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Unmasking Violence Against Women in the 2016 General Elections in Uganda
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Forum for Women in Democracy
FOWODE
P.O Box 7176 Kampala, Uganda
Plot 15, Vubya Close, Ntinda-Nakawa Road
Email: fowode@fowode.org
www.fowode.org

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“While gender equality in politics has significantly grown in the past few decades with the increasing number of women leaders, officials, activists and voters, women are experiencing rising levels of harassment, intimidation and physical and sexual violence. This violence is a major obstacle to women’s political participation and thus democracy”

Madeleine K. Albright, Former US Secretary of State
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Acronyms And Abbreviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Women’s Participation in the 2016 Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>The ‘Python Effect’: VAW-E in the 2016 General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Annexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWD</td>
<td>African Women’s Decade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
</tr>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>Electoral Commission of Uganda</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDC</td>
<td>Forum for Democratic Change</td>
</tr>
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<td>FOWODE</td>
<td>Forum for Women in Democracy</td>
</tr>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<td>GF</td>
<td>Go Forward</td>
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<td>IFES</td>
<td>International Foundation for Electoral Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGCLR</td>
<td>International Conference on the Great Lakes Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>JEEMA</td>
<td>Justice, Education, Economic revitalisation, Morality and African unity (Justice Forum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>NDI</td>
<td>National Democratic Institute</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>National Resistance Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Peoples Progressive Party</td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td>Proportional Representation</td>
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<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDA-Uganda</td>
<td>The Democratic Alliance Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFA</td>
<td>Uganda Federal Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPC</td>
<td>Uganda People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPM</td>
<td>Uganda Patriotic Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW-E</td>
<td>Violence Against Women in Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAWG</td>
<td>Violence Against Women and Girls</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) would like to appreciate in a very special way the people who contributed to the development of this publication.

We wish to thank the women of Uganda from all regions that participated in the 2016 elections and volunteered to share their experiences that formed the body of this read.

FOWODE appreciates Solome Nakaweesi K. who spearheaded the immense consultative processes including individual interviews, focus group discussions and analytically weaved the stories into the Report.

In a special way, FOWODE would also like to thank Patricia Munabi Babiiha the Executive Director, Juliet Nakato Odoi the Director of Programmes and Elizabeth Ampairwe the Women and Leadership Director, for the critical input invested in editing this Report.

Finally, we are grateful to all the friends and partners of FOWODE for their unwavering support and the continued encouragement as we strive to promote gender equality and inclusive governance in Uganda.
Violence against Women in Elections (VAW-E) is as lethal as a python that tightens its body rings around its prey, breaking its bones, subduing and suffocating it to death, before swallowing it head first as other body parts follow. The python constricts and expands simultaneously, in the process of swallowing its prey. Likewise, electoral processes expand to provide opportunities for women’s participation in governance, while at the same time, constrict their right to freely participate in the public and private domains through various forms of violence against them.

The fact that VAW-E is widespread in society (the body rings), women are held hostage (tightening of prey), often in a culture of silence (stifling). Generally, VAW-E is justified in society (head-first swallowing of prey) and women bear the blame for the violations (subdue). The mere thought of the possibility of violence deters many women from elections which has a lasting negative impact on survivors (swallowed prey), undeniably making VAW-E as deadly as the Python. This threatens to unravel the gender equality gains and women empowerment achievements so far registered.
Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) commissioned a study to document the prevalence of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E) during the 2016 general elections in Uganda. The study sought to provide evidence on VAW-E, and make recommendations for an enabling environment that protects and upholds women’s rights to political and electoral participation.

The highly competitive 2016 general elections were characterized by violence throughout the entire electoral cycle (pre-election, party primaries, during elections and post-elections), which disproportionately affected women and other vulnerable groups. This was confirmed by respondents who included: women on direct seats, women on affirmative action seats, women with disabilities, youth, independent candidates, and electoral officials, among others.

The findings reveal that VAW-E is a key deterrent to women’s free participation in public life and greatly undermines their civil rights. Violence against Women during the 2016 general elections occurred mainly in psychological, physical, and sexual forms, adversely affecting women physically, emotionally and socially. Psychological violence was the most dominant.

The report highlights anecdotal accounts of some women aspirants and candidates being subjected to sexual demands from ‘political kingmakers’ and ‘godfathers’, most of whom were male Members of Parliament, political party leaders, religious and cultural leaders, business leaders, influential family groups and political campaign managers. In spite of this, VAW-E is not explicitly included in the list of election offences under electoral laws and regulations nor is it strongly recognized in the laws on GBV.

