



NO PARTY TO VIOLENCE: ANALYZING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Preliminary Findings from Pilots in Côte d'Ivoire,
Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia



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Introduction

Political parties are a cornerstone of democracy, providing critical pathways for citizens' political participation and engagement. They mobilise citizens behind ideologies and policies, select candidates for representative posts, lead electoral campaigns, form legislative blocs in parliaments and, if elected, implement a program of government. Their role in defining key political institutions - policy formation, elections and parliaments - mean political parties have traditionally been important springboards for women's political participation. However, because of history, tradition and gender norms, many have found it difficult to provide women with meaningful and equal access to leadership positions or party platforms. Political parties also tend to be 'protected'¹ public spaces, allowing and enabling violence against women within their ranks to take place.

¹ Protected Public Spaces are political institutions—such as political parties and associations, and parliaments—that in a democratic society should be transparent and accountable to the public. However, because of their traditionally elite male power structure and women's lower status within them (which can in some cases be compounded by the fact that they are deemed to be private associations or have certain privileges attached to them which exempt them from laws and scrutiny faced by other public institutions in the same national jurisdictions), such spaces often allow and enable violence against women within their memberships to take place. Perpetrators and victims of such violence are often members of the same institution. For example, female members of political parties will be victims of violence perpetrated against them by leaders or members of their own party.

INTRODUCTION

As NDI's #NotTheCost² campaign reports, this type of violence is not limited to physical threats or assaults. Rather it encompasses a range of actions, policies and communications that are designed to prevent, limit, or control women's full and active political participation. It is deeply rooted in women's unequal status relative to men within virtually all societies. Violence against women in politics is one of the most serious barriers facing politically active women, and its various manifestations are experienced by and impact on the vast majority of women who are active in politics. As with other forms of violence experienced by women, the violence that politically-active women face has been a largely hidden phenomenon. Acknowledgment of the problem has been hampered by three things: first, the conventional wisdom that, unless there is a physical manifestation, it is not violence; the perception that there are no specific gender dimensions to violence in politics; and the fact that the vast majority of women who have experienced attacks are likely to remain silent about them³. Victims may not even recognize what has happened to them as a form of violence, or may deny the problem altogether in an effort to deflect charges that they are "hysterical" or "not coping" with the demands of the job. Many are afraid of being viewed as victims or accused of "playing the victim" for fear of justifying claims that women do not belong in political life.⁴

All too often women who experience abuse, harassment and even assault have been dismissed and told that these acts are merely "the cost of doing politics." But in fact, violence costs all of us the benefits of the sustainable and democratic governance that an inclusive political space can create. A growing number of reports from around the world indicate that as women step forward to claim their right to participate in politics, they are met by a backlash in terms of violence that encompasses a range of harms, including persistent harassment and discrimination, psychological abuse - in person and increasingly online - and physical or sexual assault.

This violence is a global issue, and has serious repercussions for inclusive democratic societies. It carries the clear message that women should not participate in public life: women experience it in private, in public and in 'protected' public spaces. In the context of these 'protected' spaces in particular, perpetrators and victims of such violence are often members of the same institution, bound together as peers by ties of loyalty, a sense of a common cause and identity. All these attributes, manifest in formal and informal custom and practice, create a complex set of internal dynamics that must be understood in order to begin to address the barriers within parties that subvert women's participation.

² "#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics." National Democratic Institute. March. 2016. Web. <<http://www.ndi.org/not-the-cost>>

³ Palermo, T., J. Bleck, and A. Peterman. "Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 179, no. 5 (2013): 602-12. doi:10.1093/aje/kwt295.

⁴ Krook, Mona Lena. "Violence Against Women in Politics." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 28 no. 1 (2017): 74-88.

