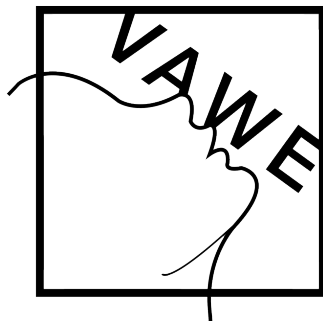# Violence Against Women in Elections Framework

Understanding that violence against women in elections (VAWE) is embedded in deep-rooted patterns of exclusion and that acts of VAWE are underreported, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) VAWE Framework offers a tool to interpret, document and analyze the presence of VAWE at a national level. Using best practices in field research, the VAWE Framework captures the complexity of VAWE and offers programming recommendations for ending it.

The guiding definition of VAWE is at the framework's core and draws upon definitions of electoral violence, violence against women, and examples from IFES' research into the acts of violence against women:

Any harm or threat of harm committed against women with the intent and/or impact of interfering with their free and equal participation in the electoral process during the electoral period. It includes harassment, intimidation, physical harm or coercion, threats, and financial pressures, and it may be committed in the home or other private spaces, or in public spaces. These acts may be directed at women in any of their roles as electoral stakeholders (e.g. voters, media, political actors, state actors, community leaders, or electoral officials).

The VAWE Framework flows from the project's research finding and includes the following elements:

- **Typology of electoral violence and VAWE:** Streamlined in 2018, IFES' typology (see below and on next page) expands the traditional categories of electoral violence monitoring and research efforts to encompass the nuances of women's experiences, including the distinct spaces, types, actors and impacts of VAWE;

TARGETS
- Political
- Institutional
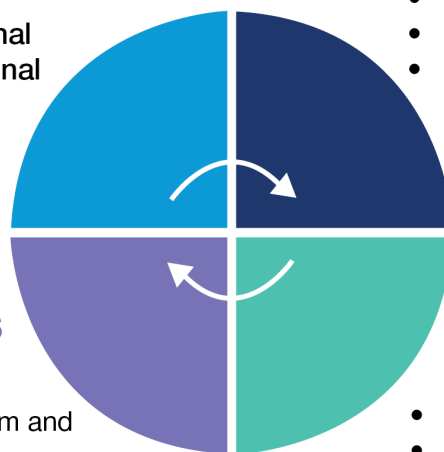- Professional
- Private

PERPETRATORS
- Institutional
- Non-state political
- Societal

FORMS
- **Physical**
  Bodily harm and sexual
- **Non-physical**
  Socio-psychological and economic

LOCATIONS
- Public
- Private
- Domestic
- Virtual

- **Assessment methodology:** The VAWE assessment tool allows practitioners to assess, map, and program in response to the risk or presence of VAWE based on four categories: the status of women, women's political participation, VAWE and responses to VAWE;

- **Monitoring methodology:** The monitoring methodology suggests new ways to gather trend and incident-specific information to better document and analyze VAWE. It can and should be used in any political context during all stages of the electoral cycle; and

- **Program recommendations:** The recommendations section addresses both using the VAWE Framework and improving other ways to reduce VAWE.

IFES also works to mitigate and end VAWE through its VAWE Online tool and VAWE Legal approach.

Types of Harm				
Categories	*Physical*		*Non-Physical*	
	Bodily Harm	**Sexual**	**Socio-Psychological**	**Economic**
Subtypes *Include but are not limited to:*	Murder/attempted murder, physical assault and injury, battery, maiming, wounding, etc. Also see online-specific forms (below)	Rape/attempted rape, sexual assault, intimate partner sexual assault, forcibly compelling a person to perform sexual acts	Intimidation, threats to victim or victim's family, verbal harassment, shaming, defamation	Denial/constant threat of denial of resources/services, unlawful control and monitoring of the use and distribution of monies and access to services (health care, employment, etc.)
Targets				
Categories	**Political**	**Institutional**	**Professional (non-state/non-political)**	**Private (non-state/non-political)**
Subtypes *Include but are not limited to:*	Candidates, elected officials, political aspirants (i.e. seeking nomination), staffers, party members and supporters	Electoral management body (EMB) permanent staff and poll workers, police and security forces, state administrators and civil servants	Journalists, civic educators, civil activists, community leaders	Voters, various private citizens (bloggers, university professors, politically vocal celebrities and pop culture figures, retired state people, etc.)
Perpetrators				
Categories	**Institutional**	**Non-state Political Actors**	**Societal**	
Subtypes *Include but are not limited to:*	State security, police, armed forces, government institutions (executive, judicial and legislative actors), electoral agents (poll workers, EMB staff, electoral security agents), and state proxies (milita, gang)	Candidates, party leaders, inter-party and intra-party members, paramilitary, party militia, non-state armed actors	Journalists/media, voters, community members or groups, religious leaders, traditional leaders, employers, criminal actors, intimate partners/spouses, family mmebers, electoral observers, youth groups	
Locations				
Categories	**Public**	**Private**	**Domestic**	**Virtual**
Subtypes *Include but are not limited to:*	Streets, political party headquarters, churches	Private homes, offices	The space between intimate partners, wherever they may be physically located	Public online spaces such as television, blogs, internet media, chatrooms, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram Private virtual spaces, such as personal e-mail, Short Message Service (SMS) texting, cellular and landline telephone connections