The widespread use of social sanctions and punishment defined by patriarchal norms, dictating subordination of women to men, further infringed on women’s civil rights. The ‘sacrificial lamb’ syndrome was prevalent in most parts of the country as female candidates were coerced to step down in favour of their spouses vying for similar political positions. In other instances, controlled voting was reported, where women were forced to support candidates of their male relatives’ choices.

Increasing commercialization of politics makes women more vulnerable to violence, patronage, and poverty, as they have less access to resources than their male counterparts. Further, highly monetized politics within and outside of political parties affects women’s voice and agency and reduces their capacity to effectively represent their constituents as they are often gagged by their ‘kingmakers’.

The lack of effective regulation of elections predisposes women to various forms of violence and patronage by male ‘god-fathers.’

The creation of new districts, which would expand space for women seats in Parliament, instead alienates them and makes them more prone to patronage and VAW-E.

Failure to expand political space for women to compete favourably (beyond the traditionally available affirmative action slots) for open seats makes the affirmative action seats extremely competitive. The report findings revealed that, areas that had very stiff competition between women for the District Woman Affirmative Action Seats had higher incidences of VAW-E. More often women candidates and their supporters committed violent acts against opposing candidates (other women contestants).
RECOMMENDATIONS

The report makes several recommendations to a cross range of actors, including key agencies; The Uganda Electoral Commission, Registrar of political parties, The Parliament, political parties, law enforcement, civil society and development partners;

1. Review the legal framework that governs elections and political participation in order to include VAW-E as part of the specific offences under electoral laws.

2. Review GBV laws to include VAW-E.

3. Increase of public education campaigns throughout the electoral cycle aimed at curbing and addressing VAW-E at various stages of the electoral process and in politics in general. This massive civic education should be customized for specific target groups and stakeholders.

4. Functionalize the existing database of political parties which will help to generate sex / gender disaggregated data to monitor and track political party processes from a gender perspective.

5. Political parties should put in place specific mechanisms intended to detect, prevent, and redress VAW-E in order to expand women’s space and opportunity to effectively participate in politics. This would further be complemented by deliberate awareness-raising campaigns undertaken by various political parties targeting their members and supporters regarding VAW-E and its negative consequences on women’s participation.

6. Develop a robust monitoring and reporting system for VAW-E.

7. Regulate elections by either enacting and implementing an Elections Expenses Act or amending the Political Parties and Organisations Act, so as to regulate campaign financing.

“As long as most of the data on electoral violence remains gender-blind, it is impossible to properly address the problem and bridge the gap in political participation... By asking the right questions, we will shed new light on the prevalence of violence against women in elections so that it can be mitigated.”

-Hubbard, C. (2015), Senior Program Manager for Gender and Democracy NDI
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Worldwide, election violence disproportionately affects women more than men. Although it is true that both men and women may be victims of election violence, the forms of violence that women encounter are distinctively aimed at jeopardizing their political participation.

This study investigates the barriers that women face in political participation in the form of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E) as candidates, and as voters. It also proposes actions and interventions to reduce and eliminate the identified obstacles. Whereas election violence has been widely documented in many parts of the world, violence targeting women during elections remains largely under-explored, making it very difficult to design interventions and measures to eliminate it. In Uganda, documentation of VAW-E is in its nascent stages.

According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women), VAW-E is defined “as any act of election violence like threats, hate speech, assault, blackmail or assassination that is directed at women due to their gender and that seeks to determine, delay or otherwise influence engagement in an electoral process”. VAW-E therefore, differs from general electoral violence because it is the type of violence targeting women specifically during elections as opposed to the election violence that stems from differences in candidates’ or parties’ positions and struggles for power. Women can be targeted in the election process as voters, candidates, political party supporters, candidates’ families, campaign workers, journalists, electoral officials and staff, security forces and observers. Studies on election violence have shown that half (50%) of all recorded incidents that involved women were targeted at women political party supporters or activists, 22% against women as voters and 10% against women candidates (UN Women Guide, 2015).

1.2 Decoding Violence Against Women (VAW)

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most rampant human rights violations, and includes forms that may be more common in specific settings, countries, and regions. Violence against Women (VAW) manifests itself as physical, sexual, emotional and economic. The most universally common forms include: domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence (including rape and sexual harassment), and emotional/psychological violence. According to United Nations estimates, one in three women world-wide has experienced physical or sexual violence as a result of her sex – with 36.6% of female survivors of domestic violence found in Africa.