Both men and women experience negative behaviors that are often dismissed as “the cost of doing politics,” but these behaviours have different dynamics according to gender, present new opportunities for micro and macro aggressions, and further damage democratic practice and culture. For example, the exchange of material goods for positions of power within parties or elected bodies is often commonly accepted, even though it is corrupt behavior. However, for women, unlike the vast majority of men, the predominant currency of these demands is sex or sexual favors, a practice labelled ‘sextortion’ which clearly falls into the category of violence against women⁵. Importantly, this type of extortion further pollutes a system’s democratic culture: women learn that only by providing such “favors” can they move up the political ladder, and citizens’ perceptions of women in politics are colored by the belief that any woman who advances must have performed such favors.

Taking the opportunity provided by its 2017 review of political party strengthening, *Reflect, Reform, Re-engage: A Blueprint for 21st Century Parties*,⁶ NDI has revised its long-standing Win With Women political party assessment tool,⁷ including by adding guidance on measuring levels of and dealing with the violence that women members face within their parties. The *No Party to Violence: Political Party Assessment* includes survey, focus group and in-depth interview tools to be used with women and men in the leadership and membership of parties in order to develop action plans to root out the violence targeting women within their own political party.

Over the last year, this new approach has been piloted with a number of the larger political parties and civil society in Côte d’Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania and Tunisia. The outcomes from this piloting represent the first assessment of women

party members’ experiences of violence within political parties, thus providing important new insights on the phenomenon, which has never been systematically studied previously. It offers a unique cross-country analysis of the current understandings and perceptions of men and women party members around the types, levels, and impact of violence against women within these institutions. This important information is being used to create party- and country-specific recommendations to improve awareness, action and accountability to end violence against women within political parties, thereby strengthening women’s membership and their roles on a basis of enhanced equality. The piloting process has also created a safe space for multi-party dialogue in ways which have not exposed any party to the political risk of negative commentary from the issue being aired in public and/or used by their competitors.

This briefing paper presents an analysis of the topline preliminary findings from the surveys of men and women party members in the four countries. This briefing will be followed by an analysis of the accompanying focus group and in-depth interviews that were carried out as part of the *No Party to Violence: Political Party Assessment* pilots.

⁵ “Votes Without Violence.” National Democratic Institute. 2016. Web. <<https://www.voteswithoutviolence.org/>>

⁶ “Reflect, Reform, Re-engage: A Blueprint for 21st Century Parties.” National Democratic Institute. June 2017. Web. <<https://www.ndi.org/publications/reflect-reform-reengage-blueprint-21st-century-parties>>

⁷ First developed by NDI over 10 years ago, the Win With Women Initiative contains a Global Action Plan with an accompanying assessment tool designed to measure gender equality and the status of women in parties, and to strengthen political parties.

NO PARTY TO VIOLENCE: ANALYZING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES

Methodology

Surveys were distributed to men and women party members to gather information about women's own experience of violence within their parties, to gauge the socio-cultural norms and attitudes held by men and women inside political parties, and to better understand the institutional mechanisms for the prevention and reporting of such violence. Importantly, the findings from the No Party to Violence assessments will be used to develop action plans for stopping this particular type of violence against women in politics.

In total, 64 women party members and 76 men party members from four countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia undertook the survey. The 140 participants represent 26 different political parties from the four pilot countries, and represent party members of all ages. The surveys were distributed to each participant either in person or via electronic communication. The range of issues covered in the survey included perceptions of violence in political parties, common types of violence occurring and whether or not victims are willing to utilize official reporting mechanisms.

This preliminary analysis focuses on responses related to women's experiences of violence while in political parties, and both women's and men's perceptions of this violence. The analysis in this briefing paper does not include all the findings from the supplementary focus group and in-depth interviews, which - for example - will provide a comparison of the experience of violence within their parties by women and by men, as reported by respondents. A further report, which will include analysis of that data, is forthcoming later in 2018.

