

GUIDANCE NOTE

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. CONCEPTS AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS	4
1. What is violence against women in politics? Definitions and manifestations	4
Victims and perpetrators	4
Magnitude of VAWP	5
2. What is the normative framework?	5
Women's rights to participate and live free from violence	5
Normative references to VAWP	6
III. PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR ADDRESSING VAWP AT COUNTRY LEVEL	7
1. Building the evidence-base on VAWP	7
2. Legislative reform	11
3. Monitoring and reporting	12
4. Capacity-building	17
5. Support during electoral processes	21
6. Coordination, advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising	26
IV. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING VAWP PROGRAMMING INTERVENTIONS	30
1. Elections programming	30
2. Other programming	30
3. Critical considerations	30
ANNEXES	31
Annex A. Key messages for the UN System on VAWP	31
Annex B. Stakeholders list	32
Annex C. Additional reading	35
ENDNOTES	37

I. INTRODUCTION

This Guidance Note provides technical advice to UN Women and country teams on how they can support Member States to address violence against women in politics (VAWP). It draws on existing definitions, insights and framing generated from research, normative advancements and programmatic collaboration, including: the Report of the Secretary-General for the 65th Commission on the Status of Women on *Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls* (E/CN.6/2021/3); key messages for the UN system on VAWP adopted by the UN Executive Committee in 2020 ([Annex A](#)); a thematic report of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on VAWP submitted to the 73rd regular session of the UN General Assembly (2018), UN Women and UNDP’s programming guide on [Preventing violence against women in elections](#); two expert group meetings and a global mapping of lessons learned and good practices of UN Women Country Offices (COs).¹

This Guidance Note therefore focuses primarily on women in politics but it likewise applies to violence against women in public life more broadly, including that perpetrated against women human rights defenders, journalists, those active in civil society and in other areas of public life. It can also be used to guide and inform the work of other United Nations agencies and development partners.

VAWP is recognized internationally as a violation of women’s political rights and a major barrier to women’s political representation in the 2021 Report of the Secretary-General on *Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls* the United Nations Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018 on Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment ([A/RES/73/148 17](#)), among other normative documents. It is not a ‘normal’ part of politics; for VAWP to be confronted systematically, reduce the risk of violence, and transform policy and practice, women need greater representation in political and public life. At the same time, it is critical that perpetrators are held accountable, impunity ended, and governments,

legislatures, and the public sector – including judiciary and electoral bodies – promote long-term and integrated institutional solutions.

UN Women specifically includes VAWP in its Strategic Plan (2018–2021) under the thematic priority on Women’s Political Empowerment and Leadership. Strategic Plan Output 4 states: “More women of all ages fully participate, lead and engage in political institutions and processes”. Indicator 4.4 focuses particularly on the “number of initiatives developed and/or being implemented to monitor violence against women in politics, with UN Women’s support”, while Output 1.3 refers to “strengthened capacities of key stakeholders to design and implement initiatives to mitigate VAWP”.

The UN plays an important role in supporting both State and non-State actors to implement policy and programme actions to address VAWP at country level. The UN can, for example, partner with national, regional, and international organizations to raise awareness, support prevention programming and further research. Offices at HQ, regional and country levels can collaborate to address VAWP through regional and country programming. UN country teams can provide support to national partners. Relevant agencies across the UN System can also coordinate to ensure policy coherence and harmonized approaches to preventing violence and work together with the office of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women its causes and consequences (SRVAW).

This Guidance Note is designed to support these efforts.

Section I includes this [Introduction](#).

Section II covers key [Concepts and norms](#) about VAWP, including definitions and normative frameworks.

Section III includes comprehensive [Practical guidance for addressing VAWP at country level](#) on assessment and research, common types of support to national partners and designing and implementing VAWP interventions.

Section IV offers guidance on [Designing and implementing VAWP programming interventions](#) in electoral and non-electoral contexts, and navigating potentially sensitive considerations in both.

The [Annexes](#) contain support tools and information resources, including key messages on VAWP for the UN System, tools for implementing various programming options, and additional reading.

II. CONCEPTS AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS

1. What is violence against women in politics? Definitions and manifestations

Violence against women in politics is a form of gender-based violence against women (GBVAW).² VAWP is any act, or threat, of physical, sexual or psychological violence that prevents women from exercising and realizing their political rights and a range of human rights.³ VAWP manifests in specific, gendered ways including, but not limited to, the following examples.

- *Physical violence*: including assassinations, kidnappings, beatings – often with the intent to force women to resign or withdraw from political life.
- *Sexual violence*: including sexual harassment, unwanted advances and sexual assault, rape, sexualized threats, altered pornographic or sexualized images intended to publicly question women’s competencies and shame them.
- *Psychological violence*: including threats, character assassination, stalking, online abuse as well as economic violence such as denial of salary or political financing, property theft or damage.⁴

BOX 1: DEFINITIONS

UN Women and UNDP:

“Violence against women in political life is any act of, or threat of, gender-based violence, resulting in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, that prevents them from exercising and realizing their political rights, whether in public or private spaces, including the right to vote and hold public office, to vote in secret and to freely campaign, to associate and assemble, and to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression. Such violence can be perpetrated by a family member, community member and or by the State.”⁵

Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics:

“[Violence against women in politics], including in and beyond elections, consists of any act of gender-based violence, or threat of such acts, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering and is directed against a woman in politics because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately.”⁶

Victims and perpetrators

Victims and survivors of VAWP may include political office holders, women candidates and aspirants, political supporters, voters, election workers and observers, public officials, and civil servants. In broader public life, civil society activists, media workers and human rights defenders may also be targets of violence. Family members or activists associated with targeted women are also affected. Women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination – e.g. based on age, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity – and those with certain political views or associations with human rights activism are likely more vulnerable to violence.

VAWP can be perpetrated offline and online, both publicly and privately by other politicians, constituents, family members and strangers, voters, traditional or religious leaders, political opponents and members of political parties, the media and journalists, or State actors, among other communities and actors. Online, it can be perpetrated by the same people and by anonymous trolls and bots.

Magnitude of VAWP

Violence against women in politics has lasting, harmful impacts on the individuals concerned and broader society. It hampers political and electoral processes and institutions' credibility and legitimacy. The experience, threat, or fear of VAWP dissuades many women from pursuing or continuing political careers, electoral campaigns, and related activities, as well as other forms of public activism. Altogether, VAWP violates women's human rights and political rights.

Unfortunately, the problem of VAWP remains under-explored and the data to assess its magnitude is not captured. Women do not usually report violence for fear of retaliation, stigma or not being believed. In politics and elections, additional reputational risks exacerbate these fears. Members of women's own political parties, or even their families, may be the perpetrators. Within political parties, members may not speak about violence fearing their partisan loyalties and discipline will be questioned (i.e. 'what happens in the party stays in the party'). In generally violent contexts, and based on social norms, VAWP may be perceived as 'coming with the territory'.

Lack of data and awareness of VAWP impedes efforts to design and implement effective policies and legislation for prevention and elimination of violence. Too rarely are perpetrators held to account and survivors provided with access to timely and appropriate remedies and services.

Institutions meant to provide access to justice and service delivery for women experiencing and reporting violence are not equipped to produce reliable data on the phenomenon's magnitude. Additionally, quantitative studies, which should guarantee women confidentiality when disclosing sensitive information, are largely missing; where they do take place, they do not generate global, comparative data. This hinders larger scale measurement of VAWP prevalence.

There are, however, some indicative studies that suggest VAWP is pervasive and global.

- More than 80 per cent of the women members of parliament (MPs) interviewed for a 2016 global study experienced psychological violence; one in three, economic violence; one in four, physical violence; and one in five experienced sexual violence in their work in parliament.⁷ More than 40 per cent of women MPs and parliamentary staff in Europe interviewed for a 2018 study experienced sexual

harassment on the job – a fact that led many to consider leaving politics altogether.⁸ Recently, women parliamentarians reported experiencing nearly twice as much exposure to torture, ill treatment and acts of violence than men, with the COVID-19 pandemic potentially exacerbating violent threats.⁹

- A 2016 survey on VAWP, as experienced by women candidates in Colombia, showed that 63 per cent of survey respondents were victims of violent acts and, in most cases, perpetrators were colleagues from the same institution (47 per cent) or the same political party (34 per cent).¹⁰
- Over 2,000 cases of electoral violence recorded in six countries between 2006 and 2010 showed women and men experience electoral violence differently: women were twice as likely as men to face psychological abuse, while men were more likely to face physical harm.¹¹

2. What is the normative framework?

Women's rights to participate and live free from violence

An extensive human rights-based framework demonstrates the commitment of the international community to promote and protect women's rights to participate in political and public office and live a life free from violence.¹² States have an obligation to promote and protect universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. Discrimination on the basis of sex is contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979), among other human rights instruments. In addition, States Parties agreed to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that established the international target of gender balance in decision-making.

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) provided a comprehensive definition of VAW, committed States and the international community to its elimination, and provided a framework for national and international action.¹³ The universal adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 provides further impetus to States to ensure full and effective political participation of women at all levels of decision-making (Target 5.5) and to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres (Target 5.2).

Normative references to VAWP

In recognition of the need to address structural barriers to women's political participation, in 2018 the UN General Assembly in its Resolution 73/148 expressed that it was “*deeply concerned* about all acts of violence, including sexual harassment, against women and girls involved in political and public life, including women in leadership positions, journalists and other media workers and human rights defenders.” It called specifically upon national legislative authorities and political parties to adopt zero tolerance codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or to revise existing ones.¹⁴

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women presented a thematic report prior to the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly in 2018. The report underscores the importance of designing, adopting, and enforcing laws and policies on gender equality and the prevention of VAW that are consistent with international human rights law. It also lays out concrete actions that State and non-State actors can take to “combat impunity” and “strengthen complaint mechanisms and response protocols in line with international and regional standards by, for instance, issuing guidelines, codes of conduct and protocols for institutions like parliaments, electoral management bodies, political parties, electoral courts, legislative chambers or local administrations, and ensure enforcement mechanisms are functional”.¹⁵

A series of UN Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council (HRC) resolutions, focused on GBVAW, outline the obligations of States to address this vital issue and call for an environment with zero tolerance for VAWP. In 2013, a report to the HRC of the UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice (WGDAW) notes the need to: “Accelerate efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including through a comprehensive legal framework to combat impunity, in order to fulfil women’s human

rights and to improve the enabling conditions for women’s participation in political and public life”.¹⁶

Likewise in 2013, the CEDAW Committee’s General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations stated that substantive progress towards equal participation of women is impossible without appropriate measures, such as ensuring that women voters and political candidates are not subject to violence either by State or private actors (para 72). It further recommended States adopt policies of zero tolerance for all forms of violence that undermine women’s participation, including against women campaigning for public office or exercising their right to vote (para 73-f).¹⁷

Specific recognition of VAWP first appeared in UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130. Sponsored by the United States, and adopted without a vote in 2012, the resolution urges all States to act, encourages the United Nations system and other organizations to enhance their assistance to States in their efforts to investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates and create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences.¹⁸

The international normative framework places States as the key actors responsible for addressing VAWP, as they have a duty to prevent, investigate and punish all acts of VAW prohibited under international human rights standards.¹⁹ Regional instruments, human rights bodies and other mechanism similarly hold States accountable. It falls within the respective mandates of State actors to create and carry out normative, legislative, judicial, and institutional actions to enable, initiate and implement solutions to VAWP. No actor alone, however, can eliminate VAWP completely. Cooperation between State and key non-State stakeholders – including political parties, the media, independent human rights monitoring mechanisms and civil society groups – is important and necessary given their interdependence and intersecting mandates.

III. PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR ADDRESSING VAWP AT COUNTRY LEVEL

Several UN country teams, partner agencies and national partners have requested support from UN Women to address VAWP in various ways including with research and data collection, support to national institutions for monitoring and prevention, capacity-building of national partners, strengthening complaints mechanisms, legislative and policy reform and raising awareness. Through global examples, this section provides practical guidance on these different areas of technical support and programming intervention.

1. Building the evidence-base on VAWP

Evidence gathering and research is a crucial early step in designing VAWP programming. It helps document women's experiences, determine the magnitude of violence, types of violence, victims, perpetrators, and locations, as well as indicate what contexts pose greater risk to women. Research can show whether the legislative and policy framework has provisions that address VAWP, if legal reform is required or if new laws are needed, and whether there are mechanisms and institutions that can regulate, prevent and respond to VAWP using their respective mandates and capacities. Importantly, it also helps capture lessons learned from prevention efforts and spur innovation in programme design. While VAWP affects women exerting their political rights, and other papers and guidance covering human rights defenders and CSOs among others exist, the proposed guidance and methodology in this section is specific to assessing women engaged in political processes.