Violence is a major obstacle to women’s and girls’ progress, and to the welfare and development of their communities and societies. VAW has physical, psychological, economic, sexual and reproductive health consequences as it affects health, wellness, self-esteem, productivity, and is a gross violation of human rights. According to UN Women and World Health Organisation (WHO), 16% of women are likely to have a low birthweight baby as a result of violence. Nearly half
(42%) of women who have experienced physical and sexual violence at the hands of a partner have suffered injuries as a result, and 38% of all murders of women globally were reported as having been committed by their intimate partner. Further, research shows that GBV is a key driver of HIV and AIDS, linked to the rising HIV infection rates among women and girls, and is a significant contributor towards unwanted pregnancies.

In a study on the effects of VAW, Johnson (et al) notes that women’s overall quality of life can be adversely affected over a lifetime, which can, in turn, impact their participation and engagement in various aspects of life and society. These consequences to the individual women, along with the violent act itself, can have ripple effects on society as a whole (WHO, 2011). For instance, employers may experience lost productivity and output from their employees, while women’s informal support networks, such as families and friends, may need to alter their daily activities to provide assistance to victims (Reeves and O’Leary-Kelly 2007, AuCoin and Beauchamp 2007). This is in addition to the broader societal costs associated with delivering and maintaining health care, social and justice-related services to victims of violent crime, as well as the costs related to the criminal justice response to accused persons (Johnson and Dawson, 2011).

In Uganda, GBV is pervasive in spite of the existence of policy and legal frameworks outlawing it. A 2013 police report showed that while GBV rates increased by 18.4% and defilement by 25.8%, prosecution of offenders remained low. The 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS 2016) reported that 22% of women aged 15-49 years had ever experienced sexual violence in their lifetime compared to only 8% of men in the same age bracket. Further, studies in Uganda found that many women were unable to work following a violent incident where 9% missed work for an average of 11 days; 13% stopped housework; and 2.2% of children missed school. According to a 2012 study by Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP), the total cost of GBV is equivalent to 0.35% of GDP in 2011 and 0.75% of the National Budget 2010/11.

Despite the international community’s expressed interest and political will to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls, there is still a wide gap between binding commitments, laws and policies in place and the actual experiences of women and girls who should benefit from them.

Cultural beliefs, practices, and mindsets remain strong barriers against equal rights and opportunities for men and women. There is also, a lack of adequate and sustained resources to translate national legal and policy efforts addressing VAW into effective programs and practices that would make positive changes in the lives of women and girls.

Violence against women and girls, therefore, remains one of the biggest challenges with potential to undermine Africa’s future growth prospects as it affects women’s progress and negatively impacts the development of communities and societies collectively.
1.3 Deciphering Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E)

Violence against women in elections and politics ranges from societal, familial, economic, and political threats such as harassment and intimidation, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. These happen in the public sphere, especially for women as candidates, and in the private sphere for women who want to vote or be politically engaged. Electoral violence can also emerge out of post-conflict scenarios, simmering socio-economic, ethnic or religious differences, long-standing rivalries of elaborate patronage networks, or in otherwise stable political situations, the wrong mix of circumstances and opportunity.

In most cases, VAW-E is experienced in three main forms – psychological, physical, and sexual violence.

**Psychological Violence** - According to a study undertaken by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the most common form of VAW-E is psychological violence, which accounts for one third of all incidents of VAW-E recorded in the study (Bardall, 2015:13). This is the form of violence, pressure, or discrimination that leads to mental pressure/stress on the person being violated and an “informal means of control [and] includes systematic ridicule, ostracism, shame, sarcasm, criticism, disapproval, exclusion and discrimination” (Bardall, 2011).

**Physical Violence** - In contrast, physical violence involves direct physical harm to an individual or against a group; murder, kidnapping and arbitrary detention, battering, beating, stoning, starving, domestic abuse and physical abandonment or displacement. Given its visibility, it is the most widely reported form of VAW-E (UN Women Guide).

**Sexual Violence** - Sexual violence includes any actions or behaviors of a sexual nature which take place without consent or understanding, and are unwanted. Sexual violence may include, sexual abuse, marital rape, non-spousal violence and violence related to sexual exploitation such as coercion by ‘god-fathers for sexual favors.

The rate of women’s political visibility has been noted to increase incidents of election violence against women (Bardall, 2011). It is also important to note that many incidents of violence against women take place in private spaces such as, homes, which make it difficult to be observed and verified through official records.