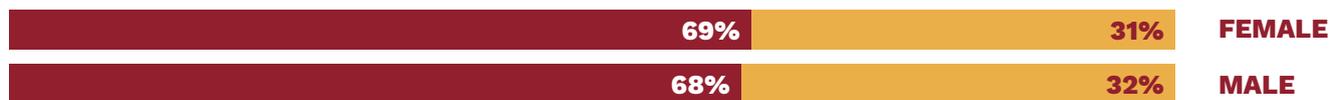
Survey Findings

FINDING 1 Both women and men are aware that violence occurs in their political parties

When asked if violent behaviors or actions take place in their political parties, approximately 70% of respondents, both men and women, identified that violence occurs within their political party.

RESPONDENTS WHO IDENTIFIED THAT VIOLENCE OCCURS WITHIN THEIR PARTY

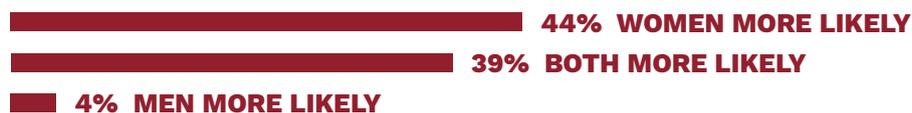
■ **YES** ■ **NO/DID NOT RESPOND**



FINDING 2 Both women and men believe that women are more likely to experience violence in political parties

Male and female respondents both indicated that they believe that women are more likely than men to experience violence within their parties. Specifically, 44% of all respondents, both men and women, say that they think that women are the most likely to experience violence. Only 4% of total respondents said they think *men* are more likely to experience violence as compared to women.

WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE IN A POLITICAL PARTY?



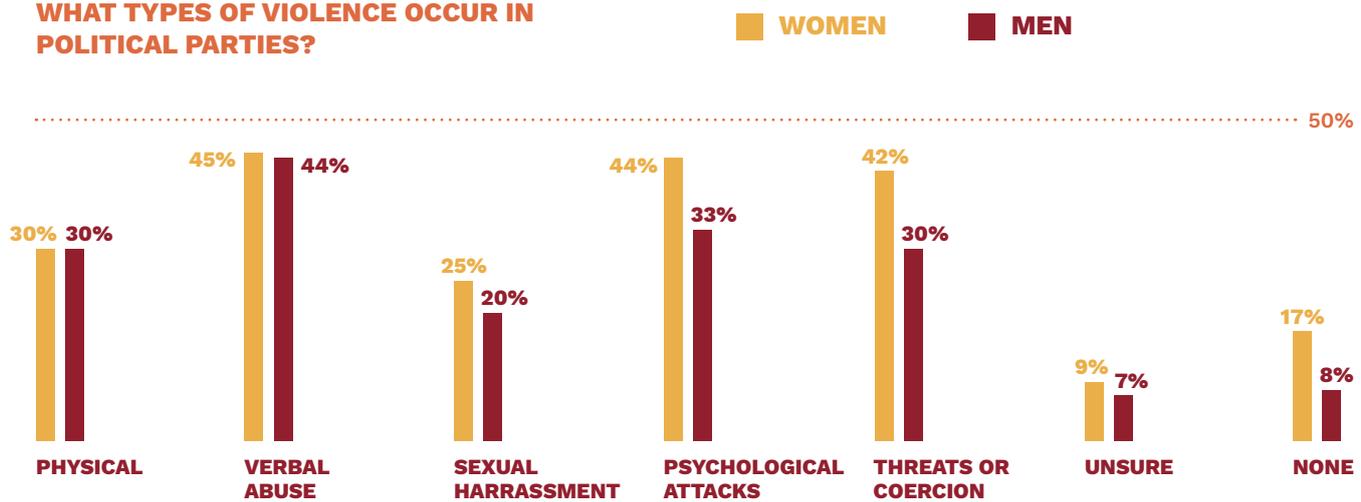
*13% OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS DID NOT ANSWER

FINDING 3 Women Experience High Rates of Violence within their Parties

Men and women respondents identified a range of types of violence – physical, sexual, psychological, and threats or coercion- occur within their parties. While both men and women agree that psychological attacks, followed by threats or coercion are the most common form of violence that occur in their political parties, women reported higher rates of every form of violence in their political party. Specifically, 44% of women reported that psychological attacks occur, compared to only

33% of men. Similarly, 42% of women reported that threats and coercion occur in their party, while only 30% of men acknowledged same. Women identify higher rates of psychological violence, sexual violence, and threats and coercion within their political parties, which mirrors what research has indicated regarding the prevalence and types of violence that women face in politics.⁸

WHAT TYPES OF VIOLENCE OCCUR IN POLITICAL PARTIES?



