actions.
- ✓ Understand masculine gender norms and how they impact men's willingness to use violence to protect their masculinity and prevent their wives/sisters/mothers from challenging it by voting, running for office or simply voicing an opinion outside of the home.
- ✓ Gain an understanding of women's perspectives on possible solutions to VAW-E.

If observers decide to use focus groups to complement other forms of data collection, they should familiarize themselves with the best practices for executing focus groups generally, as well as specifically regarding those aimed at gathering information on a form of GBV.



# TOOL BOX

## HOTLINE

### EXAMPLES

-  Hotline Intake Form: International Federation of Women Lawyers & Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies (World Health Organization)
-  Summary of Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies (Stop Rape Now)

## FOCUS GROUP

### EXAMPLES

-  Focus Group Moderator Guide: Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria
-  Presentation of Data from Focus Group: Stop-VAWIE, Kogi State, Nigeria
-  Presentation of Data from Focus Group: Stop-VAWIE, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
-  Focus Group Report: Stop-VAWIE, Kogi State, Nigeria
-  Focus Group Report: Stop-VAWIE, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

-  From Proposal to Presentation (NDI)
-  Conducting Gender-Aware Focus Groups (NDI)

# ADVOCACY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

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## Introduction:

VAW-E is not a new phenomenon, but it has received little attention until recently. There is currently a lack of understanding of the impact such violence is having on women's participation in elections and how it affects the democratic quality of the electoral process overall. Political stakeholders must be made aware of the phenomenon, and made to engage in pursuing actions to stop it. As with other forms of gender based violence, the lack of data not only contributes to a denial of the problem but an absence of actions to prevent it. Therefore, one of the first steps to eliminating VAW-E is to augment data on the extent to which it occurs. Better information on VAW-E will increase the understanding and acceptance of its impact on women's participation in elections and help to identify recommendations for specific actors to take targeted action to address it.

## Data Collection

Election observers have a pivotal role in this effort by developing country specific indicators and collecting data on the prevalence, form and impact of violence against women in each phase of the electoral cycle. By doing this, observers can begin to develop a baseline of quantitative data combined with qualitative case studies to support efforts to combat this phenomenon—as well as illustrate its broader meanings for women, politics and democracy within countries and around the world. Measured over time, such data will not only support the creation of strategies to address VAW-E but also allow for an evaluation of where progress has been made and what further interventions may be needed.

## Education and Awareness Raising

Citizen election observation groups can also contribute to the education and awareness raising necessary to prevent and respond to VAW-E. As these groups engage stakeholders as part of their needs assessment and response platform, they will disseminate the concept of VAW-E to give a name to these acts and raise awareness of their impact. Through their efforts, they can educate stakeholders—including community leaders, political parties, EMBs and the media—that these behaviors are not normal, but that they actively seek to prevent the political participation of women because they are women and that this constitutes a serious violation of international norms and national laws regarding democracy, human rights and gender equality. As these actors and institutions are those most critical for creating lasting reforms to prevent, punish and treat

VAW-E, initial pre-election and sustained engagement is a critical first step to post-election advocacy.

## Post Election

Following a successful LTO EWS program, citizen observation groups may want to continue to work on the issue of VAW-E. Observer groups can use the data they collected to identify specific steps and actors needed to stop VAW-E in future elections. Data collected in each country will reveal variations in the manifestation of the phenomenon that observers can take into consideration if they choose to make recommendations for change. In addition to proposing specific reforms, observers may decide to continue to advocate for these changes. Whether observer groups decide to continue in some capacity and play a role in promoting change, there are some key actors and institutions that should be considered when developing recommendations, including:

### Key Institutions:

- » Political parties
- » Election management bodies
- » Legislators

#### EXAMPLE: TANZANIA

Following Tanzania's 2015 national elections, the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform (TWCP) realized that despite the data it had collected during its thematic observation during the pre-election period and on election day, it had developed an additional interest in exploring why women had chosen not to vote. In particular, they were interested in specific reasons for that decision, and whether VAW-E had been a factor.

Since its initial thematic observation forms and methodology had not included this, TWCP developed a separate tool with which it conducted a post-election survey of women voters in certain constituencies in Dar es Salaam. The women who participated were first asked: "Did you vote?" For those who answered affirmatively, there were no additional questions.