Several starting questions can guide assessments of the current evidence on VAWP and help define research and new data collection priorities:

- Is information on past and/or current incidents of VAWP in a country/region available?
- Is VAWP already being monitored? If so, by which entities?
- What aspects of VAWP are already measured and how?
- Does the legal, policy and institutional framework address VAWP?

Various research and mapping approaches and sources of data can be used including: women's testimonies; qualitative studies; administrative information on reported cases of VAWP and their management; election monitoring; media content studies; interviews with relevant stakeholders, and sample surveys targeting voters, electoral candidates, office holders, and other categories of persons at risk of VAWP. Data generated by these sources vary in terms of which aspects are, or can be, measured, which categories of women in politics at risk of violence, the type of statistical measurement, and data collection principles.

BOX 2:

Proposed UN Women measurement framework for VAWP:

- **Aspects of measurement** – such as the magnitude, types/forms, severity and intensity of violence, risk and protective factors, consequences of VAWP, institutional responses and contexts that may influence perpetrators' motivations (e.g. gender policy issues or norms about gender roles);
- **Categories of women in politics at risk of violence** – such as voters, electoral candidates or aspirants, members of political parties and of political office, including consideration of whether political violence against men should be captured as well.
- **Type of statistical measurement** – prevalence, incidence, or content-based; and
- **Principles in data collection** – including ethical standards and capturing cross-cutting and intersectional identities and forms of discrimination to ensure no woman is “left behind”.²⁰

1.1. Sources of data

Selecting one type of source over another should be informed by the type of data available, and strengths of the data collection methods in relation to the purpose of the end-use of data (i.e. for advocacy, policy development or national monitoring). Below is a brief description of the main data sources on VAWP.

a. Qualitative research

Qualitative research, including individual interviews, community consultations or focus groups with women candidates and office holders – before and after elections – can provide especially important insights on women’s experiences of VAWP. In this case, only small numbers of people are interviewed, and the obtained results cannot be extrapolated for larger groups of women in politics. Nevertheless, the information collected is crucial in understanding manifestations, severity, and consequences of violence in terms of political participation and general well-being. It can also help identify whether mechanisms to prevent and address VAWP are working as designed, or if women face major obstacles in reporting violence and obtaining justice. The knowledge generated by qualitative research, as well as women’s testimonies outside of the research arena, directly contribute to VAWP’s documentation and provides the basis for quantitative surveys or formulation of broader projects on VAWP.

b. Surveys on VAWP

Surveys can provide reliable and representative data on VAWP that is critical for monitoring the prevalence of VAWP over time and the impact of policies and programmes. Documentation of VAWP through surveys can also help overcome the normalization of violence, which suggests that violence is simply an expected part of life, without consequences, and that the fault lies with the victim, rather than the perpetrator. While testimonies of a few individual women may be dismissed as singular cases, survey-based statistics uniquely reveal how widespread VAWP is, what the most prevalent types of violence experienced are, which groups of women are more likely to experience violence, and what fraction of them discuss, speak out in public, formally report the violence they experienced, and seek out justice.

Surveys on VAWP may be designed to target different groups of women engaged in political processes. Three major types of surveys may be considered.

- **Candidate surveys** can focus on women candidates in national, state, or local elections and may be conducted towards the end of the electoral campaign or soon after elections. Violence during the electoral campaign is the main topic to be explored in depth, together with other obstacles that women faced in becoming candidates and running electoral campaigns, such as discrimination, stereotyping in the media and support from family, colleagues, community and political parties.
- **Political office holder surveys** can cover various types of political offices, including those in national, state, and local legislative and executive bodies. They may be conducted after the members of these bodies have held the office for a certain period of time (at least several months). Similar to candidate surveys, office holder surveys can explore VAWP in-depth together with other aspects of discrimination in accessing leadership positions and unequal treatment of women holding political office.
- **Population-based** surveys can add a set of questions to an existing survey to capture violence experienced by voters during elections, particularly if those surveys are conducted soon after elections. Examples of topics covered include suppression of expressing political opinions, pressure to vote for certain candidates, and voter intimidation and harassment at polls.

One or more of the above types of surveys on VAWP may be considered where survey-based data are not available or are inadequate (e.g. in terms of sample coverage, the questionnaire used, the field protocol and ethical and safety standards implemented). UN Women is working on developing harmonized data collection tools that can be adapted to country contexts and, currently, some UN Women Country Offices are pioneering VAWP data collection projects through national studies (see section on [Knowledge management](#) and box on [National studies](#)). These harmonized data collection tools are guided by existing definitions of VAW and VAWP (see previous section on [Definitions](#)), existing research and a series of internationally recommended principles in VAW data collection).

Candidate and office-holder surveys require sampling frames that are different from regular population-based surveys. They would refer to lists of candidates or elected persons and may be accessed from EMs or line ministries. The collection of data may be based on face-to-face interviews, or through remote completion of a questionnaire through online, phone or mixed-method surveys;

the latter are especially needed in contexts where face-to-face interviewing is not recommended, such as during health emergencies or conflict affected contexts. Remote candidate and office-holder surveys can be expected to have a high non-response rate, similar or even higher compared to regular population surveys, given the very public profiles and positions of respondents. On the other hand, given that electoral candidates and office holders are more likely to have better access to technology, any remote survey results bias induced by differences in access to internet and phones may be lower compared to regular population surveys.

Critical concerns when implementing VAWP surveys also include enabling the disclosure of experiences of violence and ensuring ethical and safety standards. The collection of information on VAWP (and GBV in general) is highly sensitive and can take an emotional toll on both the provider and the information collector. Women exposed to violence may have difficulty speaking about their experiences and risk reliving trauma. Any data collectors engaged must be thoroughly trained so they can assure victims of their safety and earn their trust when sharing sensitive information. Data must also be processed and protected so that it will not expose details of individual cases.

Not all women politicians who have experienced VAWP identify as “victims” with some seeing their experiences as a “normal part of life” for a woman politician. Therefore, data collection must also consider that many women politicians will not necessarily frame their experiences as “violence.” For this reason, survey questions and focus groups should be carefully worded to capture specific experiences rather than asking if the woman is a victim of violence (as one is likely to get a number of false negative responses skewing the results).

In addition to the harmonized data collection tools in development by UN Women, there are several resources on ethical standards and methods for data collection on VAW, including the UN Women Guidance Note on Measuring Violence Against Women,²¹ a World Health Organization (WHO) multi-country study²² that sets the methodological and ethical standards²³ for research in this field, and the United Nations Statistics Division Guidelines for producing VAW statistics through surveys.²⁴

c. Administrative sources

Data based on administrative sources maintained by public institutions such as police, EMBs, electoral courts

and other bodies of the justice system refer to officially reported incidents of violence. The statistics generated by these sources capture the *incidence* of violence (showing the frequency of violence over a period of time) as opposed to *prevalence* of violence measured through surveys (which shows the proportion of women who experienced violence). Although, in theory, administrative data should cover the entire population and not be constrained by sampling issues related to surveys, in practice, it cannot be used to assess the magnitude of VAWP (or GBV in general) because of severe underreporting to public institutions. 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.

d. Election observation and monitoring

International and domestic electoral observation and monitoring are designed to assess the integrity of the electoral process and can report on violations of political participation rights, potentially including VAWP. They can record incidents of VAWE and may generate information on the frequency of these events in the contexts observed (e.g. during the nomination period, during specific campaign events, or at specific voting polls). While the information generated by election observation and monitoring typically cannot be extended beyond the context that was observed, or be considered representative of the entire electoral process, they nevertheless can be used to advocate for government action on VAWE. The use of a common observation and monitoring framework that prioritizes gender-related concerns and includes agreed indicators and points of measurement by both domestic and international election observation organizations are key for consistently identifying electoral hot spots where high levels of VAWE occur.²⁵

Monitoring by women’s organizations, national mechanisms for gender equality and national human rights institutions, including ombudsperson offices in public institutions, could potentially provide additional data on VAWP beyond the electoral context.

e. Other sources of data

Other, data sources may be available to assess the status of VAWP in a country. Big data on online violence, for example, uniquely focuses on content exchanged online and can be linked specifically to online VAWP, as well as “gendered disinformation”, though such an analysis requires high technical expertise such as from a large

data analytics company that uses artificial intelligence to detect online narratives, which also tends to require a large amount of resources.²⁶

1.2 Knowledge management

Whichever data collection and research approach is selected, there is no need to ‘start from scratch.’ Many tools and resources beyond this Guidance Note exist to help undertake mappings, research, and data collection. UN Women’s Political Participation policy team in HQ and regional offices can provide these materials.

BOX 3

UN Women support for national studies assessing the magnitude of VAWP and its consequences

Several UN Women Country Offices have supported national studies based on qualitative research and surveys to strengthen the evidence base on VAWP, and women’s political participation experiences and obstacles more broadly, and contribute to UN Women’s methodology for measuring and monitoring VAWP. These national studies also include reviews of legislative and policy frameworks regarding political participation and VAWP, to identify entry points and provide recommendations for strengthening a country’s monitoring, prevention, and response to VAWP.²⁷

In Georgia and Nepal, UN Women Country Offices – through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews – currently support national studies on VAWP to document the experiences of elected women and women candidates. In **Nepal**, the study covers women elected to local office in 2017 elections, and in **Georgia**, the study will cover women elected to local office and to parliament. Both studies focus on assessing obstacles to women’s political participation, including the experience of violence, its forms and magnitude, risk and protective factors, help-seeking behavior, and its consequences on the health and well-being of local women office holders, as well as on their political participation and leadership. Assessments of the national and subnational legislative and policy frameworks on women’s political participation and VAWP complement the studies, enabling UN Women and national stakeholders to identify

It is critical that experiences are collectively documented and shared across institutions, countries, and regions. Experiences of VAWP can be collated at national level through internal reports or good practice memos. In electoral assistance projects, for example, UN entities and partners from the beginning may consider producing post-election analysis and plan for data collection, to incorporate accounts from women in politics, and ensure exchange of programming lessons learned, and recommendations for future programming and research on VAWP.

opportunities for strengthening the monitoring, normative and institutional framework on VAWP.

In **Kenya**, UN Women jointly produced a report with OHCHR and Physicians for Human Rights, entitled *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Gaps in Prevention of and Response to Electoral-Related Sexual Violence in Kenya*.²⁸ The organizations conducted a comprehensive analysis, building on findings of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) on the scale and patterns of sexual violence observed during the 2017 elections, to help “build a body of evidence to identify gaps, document good practices and support the formulation of survivor-centered short- and medium-term measures that should be prioritized by duty bearers, especially in the health, security and legal sectors, for effective prevention and response ahead of [future] elections.”

After 2018 parliamentary elections in **Lebanon**, in which women ran in historic numbers, UN Women interviewed women candidates and compiled their stories in the report, *Pursuing equality in rights and representation: women’s experiences running for parliament in Lebanon’s 2018 elections*. The post-election interviews enabled UN Women to collect indicative data on women’s experiences of violence in politics including that two-thirds of women candidates interviewed (87% of the 113 registered women candidates) reported having experienced psychological violence (including threats, verbal abuse and online sexual harassment).²⁹

National studies on the issue have also been commissioned by UN Women in **Ecuador**, **Paraguay**, and **Guatemala**, among others.

2. Legislative reform

While legal reform related to VAWP has been scant and uneven globally, developments in some countries provide a basis for reforms. Global and regional normative commitments provide a framework for stakeholders at national and local levels to prevent and respond to VAWP and to protect the rights of victims by putting in place laws that mandate preventative measures and ensure comprehensive legal responses, including adequate remedies for victims and survivors.

Parliaments, the chief legislative institution of the State, can adopt new legislation – or adapt existing legislation to end VAW – to define and protect against VAWP and ensure implementation through oversight. Technical assistance to parliaments to enact legal reforms related to VAWP can be supported through three main channels.³⁰

- 1. Adopting new, stand-alone laws to prohibit or criminalize VAWP.** Only one country in the world (Bolivia) has a stand-alone, national law criminalizing VAWP that originated in a groundswell of advocacy from women’s organizations. Several others have draft national laws under consideration and/or provincial or local level laws against VAWP. A stand-alone law, however, may not be appropriate or possible depending on the context all cases. An initial understanding of the political, electoral, and legal systems, legislation, regulations and protocols that exist at country level will help ensure that any definitions or approaches are relevant and suitable for the national context.
- 2. Integrating adequate provisions on VAWP into existing laws on eliminating VAW consistent with international and regional human rights standards** (including laws that prohibit sexual harassment and stalking).³¹ While having a specific law addressing VAWP represents one approach, where available, VAW legislation can be amended to include a reference to the issue of violence against women in politics and refer to criminal codes when appropriate. Where laws on ending VAW exist, there may be an opportunity to identify acts of violence that are perpetrated in political spaces as a first step towards codifying VAWP in law.