WOMEN'S SPECIFIC REPORTING OF THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE

Women survey respondents were also asked about their own personal experience with violence while carrying out any political party function. This included a more indepth look at the specific forms of violence that women face.

Approximately 55% of women respondents indicated that they have personally experienced violence while carrying out political party functions, with 48% of these respondents saying that they had experienced psychological violence—the most widely reported type of violence against women in politics.⁹ Threats and coercion, and economic violence were also widely reported

by participants. The World Health Organization estimates that one in three women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.¹⁰ However, this is also the least reported form of violence that women face. In this context, it is worth highlighting that, of the women who said they have experienced violence, 20% said that this was sexual violence.

⁸ Krook, Mona Lena. "Violence Against Women in Politics." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 28 no. 1 (2017): 74-88.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ World Health Organization. "Violence against women." November 2017. <<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>>

**WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE
WITHIN THEIR POLITICAL PARTY**

Physical violence	YES 20%
Sexual violence	YES 23%
Psychological violence	YES 48%
Threat or coercion	YES 23%
Economic violence	YES 36%

Women respondents were also asked to detail what particular forms of violence they experienced within each type of violence. For example, women were asked to choose from specific types of sexual violence - rape, sexual harassment, unwanted touching, etc. Their responses are highlighted in the data below.

**PREVALENCE OF VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES**

Physical violence	YES
Attempted murder	0%
Assault or aggression (punching, hitting, pushing, etc.)	17%
Sexual violence	YES
Rape/unwanted sex	3%
Sexual exploitation	6%
Sexual harassment	8%
Unwanted sexual contact	14%
Psychological violence	YES
Defamation, slander, character attack	30%
Harassment by the media	23%
Harassment online/social media	19%
Insults equating women's participation with immoral practices	23%
Hate speech	31%
Threat or coercion	YES
Threats	14%
False accusation	23%
Intimidation or blackmail	14%
Threats sent online	14%
Economic violence	YES
Using money to control you	23%
Denying and delaying resources available to men	27%
Property damage	31%

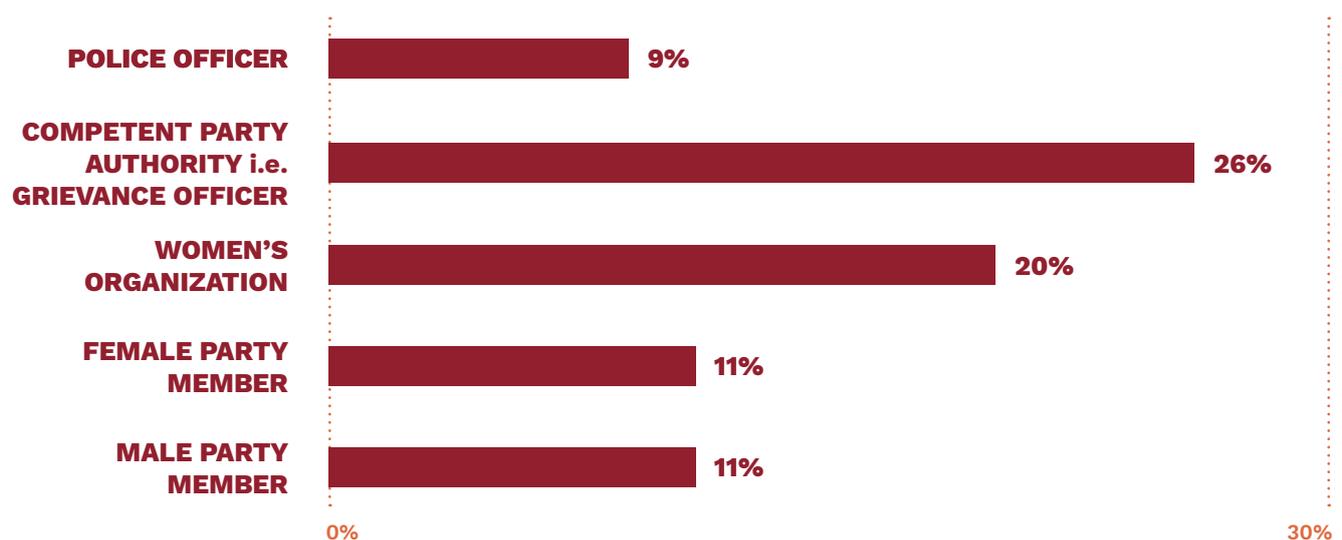
FINDING 4 Violence experienced by women is under-reported

