



DATA AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

Expert Group Meeting Report & Recommendations

4-5 December 2019 | New York, NY



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ABOUT THE MEETING

UN Women organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Data & Violence against Women in Politics (VAWP) from 4-5 December 2019, in New York, as a part of its ongoing efforts to tackle this issue.

As one of the key deterrents to women's political participation, VAWP has captured global attention. However, comparative data remains unavailable. Internationally agreed indicators and data collection methods to measure incidence or prevalence do not yet exist.

More than 40 experts attended the meeting, including academics, gender equality advocates, Members of Parliament (MPs), representatives of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and International Organizations (IOs), as well as UN agencies. The EGM helped map existing

knowledge tools, databases, and surveys as sources of data on VAWP, and facilitated the exchange of lessons learned, experiences, and good practices in data collection.

A follow-up EGM on data was a recommendation of the Violence against Women in Politics Expert Group Meeting in March 2018, organized by UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in collaboration with partners.

This report provides an overview of the 2019 EGM discussions and the priority actions identified in each session. It also provides an overview of key discussion points to inform future efforts to collect data on VAWP.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SESSION 1: Welcome and programme overview	6
SESSION 2: Measuring violence against women in politics	7
SESSION 3: Tracking violence against women candidates	10
SESSION 4: Monitoring violence against women in elections through election observation	14
SESSION 5: Monitoring violence against women in politics through political violence mapping and data visualization	17
SESSION 6: Data collection through state actors and national institutions	20
SESSION 7: Tracking violence against women officeholders and officials	23
SESSION 8: Areas of measurement for possible indicators	26
SESSION 9: Priorities, partnerships and next steps	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31
EXPERT GROUP MEETING PARTICIPANTS	32

ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEC	Central Election Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO	Civil society organization
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOP	Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation
EGM	Expert Group Meeting
EMB	Electoral Management Body
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INE	National Electoral Institute, Mexico
INMUJERES	National Institute for Women, Mexico
IO	International Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MP	Member of Parliament
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NSO	National statistical offices
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWE	Violence Against Women in Elections
VAWP	Violence Against Women in Politics

SESSION 1:

Welcome and programme overview

Dr. Sabine Freizer, Chief of Leadership and Governance Section, UN Women, opened the meeting by underscoring that the issue of violence against women in politics (VAWP) is a priority for UN Women. The organization has focused on increasing awareness and understanding of VAWP, as well as providing support to UN Member States to take actions that enable women to participate safely and freely in political life. Dr. Freizer cited VAWP as a top deterrent to equal participation in political life. In addition to structural barriers or lack of political will, harmful norms and stereotypes often fuel violence against women (VAW), including hateful speech, sexist comments or physical assault, all of which have a direct impact on women's level of participation in politics. Dr. Freizer observed that VAWP is used not only to intimidate the victim but also to send a message to other women: "you are not wanted here." Collecting reliable data and legislating acts of VAWP are critical to efforts to end VAW. Building strong partnerships and a community of practice on addressing VAWP in general, and data collection in particular, are necessary for achieving progress.

Ms. Julie Ballington, Global Policy Advisor on Political Participation, UN Women, provided an overview of the agenda and the content of each session.

As public debate on VAWP is relatively recent, only a few Member States have taken measures to address this phenomenon.¹ Such actions have included strengthening laws against domestic and gender-based violence (GBV), the introduction of legislation to prevent, prosecute and eradicate VAW, and providing assistance services to victims of GBV. However, these actions have not always addressed VAWP explicitly. A few States have adopted special laws defining the acts that constitute political violence and GBV, including actions that force women elected officials to resign.² Ms. Ballington noted that current challenges in tackling VAWP include the absence of commonly agreed definitions and measurement methodologies, which poses a barrier to the collection of statistically reliable and comparable data and, therefore, to the advancement of solutions through research, monitoring and policy and programming responses. Nonetheless, current measurement and data collection practices, such as surveys, hold potential for developing methodologies for monitoring VAWP, and there are also informative lessons learned from the development of VAW measurements and indicators. An integrated approach, strengthened through partnerships and common priorities that holistically measure VAWP through agreed standards and indicators may, therefore, be a compelling way forward.

“Data is a necessary game-changer in terms of identifying ways to prevent, protect, prosecute, and develop policies combatting violence against women, including in politics.”

—Dr. Sabine Freizer, Chief of Leadership and Governance Section, UN Women

¹ United Nations (UN), 2013a.

² Ibid.

SESSION 2:

Measuring violence against women in politics

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Violence against women in politics is a human rights violation that curtails women's participation in politics and electoral processes, yet global, regional, and national data on its prevalence or incidence is unavailable. The session provided an insight into current approaches to analyze and measure VAWP, explored commonalities between VAWP data collection and standard, global data collection methods on VAW more broadly, and identified gaps and opportunities to advance standardized data collection on VAWP.

MODERATOR:

Ms. Julie Ballington, Global Policy Advisor on Political Participation, UN Women

INTERVENTIONS BY PANELISTS:

Dr. Mona Lena Krook, Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University, noted how a public discussion on VAWP emerged organically out of women's experiences in different parts of the world. This led to a growing volume of evidence on VAWP over the years. The Human Rights Council Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice drew attention to VAWP in its 2013 report. The

report observed that “evidence-based knowledge” was weak on the “extent of violence against women in political and public life.” The report also recognized the impact that VAWP has on “women's capacity to exercise their right to political participation.”³

Through her research, Dr. Krook has identified four approaches used by scholars and practitioners to generate and analyze data on VAWP: 1) gendering existing datasets;⁴ 2) conducting original surveys;⁵ 3) collecting women's testimonies;⁶ and 4) analyzing social media.⁷ She found three main issues that stand in the way of measuring VAWP: 1) definition of violence (whether used in the context of electoral

“ There have been four approaches used by scholars and practitioners to generate and analyze data on VAWP: 1) gendering existing datasets, 2) conducting original surveys, 3) collecting women's testimonies and 4) analyzing social media. ”

—Dr. Mona Lena Krook, Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University

³ United Nations, 2013b.

⁴ See, for example: ACLED, 2019; IFES, 2011; NDI, 2016.

⁵ See, for example: Dalton, 2017; IPU, 2016; Smith, 2018.

⁶ See, for example: Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2012.

⁷ See, for example: Amnesty International, 2019; IFES, 2018b; Lucharodas, 2018; NDI, 2019; Rheault et al., 2019.

and political violence or in VAW discussions); 2) population covered (whether the focus is on women's experiences only or on women's experiences in comparison to men's); and 3) 'generalizability' (whether the aim is to generate broad conclusions or to capture women's experiences).

Dr. Krook argued that the phenomenon of political violence is issue-based because it aims at silencing a competing political perspective. VAWP, on the other hand, specifically seeks to silence women in politics and impede their right to participate in political life. Although there are some common elements between these two phenomena, according to Dr. Krook, it is essential to keep in mind that women may experience both political violence and VAWP, and often at the same time. Under such circumstances, it might be challenging to identify appropriate data sources and conduct an analysis of incidents/ experiences/ prevalence of VAWP separately from other political violence.

Dr. Juncal Plazaola Castaño, Policy Specialist on Violence against Women and Data, UN Women, shared knowledge on and experiences with data collection and measurement of VAW, particularly intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, and sexual harassment. Dr. Plazaola Castaño noted the availability of globally agreed data collection methods and indicators for measuring VAW, including safety and ethical standards, and the opportunity to use lessons learned from VAW measurement to identify potential data sources and develop data collection tools for VAWP. For instance, current international statistical standards on VAW mainly capture the prevalence of the phenomenon (the proportion of women who experienced violence) through population-based surveys. The forms of violence for which international standards exist are physical and sexual. Psychological and economic violence are measured with some degree of variability across contexts, as different definitions are used, and there are no globally agreed measurement standards for sexual harassment yet. The VAW questionnaires are act-based, focusing on whether a respondent experienced a specific type of violence, and their administration in the field requires extensive training and clear ethical and safety protocols. These surveys also explore the consequences of the violence on the women who experience it and on their communities; the factors that are associated with increased

violence and those protecting women from it; and the actions taken by survivors to cope with the violence, e.g., seeking help from the police or other support services.