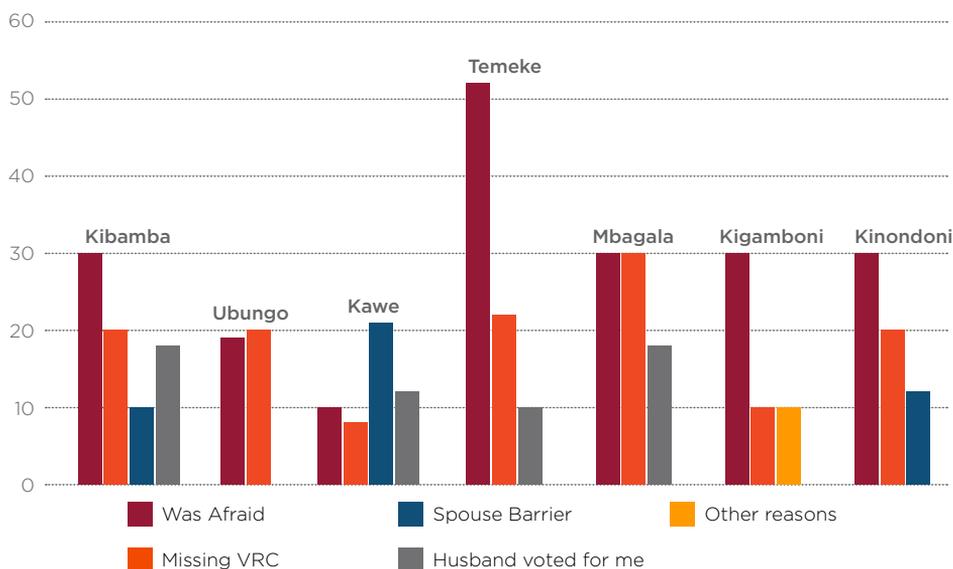
For those who responded that they had not voted, TWCP asked the reason. While the sample size was small, TWCP found that some women voters had experienced a form of VAW-E, including:

Fear of reprisal: Young men threatened women with violence who they knew supported a different candidate, preventing women from voting.

- Missing registration card: Some women reported that their voter registration card was missing. While TWCP's analysis does not draw direct correlations, they noted that in campaign meetings men were told that they needed to "control their wives," and that men who were not able to convince their wives to vote along their party's lines may have stolen their cards.

- Spouse barrier: In some cases, women reported that their husbands had forced them to stay at home on election day.
- Family voting: In some cases, women reported that their husbands forced them to pretend they needed assistance with voting, allowing the husband to vote for his wife.

### Reasons for not voting in some constituencies of Dar es Salaam



“It is very difficult for one to observe VAW-E using observation tools alone.”

–Dr. Ave Maria Semakafu, TWCP and Sextortion Coalition, Tanzania

### Post-Election Assessment

Observer groups should perform a post-election assessment of their monitoring efforts. This can give the group a clear idea of the effectiveness and impact of the observation so it can evaluate its successes, identify lessons learned and gather feedback from its observers and partner organizations to strengthen the organization and improve future observations. This sort of post-election assessment can be as formal or informal as the organization chooses, and can assess whether the group met its goals for the observation, including the success of its implementation of the VAW-E LTO EWS framework and methodology. More guidance on this can be found in this chapter’s toolbox.

# TOOL BOX

## TOOLS

-  [Guidance: Post-Election Assessment](#)
-  [Presentation: Strategies for Change](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-  [Law Against the Harassment of and Political Violence Against Women, Bolivia](#)
-  [Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Costa Rica](#)
-  [Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Ecuador](#)
-  [Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Mexico](#)
-  [Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Peru](#)

# CONCLUSION

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While violence against women is not the only barrier that women may face as they seek to claim full and equal political and civic rights, evidence increasingly shows the extent and severity of the threat it poses to the democratic character of a country. Too often, this violence is invisible, hidden either by assumptions that it is part of the normal risks of political participation, or because it occurs in private and protected spaces. While the causes, manifestations and impacts of this violence differ around the world depending on political and sociocultural contexts, it has a chilling effect on women's participation in the critical democratic processes of elections. It is a violation of their human rights and sends a clear message to society that women do not belong in politics.