Furthermore, in terms of its prevalence, VAW-E is widespread across many countries as demonstrated in a study conducted between 2006 and 2010 comparing over 2,000 acts of election violence. This study consisted of six countries and found that women are victims in almost 40% of all acts of election violence. For instance, during the 2010 elections in Afghanistan, it was reported that 9 out of 10 threats against candidates in the 2010 election campaign were against women (Bardall, 2015:12). In the 2015 Nigerian elections, it is reported that women politicians, wives and family members of male candidates experienced heightened levels of gender-based hate speech, and in certain instances were directly targeted by thugs and criminals for physical violence including sexual abuse (Safir and Alam, 2015:3).

1.4 Study Objective

The objective of this study is to provide information on Violence against Women in Elections (VAW-E) in Uganda and make recommendations to guide the development of laws and design of programs that can protect women and facilitate their political and electoral participation through the mitigation and prevention of violence.

The study also establishes the magnitude of VAW-E, identifies interventions to counter and prevent occurrences of VAW-E with the expected outcome of expanding women’s effective participation in political processes in Uganda.
2. Women and Elections: A Background

2.1 Regional and International Context

In the past 20 years, the number of women in parliaments has doubled from 11 to 22 percent globally. Seventeen percent of ministers globally are women; and in 2015 there were 18 women as Heads of State. Women’s participation in politics is socially transformative. Research shows that women in politics raise issues that others overlook, pass bills that others oppose, invest in projects others dismiss and seek to end abuses that others ignore. Where women are enabled to participate in peace processes, the chances of reaching an agreement has tended to improve, and the peace agreement is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.

Notwithstanding the notable gains made towards increasing women’s participation in the electoral process in Uganda, gender equality and women’s empowerment remains a significant challenge. Women are still under-represented in political and in socio-economic spheres and the 30% affirmative action seems to be the maximum as moving towards 50:50 gender parity remains an uphill task.

Uganda is signatory to a number of regional and international human rights instruments that promote, protect, and safeguard the rights of women as well as advance effective participation in positions of elective leadership and governance. Key among these are:

- Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 that states that everyone has the right to take part in their country’s government as well as, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966; Articles 2 and 7 that support equal women’s participation in political leadership.

- Article 7 of the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 that states that there should be no form of discrimination against women in terms of equal political participation.

- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 supports women’s equal participation in politics.

- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) of 1993 that safeguards women against all forms of violence.

- United Nations Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development (SDGs) of 2015 looks at inclusive governance and political leadership as a bedrock for ensuring women effectively participate, achieve gender equity and equality, eliminate all forms of violence and ensure peaceful societies as a way of ‘Leaving no one Behind.’ This is articulated through Goals 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16 and the specific targets therein.
Further, at the Pan-African continental level, Uganda is signatory to regional human rights instruments protecting the rights of women:

Article 13 of the African Charter on People and Human Rights (ACPHR) recognizes civil and political rights for all individuals which include freedom to political participation among others.


The African Union Protocol on Gender Parity (that came into force in 2003) calls for a fifty–fifty (50:50) representation of males and females in decision making.

Similarly, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) that came into force in 2007 promotes gender equality in both public and private institutions in a bid to deepen democratic elections in Africa.

The African Union Agenda 2063 (of 2015) sets forth both a vision and action plan for working together to build a prosperous and united Africa based on shared values and a common destiny. Agenda 2063 aspires for ‘The Africa we Want’ that among others is: prosperous, inclusive and sustainable; integrated politically and economically; exercises good governance, democracy and respect of human rights, justice and rule of law; peaceful and secure; strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics; people-driven and whose development relies on its people, especially women, youth and children, and; is a strong, united, and influential global player and partner.

Further, the African Union formally launched and declared the African Women’s Decade (AWD 2010-2020) whose aim is to advance gender equality by accelerating the implementation of global and regional decisions and commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment. The AWD prioritizes the Dakar Declaration, Beijing Platform for Action, and AU Assembly Decisions.

At the Sub-Regional level, Uganda is bound by a number of regional standards and commitments:

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has several protocols and declarations aimed at addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) within the region. Key among these are: The ICGLR Kampala Declaration on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2011) and the ICGLR Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region (2004).

The Dar-es-Salaam Declaration expresses deep concern for sexual violence and exploitation of women and girls and their use as sexual slaves. It further commits Member States to set up among other things mechanisms that provide legal assistance to women and girls who are victims and survivors of rape and other acts of sexual violence and exploitation. This Declaration also reiterates ICGLR Member States commitment to comply with United Security Council Resolution 1325 with respect to the protection of women and children during armed conflict, and ensuring their effective participation in decision making processes.

