

VOTES WITHOUT VIOLENCE:

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

THE ISSUE:

Elections are a cornerstone of democratic governance by which citizens are able to express their will, choose the candidates they want to represent them and guide the direction of their country. 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 take place in private or public spaces, and manifests itself as persistent harassment, psychological abuse - in person or online - or as physical or sexual assault.

Violence against women in elections is a particular form of electoral violence, rooted in unequal gender relations and designed to prevent women *as women* from participating freely and in their own conscience in the electoral process. While its forms may vary, it is not bound by region or creed or political context. It 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, because it is rooted in gender norms, men's and women's experience of violence is different in intent, nature and impact. Where it occurs, the net result is that women withdraw from participating thereby undermining the integrity of the electoral process.

THE TOOLKIT:

For nearly three decades, NDI has worked with local nonpartisan citizen election observers around the world to mitigate violence and encourage peace. Observers play a crucial role in forecasting, monitoring, mitigating and mediating political conflict—including violence against women.

After working with citizen observer groups in a number of countries around the world to pilot a methodology for addressing violence against women in elections, NDI has built a set of tools and guidance on a variety of methods to use at different stages of the election cycle. This information is available in the 'Votes Without Violence' toolkit for citizen observers.

TOOLKIT

- **Manual:** Guidance for addressing violence against women in elections
- **Tools:** Practical tools & resources which can be used directly by observers
- **Website:** Data on the phenomenon that addresses the critical lack of information

voteswithoutviolence.org