Nonpartisan citizen election observers, in monitoring for transparency, accountability and inclusivity, can push back against VAW-E, making the invisible clearly visible and raising awareness of its appearance and impact—in particular through long-term observation early warning systems. All election observations should include gender-aware monitoring efforts that account for the different experiences that women and men have throughout election cycles. By including VAW-E specifically in these gender-aware observations, monitoring groups can develop initiatives that track and report violence as it happens as well as identify early warning signs to prevent it. Through outreach and partnership with other stakeholders, they can respond to victims and connect them with the services they need, and can increase accountability for perpetrators. Above all, they can build the global understanding of the issue, and work toward ensuring that all citizens in their country, regardless of gender, are able to participate in one of the most fundamental cornerstones of democracy.

# APPENDICES

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## KEY DEFINITIONS

**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.

**Sex:** Refers to the biological characteristic that categorize someone as either male or female. These characteristics are generally universal and determined at birth.

**Gender equality:** Equality means that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.

**Gender equity:** Provisions should be made to redress inequality before women can take advantage of the opportunities provided, creating equality of process and outcome.

**Violence against women:** 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.

**Electoral violence:** Electoral conflict and violence is defined as the use or threat of force to harm persons or property involved in the electoral process, with the intention of influencing the conduct of electoral stakeholders and/or to affect the electoral process. Electoral violence can be physical, psychological, sexual, coercion, or threats.

**Violence against women in elections** is defined as:

- » any act of gender-based election violence that is directed primarily at women, and that is a result of their aspirations to seek political office, their link to political activities (for example, 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 impact on women because of their marginalized and vulnerable status in society.



This violence can be specifically motivated to uphold gender norms or traditional female roles in society. Violence also impacts women in a disproportionately harmful way, discouraging them from being or becoming politically active during an election. VAW-E can manifest in many forms, which fall into five key categories: physical violence, sexual violence, threats and coercion, psychological violence and economic violence.

**Family voting:** when one member of a family casts votes on behalf of an entire family, or in some cases, where a family member places pressure on other members of the family to vote for a certain party or candidate.<sup>98</sup>

**Proxy voting:** when voters appoint a “proxy voter” to vote for them.<sup>99</sup>

**Gender disaggregated data:** Data that is gathered and broken down according to gender, in order to aid analysis of any underlying influences (such as gender relations) that may be reflected in the data.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

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AC: *Acción Ciudadana*

CEON-U: Citizens' Elections Observers Network

CIF: Critical Incident Forms

DKAN: a Drupal-based Open Data Tool

EWS: Early Warning Systems

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GWD: Gender, Women and Democracy

FIDA: International Federation of Women Lawyers

IFES: International Foundation for Electoral Systems

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

LTO: Long-Term Observation

NDI: National Democratic Institute

NED: National Endowment for Democracy

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

ODIHR: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OFACI: *Organisation des Femmes Actives de Côte d'Ivoire*

OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OAS: Organization of American States

PVT: Parallel Vote Tabulation

PACE: People's Alliance for Credible Elections

PTE: *Phan Tee Eain*

POECI: *Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire*

SBO: Sample-Based Observation

SMS: Short Message Service

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SQL: Structured Query Language

Stop-VAWIE: Stop Violence Against Women in Elections

TWCP: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform

TMG: Transition Monitoring Group

VAW-E: Violence Against Women in Elections

VAW-P: Violence Against Women in Politics

WAEON: West Africa Election Observers Network

WHO: World Health Organization



# VOTES WITHOUT VIOLENCE MASTER TOOL BOX

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### Additional Resources

#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics (NDI)

Presentation: Women and Politics (NDI)

Democracy and the Challenge of Change (NDI)

Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation (NDI)

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

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Annotated Bibliography: Violence Against Women in Elections

### Additional Resources

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation (NDI)

Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Observation Missions (OAS)

Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (OSCE)

Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence (IFES)

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Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (OSCE ODIHR)

Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation (NDI)

Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections (NDI)

Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation (WAEON)

The Quick Count and Election Observation: An NDI Guide for Civic Organization and Political Parties (NDI)

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What are credible elections? (Open Election Data Initiative)

Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections (NDI)

Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Electoral Observation Missions (OAS)

Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (OSCE/ODIHR)