The Kampala Declaration aims at: preventing SGBV (through ending existing armed groups in the region, cooperating on extradition and prosecution of perpetrators and increasing resourcing towards judicial sector and women human rights work on SGBV eradication), ending impunity on SGBV (through zero tolerance to SGBV crimes, impunity and perpetrators and establishment of special sessions and courts to fast-track SGBV) and providing support to victims and survivors of SGBV.
2.2 National Legal and Policy Context

In order to domesticate the regional and international instruments, Uganda has a number of legal and policy frameworks in place. The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda sets basic principles for equal participation of all citizens without discrimination.


The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda clearly outlines the rights of women in Article 31, 32 and 33. Further, in order to deter political patronage, Article 68 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), states that a person who either before or during an election with intent, either directly or indirectly to influence another person to vote or to refrain from voting for any candidate, gives or provides or causes to be given or provided any money, gift or other consideration to that person, commits the offence of bribery and is liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment or both.

The Presidential Elections Act (2000) provides equally for both males and females to contest for presidency.

Section 64 of the Presidential Elections Act (as amended) 2005 makes it illegal for political candidates to offer money or gifts to another person to either directly or indirectly influence someone to vote or not to vote in a particular way. Section 68 of the Parliamentary Elections Act (as amended) 2005 also makes voter bribery illegal.

Campaigns are guided by the Presidential Elections Act Section 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; Parliamentary Elections Act Section 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and the Local Government Act, Cap 243 Sections 122 to 126 (on local government council elections) and 147 to 159 (on illegal practices and offences) which include: restraining candidates and their supporters from using abusive language that may cause the other party to be ridiculed; non-interference in campaign rallies; prohibition of use of public resources to campaign; rights of candidates to free expression and access to information in the exercise of the right to campaign; reasonable access to and use of state media; right to use private media for campaigns; equal treatment of candidates by public institutions, authority and public officers. The laws and guidelines on campaigns also provide for offences which candidates and supporters can be charged with during the campaigns. For instance, campaigning beyond 6:00pm is prohibited; use of language that incites public disorder, violence, or which threatens war, use of defamatory or insulting language which constitutes incitement to hatred is prohibited.

As a way to address violence against women, Uganda has a detailed legal and policy environment that includes the following.

- The Domestic Violence Act (2010) supports execution of cases of domestic violence. The main elements of domestic violence in this Act are comprehensive including acts which harm or endanger health; wellbeing whether physical or mental; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; verbal and psychological abuse; and economic abuse.
- The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) specifically outlaws Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a harmful traditional practice.
- The Penal Code (Amended) Act (2007) provides for aggravated defilement in cases involving the deliberate and intentional transmission of HIV and AIDS to a person below 18 years; sexual acts with persons below 14 years and serial offenders. However, the Act falls short regarding the nature of rape as it does not cater for incidences of marital rape.
- The Prevention of Trafficking of Persons Act (2010) prohibits all forms of trafficking, prescribing...
2.3 Women and Electoral Governance in Uganda: A Historical Context

2.3.1 Overview

As in most countries in the world, women have already overcome a significant number of unjust practices and challenges that limit their participation in elections from laws limiting women’s movements outside the home, to patriarchal customs and traditions subordinating and restricting women from participating in public life. In Uganda, only a small number of women get elected for direct (non affirmative) seats or occupy top leadership positions within political parties and government. As a result, real and meaningful gender-inclusive democracy still eludes the country.

The continued absence of women’s voices in governance is largely due to inequitable representation and participation in institutional structures—from governments and political parties to NGOs, and the private sector. However, it is worth noting that boosting women’s political participation needs to go beyond raw numbers to encompass the complex relationship between power, patriarchy, poverty and participation. Women want and need to be able to participate in the decisions that affect them, their families, communities and countries.

Therefore, until gender parity is achieved in governance, women cannot reach full equality with men in any sphere. The absence of women’s voices in shaping the most fundamental political instruments—the most critical of which is the national budget and political decision making—has ensured the preservation of gender inequity even with regard to women’s health and security in their own homes and personal lives.

With the exception of voter bribery, use of foul language, campaign period timelines and political patronage; all other forms of VAW-E are neither mentioned nor acknowledged within existing electoral laws.

While there is a detailed legal and policy environment on elections, governance, campaigns and VAW, there are no specific provisions to address the detailed manifestations of violence against women in elections. With the exception of voter bribery, use of foul language (use of language that incites public disorder, violence, or which threatens war, use of defamatory or insulting language which constitutes incitement to hatred), campaign period timelines and political patronage; all other forms of VAW-E are neither mentioned nor acknowledged within existing electoral laws.