Integrating aspects of VAWP into anti-discrimination legislation can also strengthen legal response to it. Support can include analysis of the applicability and scope of existing anti-discrimination legal frameworks to identify gaps and opportunities to integrate provisions regarding forms of discrimination that constitute VAWP. Where applicable, international, or

regional normative frameworks can be used as advocacy instruments for legal reform. In common law systems, case law detailing previous judicial decisions can help establish legal precedent for using criminal, civil or electoral codes for adjudicating cases of VAWP where stand-alone VAWP laws do not exist.

- 3. Introducing legislative reforms or expansions of electoral codes or penal codes.** This could include adding penalties or sanctions for violence in elections; prohibiting family voting; establishing security mandates and powers of EMBs; or stipulating codes of conduct to include provisions on discrimination, hate speech and VAWP, specifically. While there is added value in legislating VAWP through election-related legislation, it might be difficult to introduce as a stand-alone change. Nevertheless, such an approach can be effective if there is ongoing reform of legislation in this field. Another entry point is electoral codes of conduct developed by EMBs for other stakeholders (e.g. political parties, independent candidates, media) to guide their actions in the electoral process. Codes that are legally binding and envision sanctions have the potential to address different issues, including violence against women.

Specifically, technical assistance could include:

- **Supporting the revision of relevant legislation** to incorporate legal responses to VAWP.
- **Supporting the development of country-specific legal guidelines** for how the existing legislation can be used by survivors or institutions to address VAWP.
- **Supporting the development of regional model legislation or legal guidelines** on VAWP, particularly in regions where countries have ratified relevant human rights conventions.
- **Developing a compendium of legal responses to VAWP** on how existing legislation and available international and regional standards are used to address VAWP at the national level, including through regional courts or individual claims.
- **Creating a catalog of VAWP observations in Member State CEDAW reporting** to help the CEDAW Committee bring more attention to the issue.
- **Supporting EMBs to adopt legally binding regulations** on VAWP, where relevant.

Regardless of approach, it is important to support alliance-building between women’s organizations and women in politics to organize joint advocacy around national legal reform processes (see section on [Coordination, advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising](#)).

BOX 4

Legislative reform in Latin America and Tunisia

All **Latin American** countries are party to the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women* (1994) that protects women's political rights (Article 5). After signing onto the Convention, all countries in the region reformed their VAW laws, with some amending and expanding penal codes to include VAW crimes. In 2012, **Bolivia passed the world's first and only law on VAWP** (Law No. 243 – Against harassment and/or political violence against women). UN Women provided technical support to locally-elected women in the country to develop municipal law initiatives. The Bolivian law is significant as it defines 17 distinct acts of VAWP and related penalties and includes follow-up mechanisms to oversee the law's implementation, including a National Gender Observatory, where incidents can be reported. In 2017, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and MESECVI published a similar model law, drawing on region-wide experiences, as well as a model protocol for political parties.³²

Laws in **Argentina** (2010) and **El Salvador** (2011) now recognize the political sphere as a space in which VAW occurs, although it is not explicitly defined as harassment and/or gender-based violence. Political violence has been incorporated into laws on gender-based violence in **Argentina** (2019), **Bolivia** (2013), **Ecuador** (2018), **Mexico** (2020), **Panama** (2013), **Paraguay** (2016) and **Uruguay** (2018). **Ecuador** also classified VAWP as an electoral infraction in 2020 as part of broader electoral law reform.

Where specific legal frameworks on VAWP do not exist, countries have instead advanced national regulatory frameworks and institutional reforms to address it. **Mexico** adopted inter-institutional and judicial protocols to address VAWP in 2016. Several protocols for addressing harassment and VAWP in national parliaments as workplaces were adopted in **Argentina** (2018), **Chile** (2019), **El Salvador** (2012) and **Mexico** (2019). Protocols for handling VAWP in political parties were also developed in **Mexico** and **Argentina**.

EMBs in some countries have also adopted regulations on VAWP. In **Bolivia**, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal adopted regulations for processing complaints and resignations in 2017 for VAWP cases specifically. In **Peru**, the National Jury of Elections designed an institutional roadmap for victims' reporting and care, based on the definition of this issue set out in the Model Inter-American Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life (OAS/CIM, 2017).³³ **Tunisia** passed its first national law to combat VAW in 2017. The long-awaited legislation includes a broad definition of violence, recognizing economic, sexual, political, and psychological forms of violence in addition to physical. Article 3 of Law 2017-58 defines political violence as "any act or conduct that has the purpose or results in depriving or impeding women; partisan, political or associative activities, or any woman's fundamental rights or freedoms." Article 18 stipulates that "any person who commits political violence shall be fined to one thousand dinars," and that "in the event of recurrence of the offence, the punishment shall be a term of six months imprisonment."³⁴

3. Monitoring and reporting

3.1 National Observatory monitoring

National Observatories are institutionalized structures which have a legal basis and are designed to monitor various issues related to women's political participation as part of a country's national Human Rights and/or gender equality apparatus. In a small, but growing number of cases, they also monitor VAWP. They emphasize civil society and State actor cooperation. Most known examples come from Latin America, where Observatories conduct information-gathering and monitoring work to track States' compliance with gender quotas and parity laws, publicize missteps and demand accountability.³⁵ Some are State-created and directed – modeled after 'traditional' VAW Observatories – while others are tied to electoral tribunals or led by civil society.³⁶

Reliable and systematic VAWP repositories around the world are scarce; Observatories can help make data on women's political inclusion publicly accessible (see

box on UN Women’s support of Observatories in Latin America and Africa). State-managed Observatories sometimes have authority on matters related to women’s political participation and VAWP, though they may depend heavily on the commitment of leaders and links to other government stakeholders, political parties, and media. Such connections secure collaborations, avoid duplication of efforts across different private and public sector agencies, and ensure that the research and data have an impact beyond their web presence.³⁷

The establishment of an Observatory of this kind is a national decision. Where the need for an Observatory has been identified, UN entities can provide technical and financial support for initial assessments, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The UN can also help raise awareness and advocate for the establishment of an Observatory with the national government. Where needed, the UN can also seek or provide financial support for its establishment and functioning.

Technical support can include the sharing of best practices and lessons learned regarding the structure, roles and composition of Observatories; developing data collection and analysis tools and training on their application; processing of information for policy development, advocacy and awareness-raising; and establishing VAWP response coordination and response mechanisms.

Where Observatories are led by civil society, it is important to work closely with organizations at the local level as they have the best understanding of community social, cultural and economic dynamics and realities to put in place effective measures and target the most relevant stakeholders, opinion and decision makers. Challenges in the technical capacity of local organizations can be overcome by supporting capacity-building initiatives through specific training, as well as exchange programmes with different countries, or by providing templates and materials to guide strategy development and implementation that can be adapted to local contexts.

In some countries, Observatories with broader mandates on gender equality and/or women’s political participation already exist, and these could incorporate a component on VAWP.

BOX 5

UN Women’s support of Observatories in Latin America and Africa

Mexico’s Observatory is the most institutionalized in the Latin America region: it monitors and evaluates progress on women’s participation, generates and publishes available data for government and civil society, collates good practice on women’s political empowerment strategies and promotes alliances for implementing international normative frameworks on women’s political participation. The Observatory’s web portal includes a dedicated section on VAWP containing a case registry.³⁸ Currently, the Observatory works to strengthen local observatories at the federal level, with greater inclusion of indigenous women’s needs and representation.

Bolivia’s Observatory was established by the Plurinational Electoral Organ (PEO)³⁹ in 2017 to generate knowledge, including sex-disaggregated data on women’s political participation and rights; process VAWP complaints; and monitor cases through legislative councils or assemblies.⁴⁰ The Observatory uses a set of indicators⁴¹ covering: electoral processes; political participation and representation, including of rural, indigenous women; gender parity in public institutions; and VAWP. The indicators enabled the Observatory to publish the country’s first national data set on political participation and support information-gathering for VAWP research which helped the government prepare 2018 CEDAW, Universal Periodic Review on Human Rights (UPR) and Beijing review reports.⁴²

Zimbabwe’s Gender Commission – in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, Zimbabwe Media Commission, security sector, civil society organizations, Women’s Peace Committees, the Zimbabwe Women’s Parliamentary Caucus and Academia – set up a Gender Observatory in 2017. The objective was to collect evidence and analyse trends on women’s participation in elections; disseminate information through social media, political parties and civil society; and respond to VAWP incidents by issuing recommendations, referring cases to court, and encouraging political parties to adhere to the Constitution

or electoral code of conduct. The Observatory is staffed through secondments from member institutions and compiles information gathered by women-led grassroots early warning systems, election observation missions, situation rooms, media, community members and leaders, candidates, researchers, and courts.

Tunisia’s National Observatory for the Prevention of Violence against Women was established in August 2020. The Observatory is tasked with the following: monitoring a database of cases of violence against women from reports and information collected while documenting cases of violence and their effects; monitoring implementation of legislation and policies, assessing their effectiveness and efficiency in eliminating violence; publishing relevant reports and recommending necessary reforms; conducting scientific research and field studies on violence against women to assess what actions are needed to address all forms of violence as per Law 2017-58 on violence against women; contributing to the development of national strategies, joint and practical measures across sectors and defining the guiding principles for ending violence against women; cooperating and coordinating with civil society organizations, constitutional authorities and other public bodies concerned with monitoring and supervising the observance of human rights with a view to developing and consolidating rights and freedoms; issuing opinions regarding training and qualification programmes; empowering all stakeholders in the field of violence against women and proposing mechanisms for their development and follow-up. The Network of Locally Elected Women has also set up a local observatory dedicated to VAWP to report cases of political violence and assist victims.

3.2 Global and regional monitoring mechanisms

Monitoring mechanisms and procedures on human and women’s rights are important partners for the UN in addressing VAWP worldwide and at regional level. Each have different approaches to GBVAW within their respective mandates. Improving their coordination on the specific issue of VAWP has been a priority of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

Key monitoring mechanisms and procedures include:

- Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee)
- UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences
- Working Group on discrimination against women and girls
- African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR)
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)
- Follow-up Mechanism to the *Belém do Pará* Convention (MESECVI)
- Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO, follow-up mechanism to the Istanbul Convention).

The presidents of ACHPR, IACHR, MESECVI and GREVIO attended a 2018 EGM on VAWP, co-organized with UN Women. The presidents concluded that although VAWP is not explicitly mentioned in most regional conventions on human rights and EVAW, freedom from VAWP is protected by regional conventions in both “letter and spirit”. They also agreed to increase collaboration and cooperation, including through joint missions and press releases, launching communications about VAWP at state or regional level and engagement with social and economic commissions.

To determine how best UN Country Teams can address VAWP, the Secretary-General encourages holding dedicated discussions with the Resident Coordinator Office and partner agencies on VAWP and to specifically bring in the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and the Platform of Independent Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women. Country-level support and activities for UN Women and the broader UNCT could include: increased assistance for the implementation of VAWP programming; integration of VAWP into prevention and response programming like early warning; including VAWP in human rights recommendations to countries; and, generally, improving inter-agency partnerships and coordination to strengthen advocacy and awareness-raising on VAWP (e.g. through policies, assessments, strategies, trainings and dialogues).

BOX 6

VAWP and human rights monitoring mechanisms, some examples:

The **UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice** issued a statement in 2018 calling for **Nigeria** to protect and promote women’s participation in politics. Citing reports of party and election officials excluding women candidates from candidate lists, denying them access to essential information regarding the election, and cancelling and re-scheduling primaries – allegedly with the sole purpose of excluding women candidates – the statement called “on the Nigerian authorities to fully investigate these allegations and to ensure that women candidates who have been unfairly or illegally excluded are given access to appropriate remedies,” and condemned “in the strongest possible terms the use of violence and intimidation to try to keep women out of politics.”⁴³

In 2019, the Special Rapporteur called on the government of the **Philippines** to protect Filipino women in politics against verbal attacks coming from high-level politicians. Invoking the country’s obligations under international law, she stated: “Under international obligations, all persons in their respective roles should be protected against such types of verbal abuse and attacks that are coming with respect to their specific role.”⁴⁴

The **MESECVI Committee of Experts** has given its opinion on several VAWP cases, including one involving a violation of maternity leave rights for a member of the **Andean Parliament** and another on violence perpetrated against a **Mexican Senator** during an official online work meeting.