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Presentation: Gender and election observation throughout the electoral cycle

Presentation: Gender and election observation, pre-election

Presentation: Gender and election observation, election day

Sample agenda for gender and election observation and VAW-E

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Training presentation: Gender and election observation during voter registration, Côte d'Ivoire (French)

Training presentation: Gender and election observation, Guatemala (Spanish)

Training presentation: Gender and election observation, Myanmar (English)

### Additional Resources

Integrating Gender into Election Observations (NDI)

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Presentation: Violence against Women in Elections, Election Day

Sample Agenda for Gender and Election Observation and VAW-E

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Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Election Day, Tanzania (English)

Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Myanmar (English)

Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Voter Registration, Côte d'Ivoire (French)

Training Presentation: What is VAW-E, Guatemala (Spanish)

### Additional Resources

Violence Against Women in Elections Overview  
Manual for Incorporating a Gender Perspective into OAS Electoral Observation Missions (OAS)  
Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (OSCE/ODIHR)  
Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (UN Women)

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Violence Against Women in Election: Pre-Observation Context Analysis  
Draft Agenda for In-Country Stakeholder Interviews  
Talking Points on VAW-E to Engaging Stakeholders

### **Additional Resources**

A Field Guide for Domestic Election Monitoring Groups in the Southern African Development Community: Planning for Election Observation (NDI)

## **Developing Gender-Aware Long-Term Observation (LTO) Early Warning Systems (EWS)** ..... 47

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Presentation: VAW-E Victim Referral Systems  
Example Guidance: Protocols for Election Day Incidents

### **Examples**

Response Protocol and Stakeholders: Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria  
Response Team Incident Report Form: Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria

### **Additional Resources:**

Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies (World Health Organization)

## **Releasing Information** ..... 61

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### **Examples**

Second Pre-Election Report: Acción Ciudadana, Guatemala  
Final Report: Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire

Final Statement: NDI International Observation Mission, Nigerian presidential elections<sup>100</sup>

Final Pre-Election Statement from State Elections: Transition Monitoring Group, Nigeria

### **Additional Resources**

Reporting Observation Findings: A Field Guide for Domestic Election Monitoring Groups in the Southern African Development Community (NDI)

Outreach and External Communication (WAEON)

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

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Sample Election Day Questions

Sample Post-Election Questions

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Pre-Election Observation Critical Incident Report: Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire

Monitoring and Incident Report Forms: Acción Ciudadana, Guatemala

Pre- and Post-Election Thematic Checklist: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, Tanzania

Election Day Thematic Checklist: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, Tanzania

State Election Quick Count Checklist: Transition Monitoring Group, Nigeria

Election Day Verification Box: Phan Tee Eain, Myanmar

Voter List Monitoring Checklist: People's Alliance for Credible Elections, Myanmar

### **Additional Resources**

Materials for Professional Election Observation: Designing Forms, Manuals and Trainings (WAEON)

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

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DemTool: DKAN

Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation (WAEON)

Presentation: Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation (WAEON)

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PVT Observer Training Manual: Plateforme des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation des Elections en Côte d'Ivoire, Côte d'Ivoire

Observer Training Guidelines: Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, Tanzania

Observer Training Manual: Acción Ciudadana, Guatemala

### Additional Resources

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide (NDI)

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Presentation: Monitoring Media and Violence Against Women in Elections

### Examples

Training for Journalists on VAW-E: Stop VAWIE, Nigeria

### Additional Resources

Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections (NDI)

Handbook on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions (OSCE/ODIHR)

Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective: A Media Monitoring Manual (International IDEA and UN Women)

Media and Elections (The ACE Encyclopaedia)

## Organizational Structure: Composition and Approach ..... 89

### Tools

Guidance on Gender-Aware Election Observation Recruitment Strategies

## Examples

Sample Presentation for Training Recruiters: French  
Sample Presentation for Training Recruiters: English

## Additional Resources

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide

## Additional Data Collection Methods to Complement LTO EWS ..... 95

### Hotline

#### Examples

Hotline Intake Form: International Federation of Women Lawyers & Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria

#### Additional Resources

Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies (World Health Organization)  
Summary of Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies (Stop Rape Now)