- The Marriage and Divorce Bill aims at consolidating all laws relating to marriage, divorce, and separation. It enshrines the principles of equality, sets out rights and obligations in a marriage; bans widow inheritance; and has provisions for co-ownership of property and provides the same ground for divorce for both women and men.
- The Sexual Offences Bill (2016) seeks to amend provisions of various enactments on sexual offences to combat SGBV, punish sexual offenders, and provides for procedural and evidential requirements during the trial of sexual offences and other related crimes.
- At the policy level, the National Gender Policy (1997) sets in place specific strategies to eliminate discrimination against women in elective and appointment systems and structures of governance.
- Further, Gender Based Violence Policy and Action Plan (2016) puts forth a detailed framework and action plan to address GBV.
2.3.2 Women in National Political Party Leadership

The broad range of national, regional, and international human rights standards that provide for women’s political participation partly explain the increasing numbers of women elected into politics, especially through the affirmative action structure. However, the numbers of women on constituency seats has stagnated in Uganda. In 2011, there were only 11 women (3.6%) on direct seats in Parliament as opposed to 112 women (30%) on the affirmative action seats while in 2016, 18 women were elected on direct seats as opposed to 122 women on the affirmative action seats.

This scenario also applies to the political party top leadership (Central Executive Committees) where women are majorly in the women’s league leadership and not heading other organs which are predominantly male dominated. Table 1 demonstrates the composition of mainstream party leadership across the 6 main political parties (DP, UPC, CP, JEEMA, FDC and NRM).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Position</th>
<th>NRM</th>
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<th>UPC</th>
<th>DP</th>
<th>JEEMA</th>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>Deputy One</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Two</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Three</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Party Position</th>
<th>NRM</th>
<th>FDC</th>
<th>UPC</th>
<th>DP</th>
<th>JEEMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy One</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Two</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Three</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Isis WICCE (2014), and WLEDE (2014, 2016)

The data in the table shows that women in political party leadership reduced from 7 in 2006 to 5 in 2011, and 4 in 2016, including deputization by women (the deputizing syndrome), a fairly common occurrence in the party structures.

2.3.3 High Turn-Over of Women in Parliament

The Inter-Parliamentary Union-(IPU)(2017) noted that a common challenge faced by parliaments around the world is the high level of turnover of MPs, following elections, which can impact the quality of oversight. While turnover is a natural and beneficial part of parliamentary elections, very high turnover involves some risk of loss of institutional memory, and a break in continuity in committee membership from one legislature to the next. IPU further notes that on average, there is 51% median level of turnover of both male and female MPs at elections, based on data from 175 parliamentary chambers.

High parliamentary attrition rates are also a common occurrence in Uganda’s legislature. The Parliament of Uganda Study which analyzed elections from 1996 to 2011 shows that, Uganda has a high parliament turn-over of up to 60% of MPs that don’t get re-elected by the constituents after serving their five-year term in office. In Uganda, a total of 240 MPs in the 9th Parliament lost their seats and didn’t return to the 10th Parliament. Of the 345 directly elected MPs in the 9th Parliament, only slightly over 100 managed to retain their seats and only about 10 MPs voluntarily retired from elective politics, which contributed to an attrition rate of over 64% - higher than the last parliamentary election held in 2011. Similarly, only 150 out of 322 MPs in the 8th parliament came back to the 9th parliament representing a 55% turnover. Likewise, 144 out of the 303 MPs in the 7th Parliament returned to the 8th Parliament representing a 53% turnover. Table 2 represents the turnover rates over a 27-year period (1989 – 2016):
Research shows that, the high attrition rate in Uganda’s legislature is attributed to, among other factors:

• Constituents increased focus on representation and appropriation as opposed to legislation. Constituents believe that the role of MPs is to appropriate for them projects, infrastructure, favors from the centre and development, rather than legislate or engage with parliamentary business and committees.

• In addition, the Executive’s underperformance on delivery of development programmes, coupled with the weak institutional capacity of government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to deliver on their mandates, disenfranchises constituents who consequentially vote out their MPs.

• Unfortunately, poor service delivery is also coupled with widespread public ignorance about the role of legislators. Many voters believe that MPs are supposed to perform social development roles and are not concerned about whether they legislate in Parliament. Voters therefore, expect legislators to deliver social and economic favours like attendance of burials, weddings, fundraisers and provision of personal voter needs like school fees, employment, and social services like healthcare, infrastructure, water and education. This isn’t helped by the fact that while campaigning to win voter support MP candidates promise to deliver on personal issues, development projects and social services. Once they fail to deliver on these, they are punished by being voted out of office.