3.3 National level monitoring and institutional reform

National institutions often have policies or regulations and complaints mechanisms for reporting incidents of violence. Support to institutions like parliaments, local councils, women’s legislative caucuses, gender equality committees or commissions and political parties can include providing training and awareness-raising for using existing mechanisms. If these do not exist, institutions can be supported to develop such policies and regulations.

Gender-based violence is present in all jobs, occupations, and sectors of the economy in all countries across the world,⁴⁵ including parliaments – the workplaces of elected officials and staff. Elected officials may have immunity, however, meaning that may not be legally considered ‘employees’ of the legislative body and are therefore exempt from sanctions or protection that would normally be provided by anti-discrimination or other pieces of legislation, such as labor codes.

Reform may be necessary for legislative bodies to become gender-sensitive institutions: that is, responsive to the needs and interests of both women and men in their structures, operations, methods and work and without barriers to women’s ability to fulfil their mandates and potential. In practice, these measures may focus on parliamentary working procedures, such as provisions related to sitting time, parental/maternity leave, and promoting work-life balance.

Legislative bodies can set examples, uphold standards and exemplify zero tolerance for gender-based violence in policy and practice by adopting new codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms – or by revising existing ones, clearly stating zero tolerance for sexual harassment, intimidation and any other form of VAWP.⁴⁶ They can introduce mandatory sexual harassment training/codes of conduct and establish and/or strengthen committees on sexual harassment to address alleged violations of codes of conduct. The same could also be done at municipal level or within political parties.

A possible area of engagement for technical assistance could be to develop a model code of conduct, including an ethical code to encourage the drafting of new documents or the revision of existing codes. This could be an opportunity to include specific prohibitions of sexist speech and remarks and different forms of gender-based discrimination as well as to introduce sanctions for breaching the code of conduct. It could provide a chance to review immunity rules from the perspective of GBV. The model would also require the inclusion of a proposal to introduce complaint mechanisms to prevent and sanction undesirable and unethical behavior and be enforceable against MPs and staff members. Mandates of parliamentary and/or legislative standing committees on sexual harassment could likewise be expanded to include VAWP. Parliaments can also “conduct surveys and public debates periodically to raise awareness of the issue...and the crucial role that male parliamentarians can play in preventing [it].”⁴⁷ Critically, this must also involve “addressing the impunity of [parliamentarians] with regard to [VAWP] and examining immunity rules.”⁴⁸

BOX 7

Countering VAWP in parliaments around the world

In **Austria**, in the event of harassment, parliamentarians of both chambers, the staff of political groups and parliamentary assistants can call on an independent expert to provide information and personalized advice on a confidential basis. The prime focus is on prevention and awareness-raising and establishing an environment of respect within the institution.⁴⁹

In **Bolivia**, UN Women, in coordination with UNDP and International IDEA, established a strategic partnership with the National Plurinational Assembly that directly contributed to the establishment of a parliamentary special commission against harassment and political violence.

On the initiative of women councilors, the council of the Stari Grad municipality of the City of Sarajevo in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** amended their ethical codes in 2018 to introduce the prohibition of sexual harassment. The amendments to the ethical code prohibit taking any actions against an elected official who reports sexual harassment. Violation of the prohibition of sexual harassment is classified as the most severe disrespect of the ethical code. When committed, “the perpetrator will be publicly reprimanded through the means of public information”.⁵⁰

Canada adopted a *Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual harassment between members of parliament*, annexed to the House’s Standing Orders. The Code aims to encourage reporting of instances of sexual harassment by members and to create an environment free of sexual harassment that allows members to excel in their public duties and functions.⁵¹

In **France**, the Senate amended its Rules of Procedure to include specific disciplinary sanctions for perpetrators of psychological or sexual harassment, whether senators or staff. It also adopted an anti-harassment plan, which focuses on prevention, complaints handling, victim support, and monitoring.⁵²

The **United States** Senate and House of Representatives passed a bill to address sexual harassment in Congress following the momentum

of the #MeToo movement. Under the bill, members of Congress are personally liable for financial settlements agreed with complainants, meaning taxpayers will no longer pay for settling claims of misconduct.⁵³

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, parliamentary protocols on VAWP exist in **Argentina** (2018), **Chile** (2019), **El Salvador** (2012), and **Mexico** (2019). The Chilean model is the most complete and detailed and includes sanctions for perpetrators. At regional level, UN Women and PARLATINO collaborated on the *Regulatory Framework to Consolidate Parity Democracy* throughout the region that includes commitments by parliamentarians in the region to eliminate VAWP.⁵⁴

The **Inter-Parliamentary Union** (IPU) has produced *Guidelines to Eliminate Sexism and Harassment in Parliament* offering advice and practical information to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff on how to transform parliaments into gender-sensitive environments free from sexism and abuse. The guidelines also contain numerous examples of good practice from parliaments around the world.⁵⁵

3.4 Social media monitoring

Technology-facilitated VAWP is harmful, widespread, and fast-growing. Like ‘real world’ violence, online violence occurs with different intensities and can be shared infinitely across social media platforms with little recourse for its victims. Online VAWP is very difficult to measure and address because of the speed with which it is perpetrated, the typically anonymous status of perpetrators, and the lack of response or sanction on the part of social media companies. Women in politics are increasingly harassed online by politically motivated ‘trolls’ and ‘bots’ that spread deceptive or inaccurate information and images against women political leaders and public figures, often using misogynistic story lines – a phenomenon known as “gender disinformation.”⁵⁶ This presents immense challenges for designing interventions to address online VAWP.

However, recent scholarship has begun to identify the following trends that can be conveyed to national partners to better inform VAWP prevention and response programming.⁵⁷

- **Online VAWP is globally recognizable** (i.e. use of sexual slurs) but often culturally specific in the form of discourse used to attack women (e.g. ‘witchcraft’ might be used to discredit women in politics in one culture, whereas ‘honour’ may be used in another).
- **Attacks against women also tend to ‘go viral’ more often than attacks against men** because when women break traditional norms around gender roles (or are accused of doing so), the ‘shock-factor’ is greater and triggers a viral effect. This only worsens the negative psychological and reputational impacts of VAWP on women and their families.
- **Women receive higher rates of threats of physical harm.** This includes rape and death threats directed towards them and their children, families, and supporters.
- **Violence does not end for women online when elections are over.** Women in politics and public life experience higher, sustained levels of abuse whereas abusive online content tends to cool off for men between election periods.
- **Women experience online VAWP differently,** depending on whether they are in local-level or national-level politics, or are high-profile or low-profile politicians. While political ideology can be a factor in some contexts, online VAWP appears to be an ‘equal opportunity’ phenomenon among women across the world.

BOX 8

Efforts to tackle online VAWP

In **Argentina**, UN Women and Instagram developed a [Safety Guide for Women in Politics](#).

Legal reforms in both Bolivia and Ecuador address online VAWP specifically. In **Bolivia**, Decree No. 2935, Art. 10, establishes State responsibilities for designing and implementing oral and written communication strategies through social networks to prevent harassment and/or political violence based on gender. In **Ecuador**, the Code of Democracy (2020), Art. 282, states that “violations by the media, including digital media, shall be sanctioned by the suspension of advertising in such media and a fine ranging from twenty-five unified basic wages to two hundred and fifty-five unified basic wages, and even suspension of the media for up to six months if it reoffends, in the following cases: (...) Disseminating messages

or programming that includes acts constituting gender-based political violence”.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) published a report in 2019, *Tweets That Chill: Analyzing Online Violence Against Women in Politics*. It covers three case studies from **Colombia, Indonesia** and **Kenya**, where NDI worked with women in politics, individuals in civic technology, and women’s rights organizations to develop a way to examine the country-specific challenges facing women as they engage in online political discourse. The case studies demonstrated that across the three countries, women engaging in politics online experienced similar types of violence including insults and hate speech, embarrassment and reputational risk, physical threats, and sexualized misrepresentation. The report highlights the need for additional research to understand and mitigate the impact of online violence.⁵⁸

4. Capacity-building

4.1 Security sector and police capacity

Security forces and police are critical for preventing and responding to VAWP given their duty to ensure public safety in political and electoral processes and carry out operational planning for electoral security. This is necessary for assessing and responding to security risks that may impede women’s full participation in electoral processes – whether as voters, candidates, or polling staff.⁵⁹

Specific training can strengthen awareness within security forces and develop their capacity for securing public safety in accordance with national laws as well as international human rights and gender equality standards. Training ensures operating practices and security arrangements protect women through gender-sensitive measures by respecting separated queues for women in polling stations; striving for gender balance in the police force to increase women’s participation and ensure women police officers are available to respond to occurrences involving women; establishing appropriate mechanisms to encourage women to report cases of VAWP in a safe manner, such as setting up gender Focal Points or gender desks; detecting, investigating and responding to incidents, which could include ‘subtle’ forms of violence such as discrimination and family voting; bringing perpetrators to justice; and including gender perspectives in the research, policy and practice of police, defense and military institutions.⁶⁰

Where the security sector is itself a perpetrator, training and accountability is especially important because it raises awareness about the types and frequency of gender-based violence in elections and reinforces the sector's legal obligation to take the issue seriously and provide guidance on how to respond to – and report – cases.⁶¹ Since VAWP has not been a traditional part of electoral security risk assessment and management in electoral contexts, the UN can support its partners to mainstream this issue into new and existing election security training programmes for police and security forces.

In many countries, there is long-term engagement between the UN and security forces for putting in place capacities, mechanisms, and human and financial resources to eliminate VAW/GBV. It is therefore advisable for teams specialized in ending violence against women (EVAW), as well as political participation, to collaborate and engage in long-term support to police and security forces. This collaboration will help to better integrate VAWP into VAW/GBV response mechanisms and ensure specific VAWP categories are included in data registration and case management – all of which will contribute to improved VAWP monitoring systems.

UN agencies may partner to help make the overall training curriculum for police more gender-sensitive. UN Women can, for example, help update police training manuals – many of which have room for improvement on how to cover gender-based violence and women's political participation. This kind of engagement with the police is normally regulated by a letter of agreement (LOA) that entails aspects related to VAWP. Specific support can include understanding the political component of VAWP and demonstrating how to register and respond to cases based on appropriate indicators and operating procedures.

Gender-sensitive training for police and security forces is only one of several actions police forces may take to help identify and mitigate risks of VAW in elections. Typically, such training is also part of broader, integrated support to women's political participation, and violence mitigation, in the electoral process. To ensure gender-sensitive electoral operations, any engagement with police and security forces requires coordination and collaboration with UN-mandated electoral assistance and partner agencies, such as UNDP and the UN Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (EAD/DPPA).

BOX 9

VAWP capacity-building initiatives in police and security sector forces

In **Kenya**, UN Women with support from UNDP, developed a training facilitator's manual on enhancing the capacity of duty bearers to support survivors of VAWE (violence against women in elections) using existing protocols and measures for reporting, responding, investigating and prosecuting VAW. The manual was created in response to the gender-based violence experienced by women and girls during Kenya's post-election violence in 2007, as well as part of broader initiatives to end VAW in the country. The manual provides an overall training framework for (i) addressing gaps in "chain of evidence management", (ii) raising awareness on both the legal framework and access to justice for survivors and (iii) offering practical guidance on appropriate responses to VAWE by relevant agencies. It covers complex issues such as how to handle disclosures of VAWE and how to provide direct support to those affected by it. The manual is also rich with information about Kenya's relevant legal framework, and provides details for health, security and justice sector responses to incidences of SGBV in elections.⁶²

In **Nigeria**, UN Women supported security sector capacity-building on gender-based violence against women in elections through a series of workshops targeting 200 paramilitary personnel. The workshops were conducted in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in 2019 and while specifically designed for the security sector, influential youth and traditional leaders were also invited to attend.⁶³

In **Sierra Leone**, the national police (SLP) organized a series of country-wide trainings on gender, elections and security for personnel from national correctional services and fire forces, city council police, chiefdom police and the Road Safety Corps so that they could all better collaborate with the SLP to provide 2018 general elections security. The trainings, jointly supported by UN agencies, covered gender sensitivity and VAW, human rights, election offenses, and relevant laws and regulations. Police training manuals were updated to include specific information on VAWP and highlighted the importance of gender-sensitivity across election security operations, particularly when responding to sexual violence incidents.

Critically, the training was part of broader VAWP-prevention programmes and activities, including community mobilization, media monitoring and advocacy campaigns in which police and security personnel also participated.⁶⁴ Combined, these actions improved collaboration among security sector actors, civil society groups and communities in addressing VAWP.