### Focus Group

#### Examples

Focus Group Moderator Guide: Stop-VAWIE, Nigeria  
Presentation of Data from Focus Group: Stop-VAWIE, Kogi State, Nigeria  
Presentation of Data from Focus Group: Stop-VAWIE, Bayelsa State, Nigeria  
Focus Group Report: Stop-VAWIE, Kogi State, Nigeria  
Focus Group Report: Stop-VAWIE, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

#### Additional Resources:

From Proposal to Presentation (NDI)  
Conducting Gender-Aware Focus Groups (NDI)

## Advocacy and Opportunities for Action ..... 103

### Tools

Guidance: Post-Election Assessment  
Presentation: Strategies for Change

#### Additional Resources

Law Against the Harassment of and Political Violence Against Women, Bolivia  
Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Costa Rica  
Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Ecuador  
Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Mexico  
Draft Legislation on VAW-P, Peru

## FOOTNOTES

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1. NDI. (2014). Three decades of working for democracy and making democracy work. Retrieved from [https://www.ndi.org/30th\\_anniversary\\_report/index.html#3/z](https://www.ndi.org/30th_anniversary_report/index.html#3/z).
2. UNICEF. (2006). Women and children: The double dividend of gender equality.
3. Schwindt-Bayer, L.A. & W. Mishler. (2005). An integrated model of women's representation. *The Journal of Politics*, 67(3), 407-428.
4. World Bank Group. (2014). Voice and agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity.
5. Barsa, M., Holt-Ivy, O. & Muehlenbeck, A. Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, gender and a sustainable end to violence. Institute for Inclusive Security. Retrieved from <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Inclusive-Ceasefires-ISA-paper-Final-3.10.2016.pdf>.
6. Women in National Parliaments. (2016 May 1). Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.
7. Bardall, G. (2011). Breaking the mold: Understanding gender and electoral violence; Krook, M.L. & Sanin, J. (2016). Gender and political violence in Latin America. Retrieved from [http://mlkrook.org/pdf/pyg\\_2016.pdf](http://mlkrook.org/pdf/pyg_2016.pdf).
8. Boone, J. (2010, August 24). Afghan elections: Record number of women stand for parliament. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/24/record-women-candidates-afghan-election>; <http://www.observer.ug/news-headlines/40441-how-fdc-woman-was-undressed>; Tuckman, J. (2015, March 11). Mexican mayoral candidate reportedly decapitated - body found on dirt road. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/11/mexican-mayoral-candidate-reportedly-decapitated>; Cologne elects stabbed candidate Henriette Reker mayor. (2015, October 18). BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34568236>.
9. Jacob, M. (2015, September 15). Two nabbed for election-related violence. *aI/Africa*. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201509151706.html>; Deyaa, R. (2015, October 18). Obstacles hinder women candidates in parliamentary elections. *Swat Masriya*. Retrieved from <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/details/4365>.
10. Smita Sabharwal: Indian 'eye candy' official sues Outlook. (2015, July 1). BBC. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-33341631>; Scores

of women 'divorced or abandoned' for voting in Tanzanian elections. (2015, December 8). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/08/scores-of-women-divorced-or-abandoned-for-voting-in-tanzanian-election>; Pakistanis rally after women barred from voting in local poll. (2015, May 12). *UCA News*. Retrieved from <http://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistanis%C2%ADrally%C2%ADafter%C2%ADwomen%C2%ADbarred%C2%ADfrom%C2%ADvoting%C2%ADin%C2%ADlocal%C2%ADpoll/73565>.

11. Violence against women in politics encompasses all forms of aggression, coercion and intimidation against women as political actors simply because they are women. It is defined by three distinct characteristics: it targets women *because* of their gender; in its very *form* it can be gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence; and its impact is to discourage *women in particular* from being or becoming politically active.
12. Electoral conflict and violence is defined as the use or threat of force to harm persons or property involved in the electoral process, with the intention of stopping or influencing the conduct of electoral stakeholders and/or to affect the electoral process. Electoral violence can manifest through psychological abuse, sexual threats, physical assault, threats and intimidation, destruction of property or assassination.
13. OSCE/ODIHR. (2009). Gender and early warning systems: An introduction, 9.
14. England, C. (2015, November 5). Female candidates face fierce, unfair fight in Myanmar's elections. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/nov/05/myanmar-elections-female-candidates-face-fierce-unfair-fight-cheery-zahau>.
15. For a detailed description of how to monitor participation in each phase of the electoral cycle, please see p. 48-83 of NDI's [\*How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide\*](#).
16. The following points are rooted in the concepts discussed in NDI's publication [\*Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections\*](#), which can be referred to for more information about each of the three areas discussed.
17. Including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the SADC Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections; see [\*Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections\*](#) for more information.
18. Including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the First Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,