• There are also some unwritten laws for some constituencies where voters practice the politics of sharing the national cake among various people within the constituency; they change MPs at each parliamentary election so that different individuals have a share of the parliamentary benefits. Some constituencies are historically known to vote a new legislator every five year term. The Parliamentary Study (Ibid) singled out West Budama North Constituency in Eastern Uganda as one of the areas with the highest turnover rate in Uganda.

• Further, since 2001; Parliament has been branded as one of the most important and powerful institutions associated with fame, visibility, grandeur and high remuneration. As such, this heightens competition as many candidates bid to get into Parliament.

The above table shows a trend, where the turnover increases for each subsequent election which, necessitates addressing of the root causes. The parliamentary turnover is expected to increase while the voter turnout is expected to get lower in the 2021 elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Total No of MPs</th>
<th>MPs Retained (From one Election to Another)</th>
<th>Turnover From One Election to Another (Numbers)</th>
<th>Turnover From One Election to Another (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10th Parliament (2016 - Present)</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Parliament (2011 - 2016)</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Parliament (2006 - 2011)</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Parliament (2001 - 2006)</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Parliament (1996 - 2001)</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Parliament (NRC) (1989 - 1996)</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: African Elections Database ; Uganda Electoral Commission; Inter Parliamentary Union ; Parliament of Uganda

In 2016, the parliamentary turnover was 64% vis-à-vis the parliamentary elections voter turn-out of 67.61%.

Research shows that, the high attrition rate in Uganda’s legislature is attributed to, among other factors:
In the February 2016 General Elections, voters sank many prominent legislators and, in the same way, over the years Uganda has lost a fair share of notable debaters and legislators simply because the kind of issues that voters use as a yardstick to elect MPs are; often not about their legislative role and functions in Parliament but their social-development roles within the community.

Although some analysts argue that changing of MPs regularly is good for democracy as it ensures fair distribution of power and governance, others contend that it comes with high costs for Parliament and diminishes its influence. They argue that the high rate of turnover results in loss of legislative experience as new members struggle to settle in and take time to make significant contributions in terms of advancing Parliament’s core legislative, appropriation, and oversight roles. In terms of financial cost, new members increase the capacity development and administrative costs of Parliament as every 5 years new MPs have to be inducted and trained in Parliamentary procedures, which also affects legislation as they often settle in only by the second or third year in Parliament. New legislators have contributed to the de-institutionalization of Parliament because the longer an MP stays, the better they become in terms of legislation and performance of Parliamentary duties.

2.4 Why Eliminate Violence Against Women in Elections?

The contribution of women in political processes is not only of prime importance in ensuring a balanced representation of the needs and concerns of democratic societies, but it also increases the credibility of political infrastructure. Curving out spaces for women in politics, where they have been historically underrepresented is a critical step for regimes to achieve gender equity.

According to a 2012 International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) Global Survey of Women’s Organizations conducted in 29 countries across the world, women respondents cited “cultural beliefs/social attitudes/patriarchal mentality” as the number one factor obstructing advancement in women’s participation. In addition to direct physical violence experienced by women at home and in public, the centralized nature of political structures privileges masculinity and the role of men as political (and economic) decision-makers, limits women’s opportunities to participate in formal governance structures.

Women are targeted in election violence at higher rates than male counterparts, especially as political candidates. In many incidents it is clear that women are often being targeted not necessarily related to their political actions or affiliations, but simply because they are women. Additionally, for every public violent incident known and recorded, there are more incidents happening behind closed doors and in private, with scanty documentation and, worse, without adequate services to respond to survivors’ needs and due process for perpetrators. These private incidents, as well as more public incidents, no doubt discourage and prevent women from participating in the electoral process.

Violence against women in elections can affect women’s participation as voters, candidates, election officials, activists and political party leaders, in the electoral process, and therefore threatens the integrity of the electoral process, as well as the commitment of Governments to a free, fair, and inclusive democratic process. When public and private violence and intimidation in elections does occur, resources must be available to help women access formal justice mechanisms as well as support informal efforts to resolve conflict, especially in local communities. The fear of participation for all people must be taken out of politics. As such, a systematic and authoritative effort must be championed to reduce and prevent violence against women in elections.

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3 METHODOLOGY

This study used a triangulation approach by employing three different methods of data collection to investigate the same phenomenon in order to detect and uncover the prevalence of VAW-E in the 2016 general elections in Uganda.