As with reporting on violence against women generally and globally, the data from the pilots confirms that women’s experience of violence within political parties continues to be under-reported. Of the women who said they had personally experienced violence while participating in any party activity, 66% said that they either told or reported the incident to someone, 28% responded that they did not tell anyone about the incident, and 6% did not answer the question.

Further, women were asked to specifically select all persons that they either told or reported the incident to. Of those that did report the incident, 26% said that they told a competent authority within the party, 9% a police officer, 11% a female party member, 11% a male party member, and 20% a women’s organization.

In total, 68% of the respondents said that they disclosed the incident to a family member or colleague, but did not necessarily report the incident to party authorities or to the police, suggesting distrust in formal reporting mechanisms whether within or outside the party.

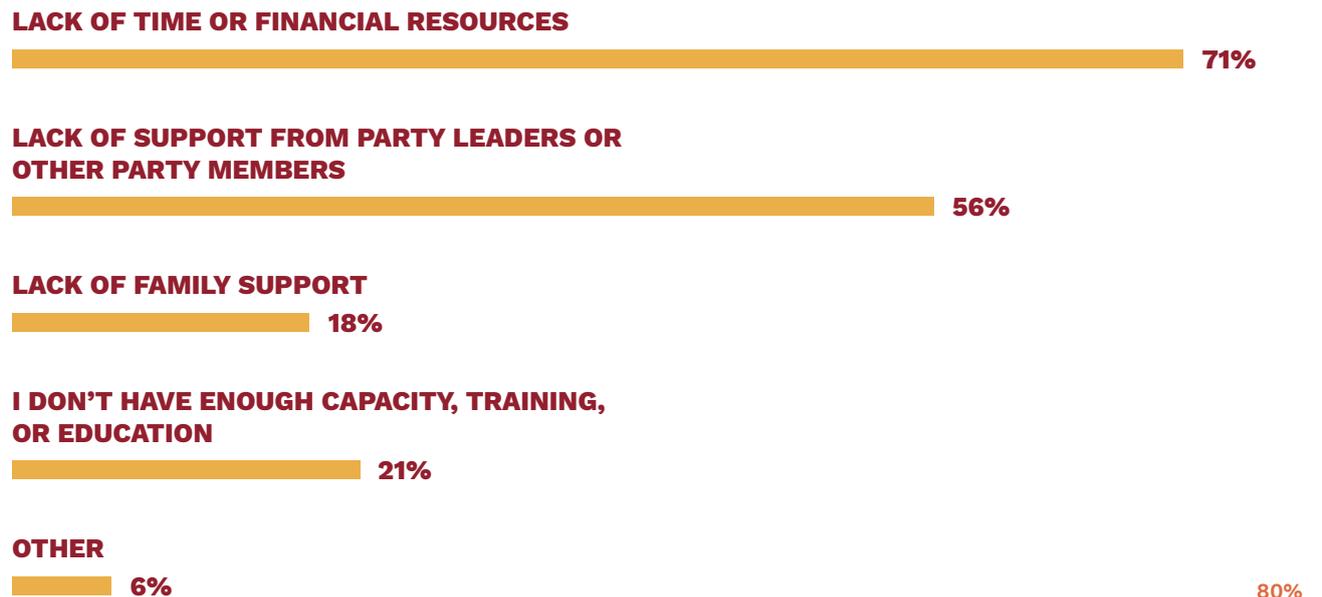
WHO DID YOU DISCLOSE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE TO? WOMEN RESPONDENTS