- the Inter-American Democratic Charter; see NDI's publication, [\*Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections\*](#) for more information.
19. For more information, readers may refer to NDI's publication [\*Promoting Legal Frameworks for Democratic Elections\*](#).
  20. Renwick, D. (2016, January 19). Central America's violent Northern Triangle. Retrieved from <http://www.cfr.org/transnational-crime/central-americas-violent-northern-triangle/p37286>; OSAC. (2015). Guatemala 2015 crime and safety report. Retrieved from <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReport-Details.aspx?cid=17785>.
  21. Piette, C. (2015, December 2015). Where women are killed by their own families. *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34978330>.
  22. For a more detailed look at monitoring violence in an election generally, see NDI's publication [\*Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation\*](#).
  23. See the chapter on training observers for more details on how this could be incorporated.
  24. A step-down or "cascade" training is organized in a way that master trainers first train regional supervisors or trainers, who then travel back to their regions and provide the same training to local observers. More information on step-down trainings can be found in NDI's [\*Recruiting and Training Observers: A Field Guide for Election Monitoring Groups\*](#) and [\*Materials for Professional Election Observation: Designing Forms, Manuals and Trainings\*](#).
  25. OAS. (2013). Manual for incorporating a gender perspective into OAS electoral missions. Retrieved from [http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/pubs/manuales/Manual\\_gender\\_e.pdf](http://www.oas.org/es/sap/deco/pubs/manuales/Manual_gender_e.pdf).
  26. IFES. (2014). Gender equality and Election Management Bodies: A best practices guide.
  27. NDI. Elections. Retrieved from <https://www.ndi.org/elections>.
  28. OAS. (2013). Manual for incorporating a gender perspective into OAS electoral missions.
  29. For reference, general electoral conflict and violence is defined as the use or threat of force to harm persons or property involved in the electoral process, with the intention of stopping or influencing the conduct of electoral stakeholders and/or to affect the electoral process. Electoral violence can manifest through psychological abuse, sexual threats, physical assault, threats and intimidation, destruction of property or assassination.

30. Krook, M.L. & Sanin, J. (2014). Mapping violence against women in politics: Aggression, harassment and discrimination against female politicians. Manuscript under review.
31. This toolkit focuses specifically on LTO early warning systems, but a pre-observation context assessment will be important for an observation to conduct regardless of its methodology.
32. The VAW-E Assessment Framework should be consulted as the pre-observation assessment is developed in order to identify areas of investigation and research that are relevant for the particular phase, process and actors the observation is focused on.
33. Further information about pre-election needs assessments is available in NDI's publication, [\*A Field Guide for Domestic Election Monitoring Groups in the Southern African Development Community: Planning for Election Observation\*](#).
34. Data as reported by Mme. Fanta Doumbia, executive president of OFACI, during her testimony at NDI's *#NotTheCost* conference on violence against women in politics in March 2016.
35. Alihodžic, S. (2012). Electoral violence early warning and infrastructures for peace, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(3), 55, doi: 10.1080/15423166.2013.767592.
36. Alihodžic, S. (2012). Electoral violence early warning and infrastructures for peace, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(3), 56, doi: 10.1080/15423166.2013.767592.
37. NDI. (2014). Monitoring and mitigating electoral violence through nonpartisan citizen election observation.
38. OSCE/ODIHR. (2009). Gender and early warning systems: An introduction, 2.
39. UN Women. (2012). Gender-responsive early warning: Overview and how-to guide.
40. Saferworld. (2015). Gender and conflict early warning.
41. UN Women. (2012). Gender-responsive early warning: Overview and how-to guide, 1.
42. Saferworld. (2015). Gender and conflict early warning, 2.
43. Saferworld. (2015). Gender and conflict early warning, 10.
44. UN Women. (2012). Gender-responsive early warning: Overview and how-to guide, 1.