In **Tanzania**, ahead of the country's 2015 elections, UN Women and UNDP developed a training manual and conducted training of trainers on gender, human rights and the role of police in elections, showing how men and women experience violence differently. This was done in partnership with the Network of Female Police Officers from the Tanzanian Police Force, and as part of the Democratic Empowerment Project (DEP) – a UNDP programme jointly implemented with UN Women and UNESCO. The training manual, *Gender, Human Rights and the Role of the Police during Elections*, included components on the different forms of violence that may occur during electoral campaigns and how these affect men, women, and social groups differently. A training-of-trainers approach equipped about 100 police officers who in turn trained another 6,000 police officers throughout the country. The programme also supported the Tanzania Police Force in integrating VAW and vulnerable groups into its Incident Reporting and Response System (IRRS), an existing IT system that facilitates rapid responses to incidents of violence during the elections and is based on VAWE typology and GBV checklists developed in partnership with the Network of Female Police Officers.⁶⁵

In **Zimbabwe**, as part of a broader initiative to establish a Gender Observatory for monitoring VAWE, UN Women contributed to an existing UNDP training manual for police and participated in the training to deliver VAWE modules. When the Gender Observatory was launched, it emphasized the important role of security sector actors, including police and the Ministry of Defense, in ensuring women's safety in elections by conducting their duties in a gender-sensitive manner. UN Women and UNDP supported training for 1,500 police officers on gender and elections. Police increased their knowledge regarding the relevant legal and policy framework for women's political rights.

Police also learned their duties and expected conduct when dealing with women's participation in elections. The training covered factors contributing to VAWE, the challenges addressing it, and the role of police in mitigation and response. The *UN Women/UNDP Programming Guide on Preventing VAWE* was a key resource for designing the training, as well for drafting security sector guidelines. The Gender Observatory further recommended that to promote peaceful voting, police needed to ensure balanced participation and deployment of female officers to polling stations. Although gender balance was not possible because male officers outnumber female officers, as a result of the training, the police service ensured female officers were present at all polling stations; the effort indicated a commitment to continue working on improving recruitment policies to increase the number of female officers hired.⁶⁶

The capacity-building of police to address VAWP includes the following additional areas:

- **Adopting and providing training** on new operating practices and evaluation methods that sensitize police and security forces to VAWE and take it into account in their work.
- **Recruitment of more women security personnel** and establishment of gender desks to encourage more women to report incidents of VAWE, including those perpetrated by police.
- **Development of independent investigation measures** to ensure VAWE cases are acted upon promptly and thoroughly and that identified perpetrators (including, where applicable, defense and security forces) are prosecuted and adequately sanctioned.
- **Public awareness-raising** so women know about the complaint mechanisms available to them.

4.2 Judiciary capacity

Training for judges can help raise awareness of VAWP and thereby ensure their ability to apply laws consistent with international human rights standards when investigating complaints and prosecuting perpetrators.⁶⁷ Training can be complemented with technical assistance on developing laws and/or protocols. Even where specific laws or protocols on VAWP are absent at national level,

when rulings issued by the judiciary (which may include electoral justice bodies) on cases that bear relevance to VAWP are made public, and include a gender perspective in line with international standards, the State must make critical efforts to end impunity. In this regard, training is particularly relevant for supporting States. They may consider, for example, updating complaint mechanisms and response protocols – including for electoral courts, legislative chambers, or local administrations – to ensure enforcement mechanisms deal with VAWP cases.⁶⁸

The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has called for States to institute compensation for victims, reinstate office holders forced to resign due to violence, provide adequate security measures to enable women office holders to exercise their functions, and formally retract offences or defamation levelled against women in politics.

BOX 10

Improving judiciary capacity

MESECVI, the follow-up mechanism to the *Belém do Pará* Convention,⁶⁹ relies on cooperation between States Parties to the Convention and a Committee of Experts. In 2015, it issued a Declaration on *Violence and Political Harassment against Women* that led to a ‘model law’ defining VAWP as a criminal act consistent with international norms and stipulating specific reparation measures and sanctions. The model law has stimulated additional actions toward solutions, including a model protocol on VAWP for political parties. As judges were unaware of basic gender concepts, or VAWP as a legal concept, a judges’ guide for adjudicating electoral disputes from a gender perspective, and training curriculum for electoral courts on VAWP, were created and are now carried out in cooperation with States.⁷⁰

In **Australia**, a Federal judge ordered a Senator to pay a fine of USD \$80,000 plus costs for making sexist slurs towards a female Senator who took him to court. It was a landmark decision as this was the first case of a sitting Australian politician to sue another for defamation. Moreover, the judge ruled against the accused lawyer’s argument that media interviews should be covered by parliamentary privilege because the comments had originated in the Senate.⁷¹

Mexico saw an uptick in VAWP as parity laws increased the number of women in public office. Without a specialized, national law on VAWP,⁷² ordinary justice, criminal sanctions and electoral dispute mechanisms were used to prosecute cases. In 2014, the Federal Electoral Court, National Women’s Institute (INMUJERES) and the office on VAW developed a justice protocol for handling VAWP cases based on each institution’s mandate and duty to protect women’s rights in alignment with international human rights treaties to which Mexico was party, including the CEDAW convention, *Belém do Pará* Convention, Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, as well as the Mexican national and local constitutions, laws, and national case law on VAW. The protocol defines VAWP, delineates a structure and flow chart for how it must be applied, and outlines the responsibilities of authorities and data collectors.⁷³

4.3 Media capacity

The building of media capacity to raise awareness about VAWP and increase the visibility of gender equality concerns is an important contribution to addressing VAWP. When the media devalues or trivializes women’s contributions to decision-making, they help normalize GBV. At the same time, the media can be a critical ally in all its forms as a powerful vehicle for denouncing violence and transforming public perceptions of women as leaders equally legitimate to men.

News coverage of VAWP as a human rights violation – both within and outside electoral contexts and not only among high-level women politicians or national-level politics – is critical for documenting all forms and acts of violence and to dismantle the perception that GBV is something that is simply to be expected. News media can be encouraged to conduct gender-sensitive political reporting (e.g. by avoiding gender stereotypes or focusing on women’s appearance more than their policy positions) and balanced reporting of women and men electoral candidates in terms of types and levels of coverage.

Different media outlets or organizations, like broadcasting commissions, can also be encouraged to develop codes of ethics regarding VAWP that emphasize the need to portray women’s political participation fairly and comprehensively, without stereotypes,⁷⁴ and improve access to information about VAWP referral systems or toll-free numbers for victims.

Other forms of media can be used to raise awareness about VAWP and promote positive portrayals of women’s political leadership, such as documentaries and films, television and radio series or soap operas, debates, public service announcements and social media campaigns.

States may require capacity building to set standards for media and social media companies on VAWP prevention and response. The 2018 UNGA resolution (A/RES/73/148 17) called on States “to encourage the media to examine the impact of gender-role stereotypes, including those perpetuated by commercial advertisements, that foster gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and inequalities, to promote zero tolerance for such violence and to remove the stigma of being a victim and survivor of violence, thus creating an enabling and accessible environment where women and girls can easily report incidents of violence and make use of the services available, including protection and assistance programmes.” The Secretary-General has furthermore urged governments and other stakeholders to “set standards on what constitutes online violence against women in public life so that the media and companies running social media platforms can be held accountable for such content.”⁷⁵

BOX 11

Building media capacity regarding gender equality and VAWP

In **Central African Republic**, UN Women trained media professionals to cover gender equality and women’s empowerment issues in 2018. A network of gender-sensitive journalists was established during the workshop to promote equal media coverage during elections and to report on and sensitize the public to VAWP.

In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, UN Women and International IDEA jointly produced studies on the under-representation of women politicians and gender stereotypes in campaign media coverage.⁷⁶



In **Nigeria**, as part of a project supported by UN Women, the achievements of twenty women political leaders were showcased through the development and publication of

the Magazine SHAPE (Showcasing Her Ability in Political Engagement). SHAPE highlighted women’s contributions and accomplishments in politics and communicated the challenges they face in public life.

In **Tunisia**, according to Article 11 of the national law on EVAW, “public and private media shall raise awareness on the dangers of VAW, and methods for combating and preventing it, and shall ensure training of people working in the media to handle issues related to violence exercised against women in line with professional ethics, human rights and equality. Advertising and broadcasting material containing stereotyped portrayals, scenes, words, or acts prejudicial to the image of women, reinforcing violence or trivializing its seriousness is prohibited.” The Independent Higher Authority for Audiovisual Communication is mandated to take appropriate legal measures and impose penalties to address any of these violations.

5. Support during electoral processes

5.1 Technical assistance to Electoral Management Bodies

Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) are the principal State actors in electoral administration whose decisions and actions determine the credibility and security of elections. While GBVAW is present in all political processes, elections expose social and political differences and can increase the risk of violence. Women, comprising over half of eligible voters in most countries, are particularly at risk.⁷⁷ UN Women, for example, often works with EMBs to support gender mainstreaming in an electoral process as part of assistance, typically coordinated by UNDP. It is critical to include VAWP in gender mainstreaming of an EMB’s work.⁷⁸

In administering the election law in preparation for an election, there are several points at which EMBs can mitigate and respond to gender-based violence, including by:

- **Analyzing voter and candidate registration procedures** to prevent barriers to women’s participation.
- **Guaranteeing secure arrangements registration, voting, and campaigning arrangements** so that women voters and candidates can safely participate and campaign.

- **Integrating information about mitigation measures for gender-based violence** into training programmes for electoral administrators.
- **Ensuring that early warning systems** for electoral violence and security assessments are not gender blind.
- **Providing opportunities for monitoring and reporting** on incidents of VAW in elections.⁷⁹

5.1.1 Enforcing electoral laws and regulations

In some countries, EMBs and electoral tribunals have specific VAWP prevention and enforcement roles; an EMB can use its mandate and authority to align with the normative framework underpinning VAWP in the country. This is an important strategy, depending on the context, EMBs can have extensive jurisdiction over political party conduct, electoral processes, and enforcement of electoral laws, including gender quota laws. Where the terms of political party codes of conduct are legally mandated, EMBs can help enforce them through legal sanctions.⁸⁰

EMBs may have jurisdiction over enforcing election laws and codes of conduct and, in some cases, adjudicating electoral disputes (see previous section on the [Judiciary](#)). They can identify measures for preventing and responding to violence during the political campaign period, including violence perpetrated within political parties, and adopt codes of conduct for elections and political parties as preventative measures against VAWP. Election day may be particularly prone to violence, so EMBs can analyze past and planned polling arrangements to ensure appropriate, context-specific measures are implemented to prevent and respond to incidents of VAWP.

5.1.2 Hotspot mapping

EMBs can map out VAW in elections to identify ‘hotspots’ and design appropriate mitigation and monitoring mechanisms. This mapping, in conjunction with broader electoral security assessments, can help identify at-risk individuals, and areas, for GBV and provide the EMB with information about effective ways to include and protect potentially vulnerable populations so they may exercise their rights.⁸¹

Electoral risk and security assessments, and VAWP mapping, may help identify hotspots and can be useful for the EMB in designing appropriate mitigation and monitoring mechanisms. EMBs can analyze voter and candidate registration procedures to determine whether they intentionally, or unintentionally, encourage VAWP or pose barriers to women’s participation generally.

5.1.3 Violence mitigation through voter education

EMBs are central to voter education programmes and registration drives (see section on [Civil Society](#)). By integrating VAWP into these programmes, EMBs can help raise and support national awareness and dialogue on the issue while also encouraging women in their right to vote freely and safely. EMBs can be supported to ensure information about VAWP, and respective mitigation measures, are integrated into training programmes for electoral administrators and other election stakeholders. This information should also reach women at the grassroots, so they are aware of the response mechanisms.

BOX 12

Mitigating violence through voter education

In **Bangladesh**, UN Women – in coordination with UNDP – conducted the first gender assessment of the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC). The assessment was validated by the BEC and provides medium- and long-term recommendations, some of which were implemented during 2018. To build capacity for EC staff, UN Women and UNDP, in partnership with the BEC, conducted two BRIDGE workshops on Gender and Elections in Rangpur and Chattogram.⁸² Participants included staff from BEC district offices and representatives from the media, CSOs, election observation organizations and universities. Participants identified barriers to women’s participation and proposed strategies and actions to enable their effective participation in the 2018 parliamentary elections and throughout the electoral cycle. A public outreach and awareness-raising initiative was also implemented through: (i) a multi-stakeholder consultation on *Ensuring Safety and Security of Women in Elections*;⁸³ and (ii) an awareness-raising campaign which mobilized over 3,000 advocates to actively engage in the discussions and underscored the importance of expanding the initiative to all 64 districts and 492 *upazilas*.⁸⁴

In **Bolivia**, UN Women supported the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Bolivia’s EMB) to develop and implement its Gender Policy, which contributed to enhanced capacities of 453 EMB staff (232 women and 221 men) regarding effective implementation of the legal frameworks on parity and handling VAWP cases, through 15 workshops with the

Departmental Electoral Courts. A cross-country exchange and regional dialogue on best practices to promote gender parity and respond to VAWP through the *Second Meeting of the Association of Electoral Magistrates of the Americas* (AMEA) was organized with UN Women's support, in partnership with IDEA and EuroSocial.