In terms of the process for developing standards for VAW measurement, Dr. Plazaola Castaño highlighted the multi-country study undertaken by WHO⁸ that set the methodological and ethical standards⁹ for research in this field, the United Nations Statistics Division Guidelines for producing VAW statistics through surveys,¹⁰ and the set of globally agreed VAW indicators currently in use.¹¹ Dr. Plazaola Castaño highlighted that administrative records, particularly from services providing support to violence survivors, i.e., health, police, justice, and social services, are also an important data source to help understand the phenomenon, who seeks help, who does not, the characteristics of the incidents reported, state and non-state responses and their impact. However, globally agreed indicators and standards for the collection, analysis and sharing of these data across relevant sectors are not available.

Moving towards a standardized measurement of VAWP, a definition of VAWP needs to be decided on, as well as which information should be collected as a priority (such as forms of VAWP), what would be the best sources (e.g., surveys, incidents recording, etc.), and how the necessary ethical and safety standards can be ensured.

Ms. Ionica Berevoescu, Policy Specialist on Women's Political Participation and Data, UN Women, underlined the need to ensure consistency between data collection on VAWP and existing international statistical guidelines. Namely, data collection on VAWP needs to have a clear, user-focused objective, apply a human rights-based approach, respect ethical standards, enable bias-free data, ensure cost-effectiveness of data sources, and engage national statistical systems.

Ms. Berevoescu offered three potential areas of measurement for consideration: 1) person-focused (e.g., members of political office, candidates, aspirants, voters/population); 2) process-focused and event-based (e.g., elections, justice-seeking processes); and 3) content-focused (e.g., social media). Data sources could include surveys, administrative data, elections observation, and monitoring activities, crowdsourcing, and other big data.

⁸ WHO, 2005.

⁹ WHO, 2001.

¹⁰ UN, 2017.

¹¹ UN, 2010; UN, 2018.

Available studies of VAWP cover different types of populations, particularly parliamentarians, mayors, party members, or electoral candidates. The sets of questions used are act-based and include various forms of violence; however, they vary from one research study to another and may not be replicable in different contexts. Existing studies do not provide information about the process of data collection, particularly any efforts undertaken to avoid biases, ensure the safety of

respondents, and provide support and services to women who disclosed experiencing violence.

Ms. Berevoescu highlighted the need for developing a model survey questionnaire(s) for priority areas of measurement of VAWP building on existing guidelines on measuring VAW and existing research on VAWP, as well as conducting testing in different settings.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- While there is increased quantitative evidence of VAWP, the availability of comparable data at the global level remains a challenge. The absence of commonly agreed definitions and measurement methodologies represents a barrier to the collection of statistically reliable and comparable data.
- Information on VAWP is mostly unavailable in administrative records. Additionally, VAWP is often unreported by victims due to fear for their safety and the possible reveal of their identity.
- Surveys targeting women candidates and women elected officials are the main data collection method for providing reliable information on the magnitude of VAWP, its forms and risk factors. The research conducted so far underlines a few aspects:
 - Existing knowledge and standards for data collection on VAW provide a good reference basis for developing data collection tools and guidance specific to VAWP. Furthermore, ethical requirements for conducting surveys on VAW, such as ensuring respondents' safety and identity protection and having well-trained interviewers, need to be consistently applied in VAWP research as well.¹²
 - Small-size research samples have offered valuable insights on VAWP; however, they do not reflect the diversity of women in politics and their experiences of violence. Moving forward, it is important to use representative samples that enable meaningful analysis across different groups of women.
 - VAWP is often not recognized as a form of violence by women politicians but rather as a "price to pay for being politically active." In surveys, developing a questionnaire that captures different acts of violence and interviewer training on enabling information disclosure and adhering to ethical and safety standards are key to capture the extent of VAWP and its various forms.
- Violence targeting women in elections administration, women human rights defenders and civic activists is under researched.
- Advancing the measurement of VAWP requires strengthening alliances to maximize the use of available resources, existing knowledge, and practices among international and domestic stakeholders. Moving forward, involving national statistical offices (NSOs), national mechanisms for gender equality, electoral management bodies (EMBs) and the judiciary is essential for addressing VAWP at the national level. The media and human rights defenders can also contribute to VAWP monitoring.
- The 2019 ILO Convention and Recommendation on Violence and Harassment¹³ provides an opportunity to advance international tools on the protection of women politicians from violence in the workplace, including in legislative and executive bodies at all levels of government, and establish or strengthen enforcement and monitoring mechanisms in this particular work context.

¹² See for example: UN, 2017; WHO, 2016.

¹³ More information about the 108th International Labour Conference and new international labour standard to combat violence, harassment, at work, can be found here: https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/media-centre/news/WCMS_711321/lang--en/index.htm.

SESSION 3:

Tracking violence against women candidates

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Stigmatization, harassment, and attacks are used to silence and discredit women who are outspoken as leaders, including women candidates, and discourage them from exercising their right to vote and run for elections. Participants examined examples of existing research on violence against women candidates, considering how violence against this group has been measured in different contexts, various research conclusions, and lessons learned.

MODERATOR:

Dr. Jennifer Piscopo, Associate Professor, Politics, Occidental College

INTERVENTIONS BY PANELISTS:

Dr. Elin Bjarnegård, Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor at the Department of Government, Uppsala University, presented her research on violence against candidates in the Maldives, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, conducted in co-operation with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in the period of 2015-2019.¹⁴ Using candidate surveys and interviews targeting both women and men, Dr. Bjarnegård aimed to identify when violence against women candidates occurred, and whether the forms of violence were gendered. Gendered forms of violence were distinguished from gendered motives and gendered impact.¹⁵ The candidate survey was designed to capture forms of violence and assess whether they were gendered. Determining the perpetrator motive based on a candidate survey is difficult.

The survey revealed that women candidates were exposed to both physical and psychological violence, including negative verbal attacks with sexual connotations used to negatively impact women's pathways into politics by compromising their reputations. For example, women candidates interviewed in the Maldives study expressed that they understood political violence as the "use of physical force." Psychological violence such as degrading talk with sexual connotations were frequent and often considered as a necessary price to pay for being in politics, to the extent that they were not mentioned unless explicitly asked about. When considering a continuum of violence,¹⁶ Dr. Bjarnegård found that libel, rumors and threats represented an issue for many candidates; however, they are often not captured in studies of electoral violence. While libel was a problem for both women and men, libel of a sexual nature was used more against women in all three contexts. In the Maldives, for instance, sexual libel and threats were widely used against women candidates (compared to men), which severely damaged their reputations and therefore reduced their

¹⁴ IFES, 2018a.

¹⁵ Bardall et al., 2019.

¹⁶ Kelly, 1987.

chances to win elections. On the other hand, men candidates were more likely to experience religious attacks/rumors (e.g., accusations of being terrorists).

Interviewers were required to explain the questions and make them relevant to the context, especially because of the normalization and frequency of violence in some contexts, where interviewees often did not consider psychological forms of violence important enough to mention, as they happened every day. With this in mind, Dr. Bjarnegård concluded that the prevalence of psychological forms of violence is most likely underestimated and, thus, so is the prevalence of election violence that women candidates experience. It is, therefore, highly relevant for interviewers to be well trained to explain to respondents the acts that constitute violence on a continuum.