45. Saferworld. (2015). Gender and conflict early warning, 2.
46. This flowchart is based on the graphic and information included in OSCE/ODIHR's publication [Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections](#).
47. For further information, see OSCE/ODIHR's publication [Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections](#) and p. 1 of *Safeworld: Preventing Violence Conflict. Building Safer Lives*.
48. This is based on research on creating gender-sensitive early warning systems for non-election related conflict prevention, and tailored for an election observation effort to reflect what observers are able to do.
49. For more information, please see Alihodžić's [Electoral Violence Early Warning and Infrastructures for Peace](#); NDI's [Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation](#); IFES' [Gender Equality and Election Management Bodies: A Best Practices Guide](#); and IDEA's [Electoral Risk Management Tool](#).
50. Saferworld. (2015). Gender and conflict early warning, 1.
51. Gender-sensitive indicators can be signs that taken together or individually indicate the *existence of* or *potential for* electoral violence against women.
52. Saferworld. (2015). Gender and conflict early warning, 1.
53. OSCE/ODIHR. (2004). Handbook for monitoring women's participation in elections.
54. Alihodžić, S. (2012). Electoral violence early warning and infrastructures for peace, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(3), doi: 10.1080/15423166.2013.767592.
55. These are a compilation based on NDI's experience monitoring VAW-E in Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Guatemala and Myanmar, as well as those gathered by UN Women's [Gender Responsive Early Warning: Overview and How-to Guide](#). For further information, see p. 8 of this guide.
56. Alihodžić, S. (2012). Electoral violence early warning and infrastructures for peace, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(3), 57, doi: 10.1080/15423166.2013.767592.
57. NDI. (2014). Monitoring and mitigating electoral violence through nonpartisan citizen election observation.
58. There remains a lack of research and evaluation of what triggers are most critical to observe to detect potential, impending or ongoing VAW-E, so this list was developed based on research and analysis conducted by UN Wom-

en aimed at compiling gender-sensitive early warning indicators. NDI then tested some of them in our pilot observations and refined them based on our understanding of electoral violence. For further information, see UN Women's publication [Gender-Responsive Early Warning: Overview and How-to Guide](#).

59. These are a compilation based on NDI's experience monitoring VAW-E in Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Guatemala and Myanmar, as well as those gathered by UN Women's [Gender Responsive Early Warning: Overview and How-to Guide](#).
60. Gender-based electoral violence includes violence against women in elections and violence targeting women because of their vulnerable status.
61. Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. (1997). Preventing deadly conflict: final report with executive summary. As cited in Alihodžić, S. (2012). Electoral violence early warning and infrastructures for peace, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(3), 64, doi: 10.1080/15423166.2013.767592.
62. Including short- and long-term response, prevention, mitigation and treatment.
63. Groups should also plan for the additional resources needed to execute such reporting (for example, any extra funding, staff time, training or technical capacity necessary).
64. Information adapted from presentation given by Chitra Nagarajan, British Council; Gender and Conflict Adviser, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme. For more information, see Referral Pathways Tool.
65. These are country-specific, and observer groups should research and follow the relevant guidelines for their country. The World Health Organization has also published [international guidelines](#) for researching and documenting sexual violence, which are not specific to child protection but may also serve as a useful reference.
66. Information adapted from presentation given by Chitra Nagarajan, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme. For more information, see the Referral Systems Presentation in the tool box of this chapter.
67. Information adapted from presentation given by Chitra Nagarajan, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme. For more information, see the Referral Systems Presentation in the tool box of this chapter.
68. Data can be communicated to the public at large in various ways. There is additional guidance on this here in NDI's handbook [Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation](#), NDI publication [How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide](#) and the WAEON [Guide on Outreach and External Communication: A Field](#)