FINDING 5 Lack of financial resources and party support are also key barriers faced by women in political parties

Participants were asked to select from a variety of **other** barriers or challenges, apart from violence, that they faced as women attempting to rise through the ranks in their political parties. Over half of women respondents said that they face other key challenges. Specifically, 71% of women respondents identified lack of financial resources as the largest obstacle, while 56% women noted that lack of support from party leaders or other party members was also a key issue.

WHAT BARRIERS OR CHALLENGES TO YOUR ABILITY TO MOVE UP THE LEADERSHIP HIERARCHY HAVE YOU FACED WITHIN YOUR PARTY? WOMEN RESPONDENTS



FINDING 6 Women's leadership roles are sometimes tokenistic

Participants were asked to select a variety of ways they believe women generally get promoted or gain leadership positions within their party. Approximately 80% of men and women respondents said that decisions are based on merit, while others pointed to good campaigns or legal quota requirements.

While these indicators imply that the majority of men and women believe that women's skill and political performance is judged on a meritocratic scale and that institutionalized mechanisms support women's participation in politics, respondents also gave additional reasons for why women gain leadership positions within a party. Interestingly, 16% of women respondents and 22% of men said that women rise 'because they are women', indicating that respondents think that women are promoted because a party wants a more feminine leadership profile. This aligns with research that shows there is a difference between women's wings as the *organizing of women* by and for the party, as opposed to being a *women's organization* in the party.

HOW DO WOMEN GAIN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN YOUR PARTY?

■ WOMEN RESPONDENTS

■ MEN RESPONDENTS

BASED ON MERIT



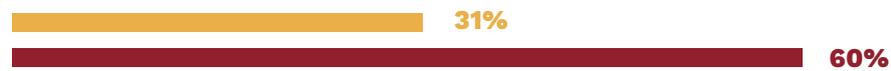
BASED ON THEIR CONNECTIONS OR FAMILY



BECAUSE THEY OFFER SEXUAL FAVORS



BECAUSE THEY RAN A GOOD CAMPAIGN



BECAUSE THEY ARE WOMEN



BECAUSE THERE IS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT OR QUOTA FOR WOMEN



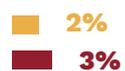
BECAUSE THEY PAY BRIBES



WOMEN ARE NOT PROMOTED OR OFFERED LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN MY PARTY



OTHER



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POLITICAL PARTIES**

Conclusion

The *No Party to Violence: Political Party Assessment* pilots are part of the suite of tools that NDI has created in response to the rising tide of violence against women in politics addressed in the #NotTheCost global call to action. This preliminary analysis showcases women's experiences of violence while in political parties in four disparate countries. It confirms that gender-based violence within political parties continues to impede women's ability to be equal and active participants in the political realm, and costs us all the benefits of the sustainable and responsive democratic governance that an inclusive political space can create.

The analysis in this briefing paper does not include all of the findings from the No Party to Violence pilots. A further report with a full analysis and country specific action plans are forthcoming later in 2018. Additionally, you can find published reports of the country pilots at NDI's website (www.ndi.org).

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

With three decades of experience in 132 countries, NDI is the leading organization working to advance women's political participation around the world. The Institute supports women's aspirations for inclusive and responsive government, by ensuring that they are able to participate, compete and lead as equal and active partners in democratic change whether as citizen activists, voters, political party workers, candidates or decision-makers.

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