Identifying a representative sample of the interviewees can represent a challenge too, particularly when it is rare for women to participate in elections. When the sample is small (e.g., only five women MPs in the country), it is hard to guarantee anonymity. When looking into which forms of violence are reported by election observers, Dr. Bjarnegård found that women observers in Myanmar tended to report sexualized attacks more frequently than male observers. To get a more complete picture of VAWP, Dr. Bjarnegård suggested asking candidates first-hand questions about experiences (not just indirect reports); inquiring explicitly about the continuum of forms of violence used; and talking to both women and men, as well as victims and non-victims, to understand better the extent and gendered nature of the violence.

““ *The absence of data does not mean the absence of the problem.* ””

—Dr. Gabrielle Bardall, Research Associate with the Center for International Policy Studies at the University of Ottawa

Dr. Gabrielle Bardall, Research Associate, Center for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa, has found in her research that women candidates are a specific, relatively easy-to-define group of women in politics who are often the most visible and at-risk targets of violence against women in elections (VAWE). However, the lack of sex-disaggregated information on candidates, typically collected by EMBs, represents a challenge in defining a sample frame, selecting a sample of respondents/research subjects, and identifying and reaching out to targeted research subjects. Identifying women who are aspirants or not yet officially registered candidates is additionally challenging, though some information may be available from political parties. Another major obstacle in measuring VAWP is the absence of an agreed, common framework for political violence data collection. When Dr. Bardall attempted to collect data on instances of political violence in Burundi from several organizations in 2015, the different methodologies used by different organizations to track acts of political violence resulted in significantly different findings.

To measure and understand VAWP, Dr. Bardall suggested looking into its frequency, prevalence, and impact, and

using quantitative and qualitative methods to look into four aspects of VAWP: 1) targets, 2) perpetrators, 3) forms, and 4) locations.

Dr. Bardall also raised the issue of online VAWP. Accessing big data collected by social media companies is particularly challenging as they prefer not to disclose them. However, she noted specific aspects of online VAWP that need to be measured. These would include, for example, the speed of dissemination of online violence (as attacks against women tend to go viral more often than attacks against men), and its intensity (women receive higher rates of death and rape threats and threats of other kinds of physical harm to themselves, their children, families and supporters) and type (women tend to face more intense forms of violence). Measuring online violence over time is also important because women often face more sustained levels of online abuse. This requires considering multiple cyberspheres, the transborder impact, and risk factors such as the candidate's profile, electoral system, and quota design. Distinguishing types of perpetrators and types of violence or sexual threats of a physical nature from those of a 'moral' nature need to be considered as well.

Dr. Juliana Restrepo Sanin, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Florida, shared lessons learned and findings from a 2016 survey on VAWP experienced by women candidates in Colombia.¹⁷ Although the survey intended to capture violence experienced by both elected and unelected candidates, most of the 166 women respondents were from among those elected for office, as unelected women were difficult to track. The study included women who were elected for local councils, state assemblies, and the national congress, as well as women mayors. The survey questions focused on types of violence women politicians experienced during the campaign period or while in office. The survey results showed that, in most cases, perpetrators of violence were colleagues from the same institution (47 per cent) or the same political party (34 per cent). The use of semi-otic violence against women candidates (understood as the use of language, images, and other symbols as a means to marginalize, undermine and exclude women as political actors) dominated compared to other forms of VAWP. This type of violence was often used in combination with physical violence or threats.¹⁸ Sixty-three per cent of survey respondents said they were victims of specific violent acts (selected from a list provided by the survey, which means this proportion could be higher). Women mayors reported that the actions were perpetrated by regular citizens (85.7 per cent) or members of the city council (42.86 per cent). The results also show that the violence is multisided and women are attacked simultaneously by colleagues, members of their party, citizens, and/or public servants. The respondents also acknowledged their fears to report violence due to lack of trust in

the justice system and the police. Additionally, as men from the same parties often perpetrated VAWP, women decided not to report those cases to the party leadership.

Ms. Edita Miftari, Governance and Leadership Coordinator, UN Women Country Office, Bosnia and Herzegovina, presented findings from the first study on VAWP in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), conducted in 2019, with the support of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.¹⁹ The study examined the forms of VAWP used against women politicians in BiH using a survey questionnaire and follow-up in-depth interviews. The questionnaire was widely distributed online and through political parties and legislative/deliberative bodies of all levels of government; however, only 83 women responded, pointing to a lack of systematic distribution of information within parties and government bodies, women's restricted access to information, as well as women's hesitation to share their experiences of GBV.

Of the 83 respondents to the online questionnaire, 60.2 per cent indicated that they had experienced some form of violence throughout their engagement in politics, with psychological violence being the most prevalent form. Nearly all respondents (96.4 per cent) considered verbal and emotional abuse as the most common form of VAWP. Survey respondents indicated that the internet is the main channel for perpetrating psychological violence, and women politicians are frequently victims of online violence, occurring most commonly in the form of misogynistic and sexualized threats.

“ Women politicians are often victims of multiple forms of violence committed by different perpetrators, such as party leaders and colleagues, political opponents, or citizens at the same time. Non-violent actions are also used as reminders of possible violence, such as threats, calls, or messages women receive, making an impact on their participation in politics. ”

—Dr. Juliana Restrepo Sanin, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Florida

¹⁷ Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2016.

¹⁸ Krook, forthcoming.

¹⁹ Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Underreporting by women candidates and aspirants is a major obstacle in understanding the extent and nature of VAWP, and results from the stigma attached to GBV, fear of political or personal retaliation and lack of trust in justice system that should otherwise protect women candidates' political rights. Political parties often discourage women from formally reporting violence; however, they could help increase trust in their institutional response to VAWP by, for example, setting up internal procedures and mechanisms to address VAWP when reported. Furthermore, holding open discussions about VAWP among women politicians can help them more easily identify what constitutes VAWP and encourage them to share their experiences across party-lines and stand together against VAWP.
- Surveys and in-depth interviews can be designed to create a safe space for women to open up about their experiences of violence and offer candid responses, helping to identify more reliable measures of VAWP.
- VAWP can manifest before and after electoral periods, so it is critical to look into it as a continuum, and capture the violence experienced by both women candidates and women aspirants. However, it is important to recognize the challenges of capturing the magnitude of the violence, as researchers cannot assume that all candidates and aspirants are easily identified, reachable, or willing to share their experiences.
- Similarly, it is important to look into the continuum of online VAWP, its forms, speed of dissemination and viral nature as they have a profound impact on women's political participation. An efficient response to online VAWP requires considering multiple cyber-spheres and their transborder impact as perpetrators can be residing outside of the target's country.
- Currently, there is a lack of standards of data collection on VAWP, including model questions. The research on VAWP conducted so far employed different methodologies. Therefore, it is challenging to compare results. Developing a repository of survey instruments and lessons learned from conducting surveys, including methodological limitations and challenges, would be useful to inform the development of models or standards of data collection in the future.

SESSION 4:

Monitoring violence against women in elections through election observation

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Available research indicates that women are frequent targets of violence throughout the electoral process, including at home or during civic engagement activities. They may be punished for expressing their political choices or intimidated into voting against their convictions, including through family voting. These acts of violence may be among those that are or could be tracked by independent observers. Experts discussed current practices of both international and domestic election observers, as well as main challenges in collecting data on VAWE.

MODERATOR:

Ms. Soulef Guessoum, Regional Advisor on Political Participation, UN Women Regional Office, West and Central Africa

INTERVENTIONS BY PANELISTS:

Ms. Caroline Hubbard, Deputy Director for Women, Gender, Democracy, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), presented NDI's approach to electoral observation and challenges in tackling VAWP. To capture data and information on VAWP in its programmes, NDI focuses on ensuring consistency from data collection to data analysis. To develop a global picture of VAWP, NDI is looking at types, perpetrators, persons affected, and impact on democracy. NDI's methodology has developed common categories and critical variables as well as standard analysis frameworks for the organization's efforts in collecting and

organizing data, so data findings are not interpreted subjectively in different countries or by different colleagues or partners. For example, in 2017, during the Liberian national elections, NDI developed checklists for the domestic election observers, which included relevant VAWE questions. The use of the checklist provided a framework for observers to report on 140 (violent and non-violent) incidents. The observers classified 13 per cent (18 cases) as incidents of VAW, including episodes of intimidation, harassment, threats and physical violence.