In **Dominican Republic**, the EMB, with support from UN Women and other institutions, developed the website [Know your Candidate](#) where, in addition to enhancing candidate visibility, the issue of VAWP is recognized.⁸⁵

In **Ecuador**, UN Women supported the EMB's regulation of the reform of the Code of Democracy (2020) which incorporates VAWP.

In **Guatemala**, the Electoral Tribunal implemented a training programme on VAW in elections with 120 staff who gained knowledge on the practical steps to report and prevent electoral offenses and violence. This process was coordinated with the Electoral Offenses Unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office. The Electoral Tribunal also produced and widely disseminated [civic education materials](#) informed by the 2017 UN Women and UNDP joint publication, [Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide](#).

In **Liberia**, UN Women supported the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to develop a [protocol](#) for addressing VAW in elections in 2020. The protocol builds on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the NEC and Liberian political parties under a convening body referred to as the Inter Party Consultative Committee (IPCC) and will operationalize clauses in the MoU on mitigating VAW in elections.

In **Nigeria**, UN Women deployed an international consultant to coordinate UN Women's programming and technical support to strategic partners and electoral stakeholders in preparation for the 2019 general election.⁸⁶ Technical support was provided to the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to implement its Gender Policy, specifically through coordinated advocacy with political parties to strengthen capacity for media organizations to promote gender-responsive media coverage of elections. In coordination with INEC and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, UN Women also convened awareness-raising sessions on

preventing VAWP with traditional and religious leaders, youth groups and trade unionists, and enhanced the technical capacities of a civil society-led monitoring platform operating in 14 states and in coordination with the INEC and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

In **Zimbabwe**, UN Women and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission provided capacity-building to staff of the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) through a BRIDGE training on gender and elections. As a result of the training, ZEC members agreed to a set of gender-responsive electoral arrangements, including the following: preferential treatment to lactating mothers, persons with disabilities and pregnant women; increasing the number of women involved in voter education, registration and as polling officers; and a political parties code of conduct with commitments to prevent VAWP. In addition, 1,500 police officers enhanced their awareness and capacity regarding gender and elections, and the role of the police in reducing and addressing VAWP. The 2017 UN Women and UNDP joint publication, [Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide](#), was used as the basis for the training curricula. In partnership with UNDP, UN Women also provided technical support to the ZEC to implement its first gender-responsive voter education campaign. The *Women's Vote Campaign* included powerful visuals encouraging women to vote, and materials were printed and disseminated on social media throughout the country's ten provinces.

In **Tunisia** during the 2019 elections, UN Women, in partnership with the national EMB, *L'Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections* (ISIE), contributed to the development of a practical guide on electoral violence that was disseminated to observers to notify and act against VAWP. UN Women continues to support the EMB to integrate a gender approach throughout the electoral process and to increase women's participation.

At regional level in **Latin America and the Caribbean**, courses that incorporate the issue of VAWP have been developed and promoted by UN Women, in partnership with the Center for Electoral Assistance and Promotion (CAPEL) and the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, for members of electoral bodies on women's political rights.

5.2 Technical assistance to political parties

Political parties determine a country's policy agenda and establish procedures for selecting candidates. They are also among the most common perpetrators of violence.⁸⁷ There are, however, numerous ways political parties can mitigate violence such as enhancing women's political participation, explicitly addressing VAWP in their founding documents, rules and regulations, and by publicly rejecting any form of gender-based violence.⁸⁸

In line with the UN electoral assistance policy, engagement with political parties must be impartial and focus only on the technical assistance required for political parties to integrate policies, measures and mechanisms to prevent and respond to VAWP; the UN does not help develop specific policy platforms in elections. One means of doing so may be engagement through cross-party platforms and/or, where relevant, national offices of political party registrars known to involve all political parties equally.

Support provided by UNDP-led electoral assistance projects may also present opportunities to convey relevant messages and impart technical capacity for gender equality and women's empowerment within political parties in an impartial manner.

BOX 13

Providing technical assistance to political parties

In **Bolivia**, UN Women supported the Electoral Tribunal to convene a year-long consultative process with a wide range of national stakeholders to draft the Political Organisations Law enacted in August 2018.⁸⁹ Under the new law, all political parties must ensure gender equality and parity within their own organizations, as well as prevent and mitigate violence against women.

The UN Regional Office for Women in West and Central Africa (WCARO) commissioned a *political party mapping* in 2020 to analyse the role and representation of women in the political parties across parliaments in **Central African Republic, Guinea, Liberia, and Nigeria**. The mapping revealed that parties did not have founding or

governing documents on gender equality and the promotion of women's leadership. Only 10 per cent of surveyed parties mention gender at all in their internal regulations and just 5 per cent in their party statutes. Although VAWP was not directly covered in the survey, respondents were asked about the challenges and obstacles women face in the party. Respondents described a complex and pervasive system of exclusion that serves to "consolidate men's hegemony". Inhibiting factors include a paucity of women's representation in party leadership; a lack of special measures to systematically increase their leadership; direct experiences of bullying and violence; a lack of party-backed protection for women who run for office; and the common claim by party leadership of a "shortage" of women candidates because they "shy away" from politics.

Party gender policies should consider measures to address and sanction against VAWP. Complementary complaint and response mechanisms for women experiencing violence can also be put in place. Parties can further "adopt internal regulations, codes of conduct and zero-tolerance policies for perpetrators of any form of VAWP, including sexual harassment and violence perpetrated through media releases and statements," and sanction against such behavior conducted by its members.⁹⁰ Political party codes of conduct, applicable from the time the party is established, may also impact women's participation more effectively than electoral codes of conduct, which only govern party activities in election periods.⁹¹

Political parties can play another important role in mitigating VAWP by ensuring inclusive nomination processes (including through the use of gender quotas) and the equitable distribution of resources; this respects women's rights and provides equal opportunities for them to vie for leadership positions through well-established, transparent and enforced rules. In addition, parties can provide skills development for women and men party members on preventing and addressing VAWP within the party.

BOX 14

Political party initiatives

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, the **UK Labour Party** adopted a sexual harassment policy.⁹² Under the new procedures, an independent investigator will be appointed to review every formal complaint, gather evidence from the complainant, and advise on how the investigation should proceed. An independent specialist advice service has also been launched to provide support to complainants throughout the process. In 2019, the **Australian Labour Party** also adopted an *Interim Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy*.⁹³

In **Latin America** and the **Caribbean**, a regional project between UN Women, CIM and MESECVI has supported several workshops for introducing a *Model Protocol for Political Parties* in **Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador** and **Guatemala**, as well as an awareness-raising video to promote dissemination.

5.3 Technical assistance to civil society groups

The evolution of norms leading to worldwide attention on violence against women in politics would have been impossible without grassroots initiatives – from gender equality advocates seeking to end VAWP to the efforts of international and national women’s rights movements and organizations across the world. All actors share a common goal of elevating the issue to the global agenda and setting new norms and standards to inform and shape policy and programme responses.

The actions of civil society groups – from dialogue to advocacy and awareness-raising, to election and political process monitoring and reporting – continue to stimulate States and other actors to initiate solutions and hold themselves and others to account. Often, women active in civil society organizations (CSOs) and women’s rights and feminist movements are themselves victims and survivors of violence perpetrated within their own organizations, and by state and non-state actors.

CSOs are thus strong potential advocates for VAWP prevention and response with key roles to play in VAWP prevention and response. CSOs can, for example, play a crucial role in the following: advocating for the implementation of normative frameworks, national legislation and strategic litigation; awareness-raising of VAWP among the constituencies they represent; organizing

cross-party networks of women politicians to take action; representing women in politics who are seeking redress, and in monitoring incidence and prevalence (see section on [National Observatory Monitoring](#)). Technical and financial support may also be provided to civil society groups to undertake civic education, advocacy and awareness-raising on VAWP (see section on [Advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising](#)).

BOX 15

Providing technical assistance to civil society groups

The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Women Authorities Elected to Local Government [La Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Mujeres Autoridades Electas de Gobiernos Locales (RedLamugol)], created in 2008, is one of the organizations that actively works to ensure the Quito Consensus is effectively implemented. One of RedLamugol’s priorities is to advocate that statutes condemning harassment and political violence against women elected authorities at local level are incorporated into public policy agendas.

Asociación de Concejalas de Bolivia (ACOBOL) is the only non-state organization involved in the passing and subsequent overseeing of reported cases of political violence filed under Bolivia’s Law 243. ACOBOL was instrumental in drafting the protocol for receiving, investigating and responding to reports of VAWE. For example, ACOBOL’s research found that, despite the passing of Law 243, “complaints of violence against councillors were lodged in 170 municipalities” in 2014. Additionally, ACOBOL served as a member of the Political Rights for Women Action Committee since 2004.

The Asociación de Mujeres Municipalistas del Ecuador has followed ACOBOL’s example in condemning VAWE by supporting Ecuador’s own proposed legislation on violence against women in politics and elections.

The **National Forum of Women in Political Parties in Panama** (FONAMUPP) has played a key role in building consensus among women politicians for VAWP legislation.

At regional level, in the framework of the fifth Ibero-American Summit of Gender Local Agendas (2020), UN Women, jointly with the

Ibero-American Union of Municipalists (UIM) and the **Network of Municipalities for Gender Equality (RIMIG)**, held talks on VAWP and launched a collection of *Stories of Violence against Women in Politics in Latin America*. In 2019, the UIM and the **National Association of Salvadoran Councillors (ANDRYAS)** in **El Salvador, with the support of UN Women**, organized a [congress](#) which also addressed the issue of VAWP.

CIM and **MESECVI** held a series of conferences in 2020 with representatives of [organizations pursuing litigation](#) on VAWP.

Source: This box is based upon UN Women and UNDP (2017), [Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide](#).

5.4 Informing civil society electoral observation efforts

The United Nations does not observe elections. Upon request, however, UN agencies can provide technical support to ensure that gender equality concerns are integrated into the election observation work of regional and national partners. This is relevant to VAWP programming because domestic and international observers are potentially vital sources of information and data on VAW in elections. Election observation reports and recommendations can identify obstacles to women's participation and issue targeted recommendations to national stakeholders.

International observation missions often have access to powerful political stakeholders and resources. Domestic observers have in-depth knowledge of the national context and are positioned to rapidly deploy sometimes thousands of people across the country to gather VAWP information.

Despite their potential, international and domestic observation missions have not systematically coordinated or integrated VAWP into their methodologies. There are many ongoing efforts in the election observation community to harmonize observation methodologies, such as by mainstreaming gender and VAWP into observer checklists. The UN can use its role in coordination and technical assistance to help ensure such efforts are synchronized, where appropriate, and based on requests from national partners.

BOX 16

Providing technical support to electoral observation

UN Women convened a forum in 2018 for regional organizations involved in electoral observation missions (EOMs) in **East and Southern Africa** to share good practices on strengthening the gender-responsiveness of methodologies and reports. Nearly 40 experts gathered from over 15 countries, including civil society leaders, technical experts, and representatives from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and UN Women Country Offices.

Sessions explored how three East and Southern African RECs could strengthen their observation reports and recommendations by improving the gender-sensitivity and gender-responsiveness of their electoral observation guidelines and tools. Through good practice exchange and discussion among international, regional, and national organizations engaged in election observation and promoting women's political participation, participants deepened their knowledge of gender-sensitive election observation and identified gaps and opportunities for gender mainstreaming in the election observation guidelines of RECs.

Recommendations included the following: strengthen gender-sensitive data collection, analysis and dissemination; consider gender in EOM composition, training and operations; expand and mainstream gender equality concerns into observer checklists and tools; and ensure EOM reports and recommendations are gender-responsive by including specific findings and targeted recommendations about various aspects of women's political participation.

6. Coordination, advocacy campaigns and awareness-raising

Addressing VAWP requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach and thorough planning. Before embarking on designing VAWP interventions at country level, a situation analysis or mapping can help determine who is working on VAWP and what they are doing, what will be the added value of each partner agency and national institution, and how efforts can be harmonized to make the best use of available time and resources.