- [Guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network](#), including considerations regarding platforms for dissemination, such as how to use social media or print effectively.
69. WAEON. (2013). Systematic methods for advancing election observation: A field guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network.
  70. While this is from an International Observation Mission, which requires a very different methodology from a citizen observation due to its different scope and mission, it provides a good example of the types of things that should be assessed in a report, and the recommendations an observation report can make. The Gender Focal Point section is of particular relevance.
  71. See the chapter on additional data collection methods for additional information about crowdsourcing
  72. See additional guidance on information to include on forms when monitoring electoral violence in NDI's [Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observation](#).
  73. Please see more detailed information on each category listed here in the chapter on knowledge-building.
  74. NDI. (2014). Monitoring and mitigating electoral violence through nonpartisan citizen election observation, 30.
  75. WAEON. (2013). Materials for professional election observation: Designing forms, manuals, and trainings: A field guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network.
  76. Extensive guidance on crafting observation forms for each phase of the election cycle can be found in WAEON's [Materials for Professional Election Observation: Designing Forms, Manuals, and Trainings](#).
  77. Even simple data collection systems and organization can have a significant impact on the efficiency of an observation effort, and citizen observation groups should also refer to additional materials when designing them, including WAEON's [Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation](#) and NDI's [How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide](#).
  78. WAEON. (2013). Systematic methods for advancing election observation: A field guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network.
  79. For more information on building data collection systems, see WAEON's [Systematic Methods for Advancing Election Observation: A Field Guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network](#).
  80. WAEON. (2013). Systematic methods for advancing election observation: A field guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network.

81. WAEON. (2013). Systematic methods for advancing election observation: A field guide for the West Africa Election Observers Network.
82. See NDI's [\*How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide\*](#).
83. See the tools in this section for further information and guidance.
84. A step-down or “cascade” training is organized in a way that master trainers first train regional supervisors or trainers, who then travel back to their regions and provide the same training to local observers. More information on step-down trainings can be found in NDI's [\*Recruiting and Training Observers: A Field Guide for Election Monitoring Groups\*](#) and WAEON's [\*Materials for Professional Election Observation: Designing Forms, Manuals and Trainings\*](#).
85. For more information and detailed guidance on conducting media monitoring, please see NDI's [\*Media Monitoring to Promote Democratic Elections\*](#) and OSCE/ODIHR's [\*Handbook on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions\*](#).
86. Information and communications technologies
87. NDI. (1995). How domestic organizations monitor elections: An A to Z Guide.
88. Also referred to as the executive committee, board of directors, coordinating council or steering committee.
89. UN Women. (2012). Gender-responsive early warning: overview and how-to guide, 13.
90. These reflect the recommended decisions that must be taken when developing a recruitment strategy; for more information, see NDI's [\*How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide\*](#).
91. For further information, see [\*Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations\*](#).
92. Defining gender-based violence. Retrieved from <http://www.health-gender-violence.org/training-programme-for-health-care-providers/facts-on-gbv/defining-gender-based-violence/21>.
93. NDI. (2014). Monitoring and mitigating electoral violence through nonpartisan citizen election observation.
94. HarassMap is an organization that crowdsources SMS and online [reports](#) of sexual harassment and assault and maps them on an [online map](#). They use these reports to show people the scale of the problem and to dispel myths about, and excuses for, sexual harassment—for example, that “how women dress” or “sexual frustration” are reasons and excuses for sexual harassment. For more information, see: <http://harassmap.org/en/>.

95. For more information on Women's Situation Rooms, please see: <http://www.unwomenwestandcentralafrica.com/womens-situation-room.html>
96. Recent data released by an AfroBarometer study on Nigeria revealed that 20 percent of men surveyed were fearful of electoral violence, versus 26 percent of women surveyed.
97. See p. 2 of NDI's [\*Monitoring and Mitigating Electoral Violence Through Non-partisan Citizen Election Observation\*](#) for guidance on verification and data collection on incidents of electoral violence generally.
98. Adapted from "Consolidated Response on the Prevention of Family Voting," available [https://www.ndi.org/files/Consolidated%20Response\\_Prevention%20of%20Family%20Voting.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/files/Consolidated%20Response_Prevention%20of%20Family%20Voting.pdf)
99. Adapted from "Consolidated Response on the Prevention of Family Voting," available [https://www.ndi.org/files/Consolidated%20Response\\_Prevention%20of%20Family%20Voting.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/files/Consolidated%20Response_Prevention%20of%20Family%20Voting.pdf)
100. While this is from an International Observation Mission, which requires a very different methodology from a citizen observation due to its different scope and mission, it provides a good example of the types of things that should be assessed in a report, and the recommendations an observation report can make. The Gender Focal Point section is of particular relevance.







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