While some progress in data collection through election observation can be observed, according to Ms. Hubbard, there are still issues that need to be addressed. For example, donors, practitioners and country partners often do not view VAWE as integral to assessing the quality of elections. Also, citizen observers need significant training and support to monitor VAWE, as there is a lack of gender

“ In some contexts, limited access to electricity, poor infrastructure, lower proficiency with computers and heavy reliance on hard copy materials, and low literacy rates among local election observers represent some of the challenges for data collection on VAWP and VAWE through election observation. ”

—Ms. Caroline Hubbard, Deputy Director for Women, Gender, Democracy,
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)

expertise among election experts and observers. There is no coordination around data collection methodology or aggregation of data for comprehensive analysis among organizations conducting election observation, and data collection can be hampered by basic logistical challenges, such as poor infrastructure. Ms. Hubbard also noted the difficulty of capturing violence that is “not so visible” and that happens inside the home or behind closed doors in political parties. In this case, there is a need to complement quantitative data collection with focus groups, interviews and other methods, such as incident tracking through hotlines or self-reporting tools.

The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DOP) and its Guidelines on Integrating Gender Considerations in International Observation adopted in 2018 may represent an entry point for monitoring VAWE. The guidelines include a focus on VAWE to ensure that international observation missions bring attention to the issue and integrate strategies for monitoring it effectively. This document is crucial for adding pressure to incorporating gender considerations into international election observation mission methodologies, public statements, and recommendations, which could pave the way for systematizing data collection through election observation.

Ms. Hubbard underscored the need to investigate online violence that targets women, as it often leads to their withdrawal from public discourse and undermines the right to free speech. Gathering evidence of the chilling effect that this has on women’s engagement in politics and online political discourse has been one of NDI’s priorities.²⁰ Ms. Hubbard recommended agreeing on an observation methodology that aligns data collection from social media with physical election observation, so that it feeds into an overall assessment of VAWE’s impact on elections.

Ms. Avery Davis-Roberts, Associate Director, Democracy Program, Carter Center, noted that the recommendations on election observation from the 2018 Expert Group Meeting on VAWP remain useful for considering how to improve electoral observation activities from a data collection perspective. In general, Ms. Davis-Roberts has observed that election observation reports seldom con-

tain recommendations related to VAW issues, including VAWP. An informal analysis of recommendations of the largest international election observation organizations, who have expressed interest in and a commitment to collecting data on VAWP (including those on this panel) from the last several years indicates that work remains to be done to ensure consistency of approach. To address this, she suggested training staff working on electoral observations to report on VAWE, using a small set of standard indicators. Promoting the practice of issuing pre- and post-election recommendations related to addressing VAWE should be prioritized by organizations and groups who monitor and report on elections. Based on recent Carter Center experience, she suggested that supplementary post-election thematic reports on VAWE that include quantitative and qualitative data could be published to share accessible information with other actors interested in publishing such data. She also underlined the vital roles that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR),²¹ reporting to the CEDAW committee, reporting process and UN Spe-

HOW ELECTION OBSERVATION INSTITUTIONS INTEGRATE VAWE MONITORING INTO THEIR WORK:

- Add questions on VAWE to existing election observation data collection checklists.
- Specifically instruct long-term observers (typically engaged several weeks in advance of an election) to speak to women candidates, their staff, women political party members and EMB officials.
- Interview women who have withdrawn from electoral processes to understand why they did so.
- Disaggregate all data by sex to identify potential gender impacts of all election aspects.
- Use existing tools to collect data on VAWE (e.g. International IDEA’s Electoral Risk Management Tool, Carter Center’s Election Standards) to integrate VAWE questions.

Source: Ms. Avery Davis-Roberts, Carter Center, Violence against women in politics: Expert Group Meeting report and recommendations, UN Women, 2018

²⁰ NDI, 2019.

²¹ The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

cial Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences can play in raising the issue of VAWP with governments.

Ms. Raja Jabri, Member of the Board of Mourakiboun, a Tunisian national electoral observation network, shared her organization's experience on advancing women's participation in elections in the country, including by adding a gender perspective into their observation methodology. After analyzing the 2011 elections, Mourakiboun took note of the low participation of women in voting, particularly those from rural areas. Mourakiboun directly observed cases of women voters being intimidated by their husbands at the polling stations. In the case of women candidates, the organization noted the prevalence of online threats and insults in comparison to acts of physical violence. Observers noted several instances of verbal violence directed towards women polling staff. Mourakiboun found that women voters were exposed to violence with political, social and economic dimensions, linked to existing structural inequalities that make women vulnerable to violence and prevent them from realizing their political rights. By conducting focus group discus-

sions, Mourakiboun learned that women did not vote for several reasons: many did not have the necessary identity documents, while others were denied money to travel to a polling station if they were supporting a candidate other than those preferred by the men in their families.

In response, Mourakiboun assisted around 300 women with obtaining identity documents and provided them with civic education opportunities to learn about the importance of participating in the electoral process. While this represented only a small group of women, Ms. Jabri noted how the findings of the focus groups led to a deeper understanding of data collection on violence against women voters, including the importance of taking into account economic, social, cultural, and financial aspects of their circumstances and experiences in future elections. She also underlined the need for co-operation between civil society organizations (CSOs) and electoral stakeholders in data collection on VAWP. Ms. Jabri noted that several Tunisian organizations are collecting data on online violence, but they all use different methodologies, which leads to incomparability of data.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Election observation reports can help reveal structural barriers to women's participation, including VAWP, and provide concrete recommendations to governments to remedy them.
- Election observation activities are well placed to record incidents of VAWP and may generate information on the frequency of these events in the contexts observed (for instance, during the nomination period, during specific campaign events, at specific voting polls, etc.). While the resulting statistics typically cannot be used beyond the context observed or be considered representative of the entire electoral process covered, they nevertheless can be used to advocate for government action on VAWP.
- The use of common observation and monitoring frameworks with agreed indicators and points of measurement by both domestic and international election observation organizations is key in consistently identifying the electoral hot spots with high levels of VAWP. In this context, it is important that organizations such as NDI and Carter Center continue working with CSOs and domestic observers on harmonizing indicators and data collection on VAWP through election observation.
- Organizations conducting electoral observation should prioritize gender-related concerns in their recommendations, and in particular those related to VAWP and VAWP. Therefore, building capacities of both international and domestic observers on recognizing and reporting VAWP and VAWP is crucial.
- The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DOP) and its Guidelines on Integrating Gender Considerations in International Observation from 2018 offers an entry point to strengthening the gender-sensitive approach of election observers, including on issues such as VAWP and VAWP.

SESSION 5:

Monitoring violence against women in politics through political violence mapping and data visualization

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Crowd-sourced data holds the potential to monitor instances of VAWE, especially if the data is disaggregated by sex or if specific types of VAW are tracked during the electoral period. The session explored ways organizations are collecting data on political violence using a gender-sensitive approach. Participants deliberated on ways crowd-sourced data and open source data visualization tools can provide a platform for tracking VAWP and capturing its magnitude.