6.1 Coordination and advocacy within the UN System

- **UN System Key Messages**, UN Women should work with its partner agencies on joint advocacy and common messaging on VAWP, especially around elections. However, while UN statements and public comments around elections can be important tools, they should be used strategically both to avoid any misunderstanding about the organization's role and the organization's political instrumentalization. See [Annex A](#) for Key Messages for the UN System on VAWP that can be used at regional and country levels.
- **Inside UN Women**, reach out to the governance or political participation advisor in your RO and/or HQ to start brainstorming. They will be able to advise on latest trends, policy guidance or lessons learned on VAWP programming in different countries.
- **Within the UN Country Team**, position UN Women in its coordinating role on VAWP from the beginning, considering the complementary roles and comparative advantages of other agencies and stakeholders and building on the potential benefits of well-established and clear partnerships. Several UN entities have complementary mandates that can contribute to a coordinated approach to addressing VAWP. For instance, UNDP is the main provider of electoral and parliamentary assistance, UNESCO often takes care of the media, and UNFPA usually covers GBV. Strong collaboration and coordination mechanisms with UN partners enable coherent and comprehensive programming.
- **Planning and strategies for engagement should initially be discussed internally at the UN.** Allocate enough time to sensitize appropriate partner agencies and conduct joint planning. A common voice in this process is important as well as fair distribution of roles and responsibilities before approaching national counterparts (or other international development partners).

6.2 Coordination and advocacy with national partners

- **VAWP programming is inherently multidisciplinary**, combining governance, elections, EVAW/ GBV, women's political participation, data, and research, among other subject areas. This requires bringing together a variety of stakeholders with the mandates, influence, and technical capacity to intervene and effect change. Involving multiple stakeholders

will ensure national ownership and strengthen national capacities for VAWP prevention and response.

- **Relevant stakeholders** may include national mechanisms for gender equality, EMBs, networks and forums of women politicians, political parties and national institutions that convene and/or oversee political parties, security institutions, justice bodies, GBV/VAW coordination and referral mechanisms, national statistics offices (NSOs), the media, academia and gender equality advocates, and traditional and religious leaders. The composition of VAWP stakeholders will vary depending on country context.

6.3 Coordination and advocacy with other international partners

- *Several international organizations actively work to address VAWP globally, regionally, and nationally.* These can be important programming allies and partners – with different comparative advantages – in maximizing support to women and national partners. Organizations may include international election observation groups and other international non-governmental organizations working on democratic governance or eliminating violence against women.

See [Annex B](#) for a list of potential stakeholders on VAWP.

6.4 Breaking the silence

Breaking the silence on VAWP is one of the first steps towards ending it. Advocacy and awareness-raising can take various forms, including, but not limited to the following.

- **International campaigns**, such as the UN Women [HeForShe](#) solidarity movement, or the NDI [#NotTheCost](#) campaign, that can be adapted and rolled out nationally and target stakeholders who can influence perceptions about women in politics and actions regarding VAWP. These include security forces, the judiciary, civil society, religious and traditional leaders, political leaders, and others.
- **Social media campaigns**, in addition to those listed above, can reach wide audiences nationally and globally, especially if national and global social influencers, including women politicians, are engaged.
- **Engagement and dialogue with traditional and religious leaders** who are strategic allies to change perceptions about women's leadership and political participation and therefore should be trained and engaged as partners, where relevant.

- **National dialogues on elections, violence and women**, such as post-election dialogues with national stakeholders, can provide a unique opportunity to reflect on how VAWP featured in the election, how it was treated and how it can be better addressed in the future. A dialogue can be convened with relevant national stakeholders (e.g. political parties, journalists, EMBs) about what VAWP is, how it is understood in the national context and how it manifests, as well as ways it can and should be addressed by relevant national stakeholders. Not only does a dialogue process help raise awareness about VAWP in the country, it can also support an overall process for identifying national priorities and initiating partnerships to address it.
- **National launches of the UN Women and UNDP 2017 Publication *Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide and other events*** especially between 25 November and 10 December to coincide with the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign.

While advocacy and awareness-raising on VAWP should not be linked on to elections, violence often intensifies during the pre-election period when electoral law reforms are undertaken, electoral preparations and arrangements are under way and women are more exposed as voters, candidates and election workers (see section on [Elections programming](#)).

BOX 17

National dialogues on VAWP, UN Women-UNDP Programming Guide on Preventing VAWP, and other awareness-raising initiatives

- In **Colombia**, UN Women and the Legal Commission for Women's Equity of the Colombian Congress organized a national dialogue with parliamentarians to promote adoption of legal reforms on VAWP.⁹⁴
- In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, UN Women organized discussions on VAWP as part of a dialogue – *Elections 2020 and COVID-19: guidelines for the defense of women's political rights* – in **Bolivia and Dominican Republic**, in partnership with CAPEL and national electoral bodies.⁹⁵
- During the 16 Days of Activism campaign to end violence against women in 2017, UN

Women launched the Guide in the **Republic of Moldova** and facilitated a post-election discussion with national stakeholders to reflect on VAWP in the national context. In addition to UNDP, UN Women partnered with the Central Election Commission (CEC) and its Centre for Continuous Electoral Training and Women in Election Management International. After UN Women presented the Guide, the CEC chairman facilitated a discussion with participants that included CEC members and staff, parliamentarians and members of the parliamentary women's caucus, relevant government and ministry representatives, gender equality advocates, CSOs working on elections and political foundations and donors.

- In 2018 in **Sierra Leone**, UN Women also launched the Guide to facilitate a pre-election dialogue with national stakeholders. As part of the event, UN Women distributed it along with 'pledge cards' to stakeholders – ranging from EMB members to police – to express why women's political participation is important. UN Women also integrated a HeForShe component into the launch to garner public commitments from influential men leaders to support women in politics.
- UN Women documented experiences of **nine women** in **Latin America** and **the Caribbean** who broke their silence on VAWP.

Additional awareness-raising initiatives and programmed include:

- The #NotTheCost Campaign (NDI) to raise awareness about VAW during elections and offer support to political parties in addressing VAWP.
- The 2017 video project, *Mapping Gender-Based Political Harassment: Parliamentarians speak out* (ParlAmericas), that collected the testimonies of parliamentarians.
- The *Red de conocimientos electorales* (Ace Electoral Project) that maps and measures VAW during elections and promotes the inclusion of a VAWP component in electoral observation; and
- The Education on Electoral Violence and its Resolution programme (IFES) that collect sex-disaggregated data on electoral violence.

Community initiatives targeting local level opinion makers, such as religious and traditional leaders, are a powerful means of awareness-raising in various settings. The media can also be engaged and provided with VAWP training, as well as support for specific campaigns through national television, radio, and print or social media (see section on [Media](#)).

While technical and financial support can be provided to civil society groups to undertake VAWP advocacy and awareness-raising, it is vital that initiatives are owned nationally and draw on local knowledge (see section

on [Technical assistance to civil society groups](#)). This will help ensure the sustainability of VAWP efforts by strengthening national women's organizations, networks and platforms.

When supporting national level campaigns, UN entities must be certain that there is no perception of political bias; any message or statement should not convey favorable or unfavorable views of any political party and the organizations supported must be widely regarded as non-political and without a specific political inclination (see section on [Coordination](#)).

BOX 18

Media initiatives supported by UN Women



The *Observatorio de Paridad Democrática de Bolivia* (ODP or Parity Democracy Observatory of **Bolivia**) organized a [campaign](#) against cyberbullying and online harassment with UN Women's support in 2020 that included several awareness-raising [initiatives](#).



In **Lebanon**, positive portrayals of women leaders were promoted through [Half of Society, Half of Parliament](#), a countrywide advocacy and media campaign supported by UN Women,

that delivered positive, respectful and impartial messaging targeting key electoral stakeholders and communities. The campaign served to: i) promote an inclusive electoral process and positive portrayal of women political leaders; ii) encourage political parties to nominate women in leadership positions; iii) encourage women activists to run for elections; and iv) encourage voters to support women candidates.



In **Nigeria**, a UN Women project provided technical support to national efforts to mitigate VAW in elections through National Peace Rallies. These gathered 1,500 women and were organized by the Women in Politics Forum and the Centre for Democracy and Development on 5 February 2019 in Abuja and in 14 states. The Rallies encouraged women to participate in elections and sensitized the public on the importance of violence-free elections using the slogan “Women for Peace”.

IV. DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING VAWP PROGRAMMING INTERVENTIONS

National partners can be supported to address VAWP as part of elections programmes and/or general women’s political empowerment programmes. Country Offices may choose to develop a stand-alone project on VAWP or to integrate it within broader projects, depending on the timing; for UN Women, activities should be aligned with the relevant outputs and indicators in its strategic plan.

1. Elections programming

Elections present an opportunity to address VAWP because when women compete and engage in the political process, violence may be used to discourage them. Visibility of women’s participation and violence is typically heightened in electoral contexts. There also tends to be an influx of financial resources available for UN agencies, including UN Women, to implement electoral assistance programming which UN Women can leverage for VAWP prevention and response.

VAWP programming in an electoral context would be delivered within the broader framework of electoral support activities – where there is approved UN electoral assistance – and typically in coordination with UNDP and other UN partners. Partnerships established through electoral assistance projects provide opportunities for working with electoral stakeholders to influence VAWP prevention and improve response readiness in an election.

Where funding allocations through electoral assistance projects are insufficient to design a comprehensive, long-term VAWP project, agencies like UN Women can consider seeking complementary funding to extend VAWP programming beyond elections.

2. Other programming

National stakeholders can be supported to address VAWP outside of electoral contexts within the framework of broader and ongoing programming on women’s political empowerment and participation in public life.

VAWP programming, messages and information can be integrated into parliamentary assistance, in specific leadership training modules, and through advocacy or peacebuilding initiatives (including Peace Building Fund Joint programmes with political participation components), as well as into office communications, coordination and work with the media, among others. In some country teams, relevant colleagues who focus on women’s political participation (and/or leadership and governance), ending violence against women (EVAW), and peace, security, and humanitarian response, may collaborate on joint activities.

The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) process might also offer an opportunity to engage with relevant stakeholders through dialogue on the country’s situation regarding VAWP, and could therefore inform proposed interventions within relevant Outcome areas of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) to prevent and mitigate VAWP.

3. Critical considerations

Regardless of when VAWP programming or activities are designed and implemented, core UN principles must be incorporated to ensure the UN is, and is perceived to be, politically neutral. These essential principles include respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states, gender awareness, political neutrality, and sensitivity to the political dimensions of elections.

Importantly, country teams should consider the risk that national counterparts may face violence due to their engagement in UN programming. That includes partners in government, EMBS, women’s organizations, the media and beyond. UN Women should be sensitive to the possible violence that staff, implementing partners, responsible parties, and other counterparts may face taking part in UN Women sponsored activities where they are expressing their political rights. This is especially relevant in electoral contexts where civil society and other non-state actors are engaged for VAWE monitoring, prevention, and response and do not have the same legal or physical protections as state actors.

ANNEXES

Annex A. Key messages for the UN System on VAWP

These key messages for the UN system on VAWP were adopted at the 16 January 2020 UN Executive Committee Meeting on Violence Against Women in Politics and are intended for system-wide use at global, regional, and national level.

Top-level system-wide message

1. Violence against women in politics is a pervasive and disturbing violation of human rights. It is both a manifestation of, and also exacerbates, gender inequality. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits and guides the world to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Having more women decision-makers leads to more inclusive solutions that benefit us all. Therefore, any act, or threat of, gender-based violence that prevents women from exercising their equal right to participate in public affairs, vote and be elected, assemble or access services, has detrimental impacts: it impedes the work of public institutions, weakens policy outcomes, and stalls and undermines peace and development. States bear the duty to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women in politics, regardless of perpetrator.

Top-level systemwide messages more specifically relevant in electoral contexts

2. Violence against women and girls in the public sphere is a grave problem, transcending political and legal systems, cultures, and societies, during conflict and peace, and all levels of development. The UN is concerned that it seems to be increasing globally, along with hate speech and an overall backlash against women's rights. Individual women and organizations representing women active in the political sphere are targeted for intimidation, harassment, and violence. New forms of intimidation, sexual harassment and hate speech have emerged and spread through online and social media, and in domestic political discourse, the impact of which is particularly noticeable during an electoral process.

3. All Member States are encouraged to institutionalize a zero-tolerance approach to intimidation, sexual harassment, and any other form of gender-based violence against women, to adopt relevant legislation and policies, and to make resources available to promote and enable women's full participation and leadership in political and public spheres. Early warning mechanisms should be put in place as well as pro-active high-level advocacy normalizing women's participation and leadership. To support this, Member States are encouraged to collect and share systematic data on violence and serious threats committed against women in politics and its impact on their levels of political participation and, critically, address discriminatory laws, norms, attitudes and behaviors that prevent women from taking up political leadership roles from local through national levels.

Messages for principals, including RCs and SRSGs, regarding specific acts of VAWP against heads of state and government, and/or cases of VAWP negatively affecting elected officials at national or local levels and other prominent women political leaders or groups of women in political and electoral contexts:

4. The UN condemns *[this act of violence against women in politics]*, and all forms of violence against women. The UN urges *[Member State]*, as a matter of urgency and based on its international/regional obligations, to adopt a comprehensive approach for the prevention of and response to violence against women in politics and during elections and to ensure coordination between different governmental sectors in the areas of justice and social protection.
5. The UN urges *[Member State]* to take immediate steps to remedy *[specific act of violence/case, e.g. gender-based acts of physical/psychological/sexual violence against women in politics, including sexual harassment and online trolling, deliberate attempts to discourage or exclude women candidates from elections, etc.]*. We call on the *[Member State]* authorities to fully investigate *[these allegations, acts, cases]* and to ensure that women can fully, equally, and safely exercise their rights to participate in politics and in public life.

Annex B. Stakeholders list

This is a list of key stakeholders involved in addressing violence against women in politics. It is not exhaustive, and stakeholders may vary depending on the country context.

Stakeholders	Examples of areas for collaboration
Academia	Commission research or papers on VAWP; partner to support gender equality advocates in advocacy and awareness-raising; coordination of research and data collection methodologies, where appropriate.
Civil Society Organizations	Technical and/or financial assistance to advocate for implementation of normative frameworks, national legislation and strategic litigation; organize cross-party networks of women politicians to act; represent women in politics seeking redress and monitoring incidence and prevalence; undertake civic education, advocacy and awareness-raising on VAWP.
Electoral Management Bodies	Support gender mainstreaming in an electoral process as part of UN electoral assistance, where applicable; technical and/or financial support for voter education on VAWP; technical assistance with analyzing voter and candidate registration procedures to prevent barriers to women's participation, ensuring that registration and voting arrangements guarantee women's safety; making sure that candidates can campaign safely; integrating information about mitigation measures for gender-based violence into training programmes for electoral administrators; ensuring that early warning systems for electoral violence and security assessments are not gender blind; VAWE 'hotspot' mapping; reporting on VAWE incidents; enforcing election laws and codes of conduct; and adjudicating electoral disputes, where relevant.
Judiciary	Training for raising awareness of judges and prosecutors regarding VAWP and enhancing their capacity to apply laws consistent with international human rights standards when investigating complaints and prosecuting perpetrators; technical assistance with updating complaint mechanisms and response protocols, including for electoral courts, legislative chambers or local administrations, to ensure enforcement mechanisms deal with VAWP cases; technical support to make sure that courts, magistrates and legal drafting teams are knowledgeable about VAWP concepts and terminology, as nationally applicable; and technical assistance with enforcing election laws and codes of conduct; and adjudicating electoral disputes where relevant.
Male Leaders (including political leaders, religious and traditional leaders)	Partner with individuals and organizations to sensitize male leaders and encourage them to incorporate acceptance of women in public life, and zero tolerance for VAWP, into their community messaging; training and sensitization on women's political participation; and advocacy and awareness-raising through campaigns like HeForShe.
Media	Capacity-building to raise awareness about VAWP and increase visibility of gender equality concerns; advocacy with, and technical support for, different media outlets or organizations, like broadcasting commissions, to develop codes of ethics about VAWP; partnerships to raise awareness about VAWP and promote positive portrayals of women's political leadership, such as through documentaries and films, television and radio series or soap operas, debates, public service announcements and social media campaigns.

Stakeholders	Examples of areas for collaboration
National Gender Observatories on Gender Equality, VAW and/or Women's Political Participation	Awareness-raising and advocacy for the establishment of an Observatory with the national government; technical and financial support for initial assessments, planning, implementation and evaluation; resource mobilization and/or provision of financial support for the Observatory's establishment and functioning, where needed; sharing of best practices and lessons learned on structure, roles and composition of Observatories; development of data collection and analysis tools and training on their application; processing of information for policy development, advocacy and awareness-raising; and establishing VAWP response coordination and response mechanisms.
National Mechanisms for Gender Equality	Capacity strengthening, and financial and technical support to undertake coordination roles on efforts to end VAWP at the national level, which may include establishing Gender Observatories and/or monitoring VAWP, as well as coordination and collaboration with national ERAW advocates.
National Parliaments	Technical support for: revision of relevant legislation to incorporate legal responses to VAWP; development of country-specific legal guidelines for how the existing legislation can be used to address VAWP experienced by survivors or institutions; development of regional model legislation or regional legal guidelines on VAWP, particularly in regions where countries have ratified relevant human rights conventions; development of a compendium of legal responses to VAWP on how existing legislation and available international and regional standards are used to address VAWP at the national level, including through regional courts or individual claims; creating a catalog of VAWP observations in Member State CEDAW reporting to help the CEDAW Committee bring more attention to the issue.
National Statistics Offices	Coordination and collaboration on data collection and compilation on VAWP/E; technical assistance and capacity strengthening on VAWP concepts and data collection and reporting methodologies.
Networks of Women Leaders	Support women from across parties in both politics and civil society (e.g. women's parliamentary caucuses, women's rights organizations) to convene around a common agenda and advocate with key institutions – such as political parties, parliaments, and media – for addressing VAWP.
Political Parties	Engage through cross-party platforms and/or, where relevant, national offices of political party registrars, known to involve all political parties equally, to provide technical assistance in line with UN electoral assistance policy through adopting internal regulations, codes of conduct and zero tolerance policies for perpetrators of any form of VAWP; ensuring inclusive nomination processes and equitable distribution of resources for women candidates and women's party networks; and offering skills development for women and men party members on preventing and addressing VAWP within the party.
Security Forces and Police	Specific training to strengthen awareness and capacity for ensuring public safety in accordance with national laws and international human rights and gender equality standards; mainstreaming VAWP in existing electoral security risk assessment, management and training programmes for police and security forces; technical assistance and capacity strengthening to identify and register cases of VAWP within internal case registration databases; refer cases of VAWP to the appropriate services according to existing VAW referral systems.

Stakeholders	Examples of areas for collaboration
Key UN Partners	
Country Team / Resident Coordinator's Office	Holding dedicated discussions with the Resident Coordinator Office and partner agencies on VAWP; outreach to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences and other relevant global and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms; increased assistance for the implementation of VAWP programming; integration of VAWP in prevention and response programming like early warning; including VAWP in human rights recommendations to countries; and, generally, improving inter-agency partnerships and coordination to strengthen advocacy and awareness-raising on VAWP (e.g. through policies, assessments, strategies, trainings and dialogues).
Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)	The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) of DPPA recommends to the Focal Point the parameters for all UN electoral assistance, pursuant to the request of Member States, and following an electoral needs assessment. Assistance might include addressing VAW in elections. UN Women's electoral assistance Focal Point oversees partnerships and communications with the EAD, especially where UN Women is implementing electoral assistance programming. UN Women and EAD-DPPA also collaborate on internal capacity-building on VAWP for UN staff.
OHCHR	As the principal UN office mandated to promote and protect human rights for all, OHCHR can be an important partner when working with and assisting governments in addressing VAWP as part of the fulfilment of their human rights obligations. OHCHR can speak out objectively in the face of VAWP as a human rights violation. Furthermore, OHCHR supports the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences for which VAWP is a priority issue, and other human rights monitoring mechanisms at regional and country level.
UNDP	UNDP's mandates on governance, elections, rule of law and security institutions constitute important entry points for addressing VAWP. It is therefore critical for UN Women to collaborate and coordinate with UNDP to maximize results.

Annex C. Additional reading

UN publications

Preventing violence against women in elections: A programming guide (UN Women and UNDP, 2017) | Available in English, French, Spanish, Georgian, Albanian. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/11/preventing-violence-against-women-in-elections>.

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International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics).⁹⁶

- Video: Violence Against Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics, 2019) | <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/video/violence-against-women-politics>
- Video and Summary: iKNOW Politics Website Relaunch and Panel on Violence Against Women in Politics (2017)

- Summary of the [e-Discussion](#) on Violence Against Women in Politics (2016)
- iKNOW Politics [Report](#) on Violence Against Women in Politics (2014)
- Summary of [e-Discussion on Online Harassment](#) of Women in Politics: How Online Harassment isn’t ‘Virtual’ For Women (2014)

UN Women country case studies

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- UN Women, OHCHR, Physicians for Human Rights, Kenya, 2019. *Breaking Cycles of Violence – Gaps in Prevention of and Response to Electoral Related Sexual Violence*.
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- UN Women Pakistan, 2016. *Creating an Enabling Environment for Women’s Political Participation: Ending violence against women in political and electoral processes*.
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Freidenberg, F. and Gilas, K. (2020). Violencia política en razón de género, nivel de exigencia normativa y armonización legislativa multinivel en México, 30 November.

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Krook, Mona Lena (2017). *Violence against Women in Politics*. *Journal of Democracy* vol. 28, No. 1, pp.74–88.

Lindberg, Staffan (2014). V-Dem: A new way to measure democracy. *Journal of Democracy* vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 159–169.

Piscopo, J. ulM. (2016). State Capacity, Criminal Justice, and Political Rights: Rethinking Violence Against Women in Politics. *Política y gobierno* XXIII, pp. 471–492.

Partner organization resources and studies

- *Model Inter-American Law to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Violence against Women in Political Life* – OAS (2017)
- *Model Protocol for Political Parties: Preventing, Addressing, Sanctioning and Eradicating Violence against Women in Political Life* – OAS (2019)
- “Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians” – IPU Issues Brief (2016)
- *Tweets That Chill: Analyzing Online Violence Against Women in Politics* – NDI (2019)
- *Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament*. – IPU, 2019
- *A Study on Violence against Women in Politics: Parliamentarians in the Arab World: A Model* – by Rula Al-Hroob, Rozana Al-Hroob and Ala’ Badr, for the Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equality (Ra’Edat), December 26, 2019.

ENDNOTES

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- 2 Violence against women in politics (VAWP) is the term largely used by the UN System; however, other terms and abbreviations are sometimes used in different contexts, such as: violence against women in Politics (VAWiP); political violence and harassment, which is often used in parts of Latin America; electoral sexual gender-based violence (ESGBV), often used in Kenya; and when referring to VAW perpetrated against women in public life more broadly, violence against women in political and public life (VAWPP).
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- 81 UN Women and UNDP (2017).
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- 83 For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/1571472223102417/posts/2131101990472768/>.
- 84 Participants included election officials, elected women representatives from all tiers of local government institutions, law enforcement agencies, journalists, CSOs, academics, youth leaders, women's network and activists, as well as college students and scouts from Mymensingh, Kurigram, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Barishal, Khulna, Jessore, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar.
- 85 <https://conocetucandidata.com/>.
- 86 Partners included the following: Independent National Electoral Commission, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, CSOs such as Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), the Nigerian Women Trust Fund, Young Stars Development Initiative, Change Managers Nigeria, Women International League for Peace and Freedom; Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Women in Politics Forum (WIPF); and Nigeria Women Trust Fund (NWTF).
- 87 UN Women and UNDP (2017).
- 88 A/73/301.
- 89 <http://observatorioparidaddemocratica.oep.org.bo/Destacados/EI-TSE-presentAs-el-proyecto-de-Ley-de-Organizaciones-PolAsticas>.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 UN Women, "Gender-Responsive Election Observation: Regional Forum on Methodologies and Good Practices for East & Southern Africa", meeting report. 2018.
- 92 UK Labour Party's Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure, <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Sexual-Harassment-Procedure-ApprovedNEC290119.pdf>.
- 93 Australian Labour Party's Interim Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy, <https://www.alp.org.au/media/1978/sexual-harassment-bullying-policy-updated-2-august-2019.pdf>.
- 94 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QR22gwXszcQ&fbclid=IwAR0aEJPFpyhSgC3D71abjejBwm4QdIfX5jYfdORiEDhiD3ti6f807A1KiNQ>.
- 95 <https://lac.unwomen.org/es/noticias-y-eventos/articulos/2020/06/elecciones-genero-y-covid-19>.
- 96 Established in 2007, iKNOW Politics is a joint project of International IDEA, the IPU, UNDP, and UN Women, <http://iknow-politics.org/en>.



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