MODERATOR:

Dr. Gabrielle Bardall, Research Associate, Center for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa

INTERVENTIONS BY PANELISTS:

Ms. Levinia Addae-Mensah, Program Director/ Deputy Executive Director, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), presented on the work done by her organization,²² noting that WANEP does not have a specific focus on VAWE. Nevertheless, the organization integrated a gender perspective into its early warning programme that focuses on monitoring and mitigation of electoral violence. WANEP established online systems to monitor instances of political violence at national and regional levels. It uses gender-specific and gender-sensitive indicators to adequately capture political violence directed toward women. To gain insight into the continuum of

political violence, WANEP starts looking at instances of violence one year before elections take place. A standardized monitoring methodology is adjusted to each country context, which helps identify country-specific indicators. Each country has an online profile and staff appointed as monitors. To collect data, WANEP relies on situation and incident data submitted through a mobile application.

When it comes to data analysis, WANEP first disaggregates data by sex and then further into sub-categories of women and men based on their sociodemographic characteristics, which helps reveal how they may experience violence differently. Ms. Addae-Mensah raised concerns about growing instances of violence directed toward young women, as one example. Once data is collected and reports are prepared, WANEP makes sure their findings and recommendations

²²West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is a regional peacebuilding organization, founded in 1998, that promotes collaborative approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, working with diverse actors from civil society, governments, intergovernmental bodies, women groups and other partners to establish a platform for dialogue, experience sharing and learning, thereby complementing efforts to ensure sustainable peace and development in West Africa and beyond.

also include a gender analysis. In the area of VAWP, WANEP collects data on:

- incidents of threats,
- threats of physical violence,
- kidnapping,
- physical abuse,
- sexual abuse,
- demanding sexual favours,
- harassment,
- hate speech, and
- economic violence.

This list is adjusted to each country context. Capturing situations and incidents through gender-sensitive indicators has helped the organization predict the rise of violence through demonstrations, for example, in cases where a party endorses a woman candidate. They have also observed weaker protection of women candidates as they are not able to afford to pay for security staff. Data collected through WANEP's monitoring system has also indicated that another way to discourage women from running for elections is by increasing the registration fee for candidates. Ms. Addae-Mensah identified online violence through social media and VAWP in political parties as particularly challenging to measure and emphasized the need for training of monitors in these areas.

Dr. Katayoun Kishi, Data Manager, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), presented the organization's work on data collection and analysis, and its crisis mapping project of political violence.²³ As of this writing, ACLED records the dates, actors, types of violence, locations, and fatalities of all reported political violence and protest events across Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Southeastern and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition to traditional media, reports and select/verified new media sources, ACLED uses reports from different violence monitoring groups with whom it has partnerships around the world, including WANEP, acquires their data and applies the

ACLED methodology.²⁴

Political violence and protest activity include events that occur within civil wars and periods of instability, public demonstrations, and regime breakdown. ACLED aims to capture the forms, actors, dates, and locations of political violence and protests as they occur in different countries. Dr. Kishi presented the organization's ongoing initiative, which allows them to monitor political violence targeting women and demonstration events that involve women. ACLED's understanding of political violence against women assumes that either women were the only targets, most of the victims were women, or one woman was the target. Cases where women are targeted along with men are not considered as gender-specific events of political violence. Also, ACLED does not currently differentiate between women victims with regards to their political activism, but examines political violence directed towards any woman. ACLED's data focus is on violence taking place in public and does not capture private acts such as domestic violence. Their methodology does not consider online violence either.

Political violence targeting women is manifested differently around the world as it varies by region, conflict and non-conflict setting, within and outside of the election cycle. According to Dr. Kishi, the organization captures several types of violence, such as:

- non-sexual attacks (targeting women for blasphemy, assaults by state militaries against women human rights defenders);
- sexual violence (wartime rape or rape cases of opposition supporters);
- mob violence (targeting of women thought to be 'child-lifters' or women thought to be engaged in witchcraft or sorcery);
- abduction and forced disappearances (kidnapping schoolgirls or women whose return to their communities depends on paying ransoms);
- various forms of explosions and remote violence (bombing of girls' schools, grenades thrown at female journalists).

²³ More information available at: <https://acleddata.com/#/dashboard>.

²⁴ More information available at: https://www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2019/10/FAQs_ACLED-Sourcing-Methodology.pdf.

ACLED also tracks data on perpetrators and what strategies they use when attacking women, such as anonymous or unidentified armed groups, mob groups, political militias, external forces or rebel

groups. About half of the recorded acts of violence targeting women are perpetrated by anonymous or unidentified groups.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Political and electoral violence monitoring groups collecting data on political and electoral violence have the potential to capture VAWP by adapting their existing methodological frameworks and data collection mechanisms. To do so, organizations like these require guidance on how to collect data on VAWP and what is considered to be 'good' data.
- Providing training opportunities to the organizations collecting data on political violence could be a first step not only to help raise awareness about VAWP but also to translate information collected on political violence into relevant data on VAWP to inform policies and programmes.

SESSION 6:

Data collection through state actors and national institutions

SESSION OVERVIEW:

State actors, including national institutions, bear the duty of preventing and appropriately responding to all forms of VAW, including VAWP. They are often responsible for collecting and receiving information on VAWP-related incidents. The session considered examples from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kenya, and Mexico on the work of domestic institutions with different mandates and how they have attempted to collect data on VAWP.

MODERATOR:

Ms. Paula Narváez, Regional Advisor on Governance and Political Participation, UN Women Regional Office, Americas and the Caribbean

INTERVENTIONS BY PANELISTS:

Dr. Irena Hadžabić, Member, Central Election Commission (CEC), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), highlighted the experience and practice of the Central Election Commission (CEC) of BiH in dealing with VAWP cases. The BiH Election Law, *inter alia*, allows the CEC to forbid the posting, printing, and dissemination of notices, placards, posters or other materials that are used for election campaigning by political parties, coalitions, list of independent candidates, or lists of candidates, on which women or men are presented in stereotypical and offensive or humiliating ways. The CEC can furthermore order the offending political party, coalition, list of independent candidates, or

independent candidate to remove the posted materials. Furthermore, the Election Law enables the BiH CEC to remove the candidate/political party responsible for the violation from the ballot and to pronounce pecuniary fines. According to Dr. Hadžabić, multiple violations occurred during the 2018 general election campaigns and CEC learned about them through complaints submitted to their office. In cases where no charges were filed, but CEC learned about instances of violations of the law (mostly through media), they were able to initiate an ex-officio process.

Dr. Hadžabić drew attention to the challenging position of women who lead EMBs. They are often exposed to pressure and gender-based attacks, same as women politicians, but such acts of violence against electoral officials are not covered by the existing electoral legislation and often go unreported and unnoticed by the media or civil society organizations.

“ Women presiding over electoral management bodies, at different levels, are often exposed to pressure and are targeted as professionals. They go through the same agony as women in politics, especially through social media. Yet, as they are not candidates, the electoral legislation does not apply to them, including possible protection from such acts. ”

—Dr. Irena Hadžabić, Member, Central Election Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr. Paul Kihugu Kuria, Director of Programmes and Research, National Gender and Equality Commission, Kenya, spoke about experiences of VAWP in Kenya. The National Gender Equality Commission is the principal body in charge of promoting gender equality and freedom from discrimination for all persons in Kenya. It prepares and submits annual reports to the national parliament on, for example, the status of implementation of Kenya's obligations under international and domestic legal standards, including women's political participation. The Commission also considers individual complaints submitted by plaintiffs who claim their human rights have been violated on the grounds of gender. These complaints allow the Commission to commence investigations; like the CEC in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Commission can also conduct an *ex officio* investigation.

In theory, acts of VAWE could be addressed based on Kenya's electoral code and the election offenses Act. Kenya has differentiated limited time frames in which complaints can be brought to the electoral court: 14 days for presidential election disputes, six months for the senate, gubernatorial and parliamentary seats and three months for the county level - sub-national seats. By the time a case may be ready to be heard, due to administrative delays (and sometimes, deliberate delays by perpetrators), the survivors of violence, especially women, may have already given up and missed opportunities for timely access to justice. It is important that survivors of violence during elections and those involved in the political process have access to justice well beyond elections, and VAWP should be included as part of crime statistics.

Kenyan women in politics are well aware that GBV is a threat and therefore it is not uncommon for women candidates to hire private security, for example. However, capturing data on VAWP can prove difficult, and the Commission has observed VAWP in Kenya by gathering information from different sources. Mr. Kuria noted that Kenya's recent advancements in gender statistics could provide some lessons for VAWP measurement. For example, administrative records were recently included as a data source for gender indicators across the National Statistics System, and new SDG indicators (for instance, on the representation of women at the local/county level of government and the proportion of refugee women) were included in

official statistical monitoring plans. Similarly, there could also be the possibility of including indicators on VAWP that use administrative data (or other official data sources) and this should be further explored.

Ms. Fabiola Alanís, General Directorate for a Life Free of Violence and Political and Social Equality, National Institute for Women (INMUJERES), Mexico, noted that Mexico has undertaken legal reforms to promote women's political participation, including, among others, a parity requirement in elections which has enabled Mexico to be among countries with the highest number of women MPs in the national parliament. However, VAWP is widely spread throughout the country. Ms. Alanís expressed the hope of eventually seeing VAWP defined and included as an electoral crime.

Together with the Electoral Tribunal and the National Electoral Institute, INMUJERES has worked to address VAWP and strengthen women's political participation more broadly through the work of the Observatory on Women's Political Participation. The Observatory serves as a platform for co-operation between governmental and non-governmental actors, such as CSOs and academia. It operates at the national and regional levels. Eradication of VAWP, improving the availability of data on women's political participation and addressing gender-based stereotypes against women interested in politics are among the Observatory's top priorities. In 2016, the National Electoral Institute, the Federal Electoral Tribunal and the Special Prosecutor for Electoral Crimes agreed on a Protocol to Deal with Cases of Political Violence against Women that aims to detect and prevent widespread violence in political parties and both houses of parliament. The Federal Protocol also envisages regular and systematic collection of information and data on VAWP, as well as the maintenance of an updated database. However, the co-ordination of domestic actors at all levels represents a continuous challenge in this area.

Ms. Cintia Campos Garmendia, Director of Special Sanctioning Procedures at the National Electoral Institute (INE), Mexico, noted in her presentation that violence against women candidates is widespread in Mexico. Ms. Campos recognized the potential traditional and digital media have on

eradicating gender-based stereotypes and promoting women's political participation, as well as their role in hampering it. The mechanism of violence most often perpetrated against Mexican women politicians in traditional and digital media is linked to gender roles and women's abilities to meet socially accepted standards of being good wives and mothers. In response to findings of the

Institute's media monitoring, public policies and gender-sensitive guidelines and journalist training are being developed. INE also signed memoranda of co-operation with tech companies, such as Facebook and Google, to help eradicate political violence, for instance by removing content promoting VAW as well as raising public awareness about fake news.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Legal protection of VAWP victims should be strengthened so that such acts can be legislated and captured in administrative records and reflected in crime statistics. Positioning VAWP within legal systems would also allow for the provision of legal reparations for victims. Adopting a *lex specialis* on VAWP represents one approach to addressing this type of violence.
- The role of the judiciary in tackling VAWP is particularly important. In addition to advancing women's participation as judges, increasing understanding of judicial officials of VAWP is a prerequisite for an institutional response to VAWP.
- EMBs are also affected by violence. Women EMBs officials in particular can be victims of violence, especially in situations when their EMBs are bringing attention to issues such as VAWP.
- A multi-stakeholder approach for successful data collection on VAWP is essential. National mechanisms for gender equality, EMBs, the judiciary, media and CSOs can collectively serve as sources of information on acts of VAWP. This requires agreeing on a common framework and understanding of data collection on VAWP. Identifying a universal concept of VAWP and setting up a comprehensive database for different institutions would also assist in unifying their responses.

SESSION 7:

Tracking violence against women officeholders and officials

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Violence and harassment against women in the world of work are widespread in all countries across the world. As workplaces, parliaments, local councils, executive offices and other government institutions are not immune. Available information indicates that women elected officials experience GBV to such extent that it prevents them from carrying out their mandates and undermines the work of the political institutions in which they serve. During this session, the participants presented and discussed research and ways of strengthening global data collection on violence against women officeholders and officials.

MODERATOR:

Dr. Mona Lena Krook, Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University

INTERVENTIONS BY PANELISTS:

Ms. Michelle Rempel, Member of Parliament from Canada (via video), shared her personal experiences of VAWP, including receiving death and rape threats. She argued that, in her own experience and that of her peers, VAWP is one of the reasons why women do not run for office and, thus, it negatively impacts women's participation and representation in decision-making processes. Ms. Rempel added that violence affects not only women candidates or officeholders, but also women members of political parties. Acknowledging how widespread VAWP has been in Canada, as an MP she has been advocating for enforcement of a legal framework that would enable collecting and publicizing data on VAWP. Ms. Rempel stressed the importance of having a common understanding or definition of VAWP – as well as what is considered unacceptable behavior and what violence looks like in practice – to collect and compare data. She recommended the establishment of an independent international mechanism or observatory mechanism to compile and communicate global data on VAWP and to collect and monitor data on VAWP when individual

States do not or cannot. This, she added, might stimulate the accountability of national institutions in their responses.

Dr. Jennifer Piscopo, Associate Professor, Politics, Occidental College, noted that women MPs are a unique group, highly visible in their work as well as a symbol of changing social norms, making them a target for violence. Women politicians may also be targets of violence because of the content of their work, advocacy and public presence. She acknowledged the need for collecting data on gendered political violence by analyzing the impacts, motives and forms of different acts. Different measurement strategies may be appropriate for different objectives. Capturing motives and forms requires comparing data between men and women, to uncover whether women experience abuse for different reasons or abuse of different types. Measuring trends over time is especially important in order to understand whether VAWP is increasing, meaning whether resistance to women's presence in politics is deepening. Capturing impact may require different measurement strategies, such as focus groups, which broaden the circle of respondents beyond just victim and perpetrator.

Through her research, Dr. Piscopo has observed that women elected officials can be exposed to pressure to resign from

their seats (for example, with men then taking over their seats as their substitutes, as has been seen in various countries in Latin America). Abuse and harassment against women can also stem from their policy stances and actual votes (for example, in the U.K., with the parliament divided over 'Brexit' votes, women politicians found themselves particularly exposed to violence, pushing many to opt out of running for another term).²⁵

She concluded with the implications of these trends for measurement. First, the list of possible perpetrators could be quite large, from members of the women's own political party to strangers on the internet. In the latter cases of online VAWP, perpetrators may not even be in the same country, which raises issues over who is accountable or liable as well as legal challenges should one want to prosecute such cases. Second, data should separate *direct* and *indirect* forms of violence: violence can directly target and harm the woman herself, but the violence can also indirectly affect those who are not the intended targets, such as family members and staff members. This relates to the recommendation for focus groups when studying impact, as victims may go beyond those whom the perpetrator intended to harm.

Ms. Brigitte Filion, Gender Partnership Programme, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) presented on data collection and methodological components of the IPU's two studies on VAW in parliament: Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians (2016) and Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe (2018). For the 2016 study, IPU conducted interviews with 55 women MPs from 39 countries in 5 regions. In 2018, IPU interviewed 123 women (out of whom 81 were women MPs and 42 were parliamentary staffers) from 45 European countries (Malta and the Slovak Republic did not participate in the survey). IPU collected data on four forms of violence that women may have experienced – psychological, physical, sexual, and economic violence – by asking questions on specific acts of violence. Participants were also asked where such violent acts took place, who the perpetrators were, whether the acts were reported and whether the perpetrator was held accountable.

Additional questions were intended to measure the impact of violence and gather participants' views on potential solutions to address violence.

Data was collected by using different methods, such as:

- Confidential face to face interviews with women MPs using a questionnaire that combined quantitative and qualitative questions;
- Confidential face to face interviews with women parliamentary staff members using a questionnaire that combined quantitative and qualitative questions (for the European study); and
- Online questionnaire for parliaments on policies and mechanisms to address sexist behaviour, sexual harassment and GBV in parliament as a workplace.

Special efforts were made to ensure the confidentiality of information provided by women MPs and parliamentary staff members. Ms. Filion acknowledged that both studies were not based on a statistically representative sample; the 2018 study involved two per cent of the total number of women MPs in Europe. Additional challenges faced when conducting the two studies included:

- Difficulties in reaching women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, despite IPU's extensive network of contacts;
- Reassuring participants. Very few people dared to speak up, mainly out of fear of retaliation, as a matter of loyalty, to avoid damage to their career, or fear of being perceived as discrediting their parliament, party, or country;
- Preventing non-response from participants, in particular from women saying, "nothing ever happened to me" or "I have nothing to say;" and
- Short timeframes and limited budget to complete the studies.

Ms. Filion expressed the IPU's interest in measuring the prevalence of VAW in parliament in other regions

“ Women are not believed when they come forward about online abuse. ”

—Ms. Rebecca Kuperberg, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science, Rutgers University

²⁵For example, British MPs Nicky Morgan, Louise Ellman, Amber Rudd and Heidi Allen cited the abuse they faced in public office as a reason for not standing for re-election in December 2019 during UK's general election.

of the world, including through an upcoming study in Africa. She also noted the importance of comparing experiences of violence between women and men parliamentarians, as well as collecting data to better measure the impact of other aggravating or discriminatory factors (such as belonging to a minority group).

Ms. Rebecca Kuperberg, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science, Rutgers University, has been researching online VAWP, a fast-growing phenomenon. Her research focused on Twitter, which provides the most accessible social media data. Ms. Kuperberg noted some differences between big data analyses of online VAWP qualitative or survey research. For instance, social media data may be incomplete and/or not representative. She described how mixed methods have been employed to gather online information, including big data based on supervised machine learning, text analysis, and interviews with women politicians, their staffers, or family members. Each method has its limitations, but a combination of methods can reduce those constraints. Though offline and online violence are linked, the typology for offline violence does not necessarily apply to online violence.

According to Ms. Kuperberg, when looking into the phenomenon of online violence, it is essential to observe it as a spectrum, consider its intensity, virality and severity, and look into context as well as forms of discrimination in addition to sexism. She further noted how intersectionality features in cases of violence, where attacks may not be explicitly sexist or racist, for example, but rather about gender intersecting with other identities or circumstances of one individual.

Ms. Kuperberg also noted some of the specific and persistent issues of online violence. For instance, violence embedded in pictures is difficult to capture/identify in automated research and women victims of online violence are often not believed when they share experiences of abuse. When studying online violence in politics, it is important to capture experiences of staffers of politicians, who often face direct and indirect violence, and the public audience of online VAWP. Another important aspect is the extent to which online violence gets free ‘publicity’ through sharing and reposting, contributing to its ‘viral’ effect.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Parliaments around the world are well placed to tackle VAWP. Their institutional responses could entail amending rules and procedures to recognize different acts of VAWP, setting up mechanisms to deal with cases, as well as reconsidering parliamentary privilege/immunity in the context of VAWP.
- As parliaments and other legislatures represent a fertile ground for VAWP, developing a harmonized survey allowing comparable data across parliaments and regions is needed to capture the magnitude of violence in these institutions. Existing surveys of VAWP experienced by MPs could inform the development of a standardized questionnaire and survey methodology for data collection. Collecting existing questionnaires in a repository would be useful for informing standardizing data collection.
- Women politicians, including elected officials, their staffers, and family members, are regularly subject to online rape threats, online harassment, cyberstalking, blackmail, and more. To tackle the online abuse and identify commonalities with offline VAWP for data collection, it is important to observe VAWP as a spectrum, while considering its ranges of intensity and severity, and the forms in which it occurs.
- Women’s testimonies about having experienced violence are often disregarded; collecting information on violence experienced by men politicians could assist in drawing more attention to violence experienced by women in politics even if there are no grounds for comparison between forms of violence experienced by women and men politicians.
- Setting up an independent international mechanism for data collection and monitoring of VAWP could be considered to measure the global prevalence of VAWP and hold States accountable.

SESSION 8:

Areas of measurement for possible indicators

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Reflecting on previous sessions and different sources of data used in research to date, this session considered what areas of VAWP can realistically be measured and monitored, including through a set of indicators. In three groups, participants discussed different areas of measurement of violence faced by 1) political office holders, 2) aspirants/candidates, and 3) during elections/by voters. The groups began to identify possible indicators, variables/data and sources to collect data on violence for each target group.

GROUP 1: POLITICAL OFFICE HOLDERS

The group proposed using the proportion of MPs who experience violence as a possible area of measurement. The group suggested focusing on MPs who experience violence because of their policy stances and/or when they do not adhere to what are considered 'traditional family values'. It recommended that both women and men nationally elected officeholders should be targeted, and suggested looking into types of violence, its frequency, triggers (e.g., when did violence occur - after a vote or speech, when behaving in a way not associated with stereotypical gender roles or in line with traditional family values, etc.), when VAWP is perpetuated through media, and identifying perpetrators and their targets (e.g., is it only MPs and/or their family members, staffers, etc.). The group suggested using EMB data, surveys, interviews, parliamentary session records, and social media as sources of data. It also suggested intersectionality as an approach, collecting data on, for example, age or ethnicity of persons interviewed or alleged victims.

GROUP 2: POLITICAL ASPIRANTS AND CANDIDATES

The group proposed looking into women's experiences of violence while seeking nominations to run for office and as electoral candidates. To gather data on aspirants, the group proposed conducting surveys among women members of political parties. The group felt strongly about

identifying indicator(s), such as the prevalence of VAWP, that would work not only for candidates but also for women experiencing violence throughout the entire election cycle. As for variables, the group suggested looking into who the perpetrators are (e.g., political parties, family members, social media users) and which type of attacks are employed. The group identified surveys, interviews, and, potentially, social media data as sources of information, and acknowledged that it would be challenging to capture violence experienced by women seeking nominations in countries where official candidate registration is not part of the process.

GROUP 3: ELECTORAL PROCESSES AND VOTERS

The group focused on incidence and prevalence of violence directed towards women registered voters (or those expressing intentions to vote), election administration staffers (e.g., women polling officers), and participants of public gatherings (in particular when they are related to women's issues). As sources of information, this group suggested using records on reported cases of physical violence, incidents recorded by election observers, post-election reports, studies conducted among polling officials, and work absence rates of polling officials. The numbers generated by these records would be used to calculate incidence indicators using additional information on the number of people registered to vote, the number of voters and the number of those who expressed their support or voting intentions, and from polling officials as relevant. The group also suggested conducting pre- and post-election surveys to analyze who has been intimidated and the potential impact on voting as a basis for VAWP prevalence indicators.

SESSION 9:

Priorities, partnerships and next steps

SESSION OVERVIEW:

This session outlined the main areas of consideration for VAWP data and measurement that emerged throughout the meeting discussions. Lessons learned from existing studies on VAWP helped participants identify common challenges in collecting data on and measuring violence, as well as opportunities for joint learning and research through harmonized approaches and partnerships.

MODERATORS:

Ms. Julie Ballington, Global Policy Advisor on Political Participation, UN Women and Ms. Ionica Berevoescu, Policy Specialist on Women's Political Participation and Data, UN Women

Meeting discussions centered on four main areas that can help set an agenda on VAWP data and measurement: (1) definitions and a measurement framework; (2) data production priorities; (3) harmonized data collection tools; and (4) international monitoring mechanisms.

1. DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

While common definitions of VAW and GBV are longstanding and agreed in international normative frameworks, they are not consistently used in data collection efforts on VAWP. Some researchers have approached VAWP data collection from a political violence perspective, while others have done so from a GBV perspective. It was agreed that one common definition of VAWP would be helpful and that it should meet “somewhere in the middle” between the two approaches. The use of established terms and definitions from both fields – GBV and political violence – would enable advocates to approach States about VAWP data collection in a manner that is consistent with existing country practices and easily understood.

While the EGM did not result in an agreed definition, the meeting successfully advanced a common understanding of VAWP, and outlined a measurement framework that considers different issues and principles, including: (a) aspects of measurement, such as the magnitude of the phenomenon, types/forms, severity and intensity of violence, risk and protective factors, context (including gendered “causes and triggers” like gender policy issues or cultural shifts in traditional gender roles and norms that underpin motivations for perpetrators of VAWP), consequences of VAWP, and institutional responses; (b) categories of women in politics at risk of violence as voters, electoral candidates or aspirants, members of political parties and of political office, including whether political violence against men should be captured as well; (c) type of statistical measurement (prevalence, incidence, or content-based); and (d) principles in data collection, including ethical standards and capturing cross-cutting and intersectional identities to ensure no woman is “left behind.”

2. DATA PRODUCTION PRIORITIES

VAWP data may come from different sources with different strengths and limitations in terms of aspects covered by data collection, data quality, and availability of data collection standards or good practices. The links between data, monitoring needs, policymaking and programming are key in deciding what data sources should be developed

and for what purposes; in other words, “how will the data be useful, for what, and for whom.” For instance, as highlighted during the different sessions of the EGM, sample surveys are the most robust source of data to measure the magnitude of VAWP, understand its risk factors and consequences, and monitor changes in the prevalence of violence over time, including the impact of policies and programmes implemented.

There is also a common understanding that administrative sources recording incidents of VAW or VAWP severely underestimate, and cannot be used to measure, the magnitude of violence. However, a few administrative systems in the world may be able to track how the reported cases advance and if survivors of violence have access to needed services. On the other hand, electoral observation and monitoring systems are designed to assess the electoral process and to spot violations of political participation rights, potentially including VAWP, but not to generate representative data on the proportion of women or men who experience these violations or on who are the people most at risk. Furthermore, big data on online violence has a unique focus on the content exchanged online and can be linked to very specific measures targeted to online VAWP, though its adequate analysis requires high technical expertise and a large amount of resources.

Regarding what data should be generated as a priority, participants agreed that having strong and consistent indicators on VAWP is important. However, some found that the exercise of formulating indicators during the EGM was challenging, suggesting that the work on indicator development needs to continue beyond the meeting.

Finally, while standards of data collection on VAWP do not exist yet for any of the sources covered by the EGM, sample surveys emerged as the data collection method most promising for further development to be used by countries. This is supported by two streams of work: 1) existing international guidelines on collecting VAW data through surveys, which were developed through the UN-wide system, and already adopted by National Statistical Offices; and 2) research initiatives conducting VAWP surveys in selected settings.

3. HARMONIZED DATA COLLECTION

Participants expressed optimism for developing harmonized models of survey questionnaires, sampling

methods to capture women candidates or elected representatives, and guidance for survey implementation, including by adopting ethical and safety protocols typically used in VAW surveys. It was recognized that international organizations, civil society groups and independent researchers, played a lead role in the research field, innovating ideas and testing new tools and areas of measurement, and generating knowledge needed for the next step of harmonizing data collection.

Going further, UN Women is in a unique position to coordinate, together with partners, the effort of developing harmonized data collection tools that countries can easily use. As part of the UN System, UN Women has the mandate to support the Member States and National Statistical Systems to increase the availability of gender statistics in the world. Following the EGM, UN Women will, therefore, focus on the development of data collection tools. UN Women can also play a key role in partnering with other UN agencies to produce robust guidelines on sampling for VAWP data collection, specifically to guide the Member States and national statistical systems.

At the same time, UN Women will continue to engage with and strengthen dialogue among other international organizations, civil society groups and independent researchers, and continue nurturing the growing community of practice on VAWP research, based on all types of data sources, to enrich contributions to the development of global data collection standards.

Participants agreed that it is important to continue to learn from each other to ensure advancement on this issue. Knowledge-sharing and joint efforts can help accelerate progress on the availability of VAWP data. Several opportunities were identified for broadening partnerships to develop and test data collection approaches and tools through ongoing initiatives of participating organizations, namely:

- **Building and sharing a repository of data collection tools and survey instruments.** Many examples of surveys were shared during the meeting. It was agreed that beyond sharing presentations, it was important to find a way to compile the actual survey instruments – questionnaires, sampling strategies, training materials – and make them available for all meeting participants to support knowledge and lessons shar-

ing within the group of experts. It was recommended that participants share their respective tools with a cover note explaining what specifically about their methodologies worked well or not, as well as recommendations for improvements. Several participants committed to consulting the repository to improve upon their own data collection tools and contribute to harmonization efforts between studies. UN Women proposed to build a repository and to follow up with participants to collect examples after the EGM and broaden outreach through its field offices which are also undertaking various VAWP research initiatives. Data collection tools will not be used without attributing the original author.

- **Developing a standardized survey instrument for women in parliaments (and parliamentary staff), in partnership with relevant organizations.** There is much to learn and build on from IPU's survey which has been rolled out in 1 regional and 1 global study, and which has inspired other researchers and institutions. The parliament of New Zealand, for example, took the IPU survey and implemented it for its own members, and a study of violence against women mayors in the United States also used some of the IPU survey questions. While these may be unique examples, participants agreed that there is no need to reinvent survey instruments for VAWP research each time and in each place a study is done, but rather use and adapt tools that already exist. It was proposed that the IPU survey could provide the starting point for a "template" for a standard instrument. UN Women proposed piloting a standard instrument for parliaments by partnering with the IPU to develop a survey for its planned upcoming regional study in Africa.
- **Identifying where VAWP data can be integrated into broader VAW data collection efforts.** In Kenya, for example, UN Women has been working with the national statistical system for two years on strengthening national capacity for the use of administrative data to improve the availability of gender statistics. This led to the availability of data for two new indicators, on women's representation in local government

and the number of women refugees. There may be other opportunities for integrating VAWP in existing data collections, such as adding attitude questions on VAWP in Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or other relevant population-based surveys and questions on voters' experiencing or witnessing VAWP in pre- and post-election surveys.

4. INTERNATIONAL MONITORING MECHANISMS

The absence of data on VAWP continues to hamper the work of all those trying to support States to address violence. In preparation for the UN Secretary-General's report on the Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Women asked States if they were taking measures to address VAWP and received several positive responses, suggesting some States are starting to take up this issue by legislating for it and sanctioning acts; however, examples remain very few.

Recalling the recommendation from Honorable Rempel, MP from Canada, and others, a remaining question is whether there is a need for an international monitoring mechanism or observatory to compile and communicate global data on VAWP, and to collect and monitor data on VAWP when individual States do not or cannot.

Participants agreed that continued progress on the previous three priorities that emerged from the meeting would provide the foundation for such an initiative and encouraged UN Women to advocate within the UN System on the issue of VAWP to increase awareness, prevention and adequate response.

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UN Women organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Data & Violence against Women in Politics (VAWP) from 4-5 December 2019, in New York, as a part of its ongoing efforts to tackle this issue.

This report provides an overview of the 2019 EGM discussions and the priority actions identified in each session. It also provides an overview of key discussion points to inform future efforts to collect data on VAWP.

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