3.1 Approach

Three methods of data collection were used, namely:

- Literature Review
- Structured Interviews
- Focus Group Discussions

3.1.1 Key Respondents

A total of 27 key respondents across the country were purposively targeted in the collection of primary data for this documentation out of whom only 22 responded (See Annex 1 for details). The categories of the key respondents include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Explanation of Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Seats</td>
<td>Women who experienced violence as they contested on direct seats for the very 1st time (successful or not) or those who contested for the 2nd time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative Seats</td>
<td>Women who contested on the affirmative seats for the very first time and experienced violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative Action Seat to Direct Seat</td>
<td>Women who had previously contested and won on the affirmative seats in previous elections and now moved to the open seat and experienced violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with Disability</td>
<td>A woman with disability who contested in the elections with an experience on election violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor and Vulnerable Woman</td>
<td>A vulnerable woman who contested in the elections especially at the local level, with an experience on election violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>A young woman who experienced violence during the elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (1)</td>
<td>A woman who stood on an independent ticket and was successful in the campaigns but after overcoming several violent cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (2)</td>
<td>A woman who after losing in party primaries contested as an independent person and won amidst violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by Political Party</td>
<td>A woman who was fully supported by the political party in the primaries and during final elections but still faced violence during the elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Corruption</td>
<td>Women who experienced high level of election bribery and how they handled it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Time Contestants</td>
<td>A woman for whom it was her 1st time to contest for any leadership post and experienced violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financially Constrained</td>
<td>Women who faced extreme financial challenges but were successful and a story for whom financial challenges ripped her of her victory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Law Sabotage</td>
<td>Any woman who was sabotaged by the electoral laws during the campaigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Violated</td>
<td>Women who experienced physical violence during the elections as a candidate voter poll agent or electoral official.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-Contestants</td>
<td>Women who were unsuccessful in 2011 / 2006 elections but re-contested and were successful, with unique violence experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Direct Seat Contestant</td>
<td>A woman, formerly on a direct seat who re-contested and lost, amidst violence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1.2 Sampling of Key Respondents

The selection of key respondents was based on the following criteria:

- **Regional representation across the 5 regions** – Northern Uganda, Eastern Uganda, West Nile, Central Region and Western Uganda.
- **Nationally** - 1 National cluster that catered for women voters, poll agents and electoral officials.
- **Political affiliation** – All major political parties were prioritized to ensure representation across various political parties.
- **High Competition** - Districts with a relatively high level of political competition between the ruling party and the opposition were purposefully selected because these provided high potential for electoral violence.
- **Independents** – Districts and constituencies where women belonging to political parties had stood as independent candidates.
- **Incidences of VAW-E** – Areas where violence was reported in the media during the party primaries and general elections. In such areas, women who had experienced violence in the elections were selected as Key Respondents.
- **Availability** - Key respondent availability and willingness to participate in the study.

In order to ensure national representation of the diverse characteristics of respondents, a total of 20 districts were selected across the 6 Regions of Uganda and the National Level as follows:

Graph 1

3.2 Limitations

Any study aimed at establishing the presence, frequency and the magnitude of VAW-E faces one serious methodological set back which emanates from the fact that many instances of VAW-E largely occur in private settings and as a result, they are often not reported and thus not documented.

A culture of silence that exists in many societies makes it even harder to uncover the dynamics of violence against women in many spheres including during elections. Similarly, during the primary data collection processes for this report, some respondents were hesitant to give their views on certain aspects of VAW-E. As a result, there was a low response rate on some questions especially...
those that delved deeper into sexual violence or violence meted by spouses, intimate partners, families, godfathers and political parties. This may be partly due to the socio-cultural factors which place the ‘blame’ on women and require ‘denial’ on issues of violence against women in society for fear of being reprimanded.
4. Women’s Participation in the 2016 Elections

4.1 Getting Into the Political Space

- **Learning from other Women and male leaders:** A number of respondents indicated that they were inspired to join politics by the admirable examples of other women leaders in their families, prominent women in public life and some transformative male leaders.

“My mother was a politician; she contested for the Constituent Assembly and later became a Resident District Commissioner. As a child I had very deep admiration of her political career. While at University, I participated in the Student Guild Elections. Although I lost in my first year, this didn’t deter me. I just focused on getting mentors who prepared me for my second year and I won. By the time I left university, my friends and family started asking me to run for Member of Parliament in my District. Later on in life, these experiences provided ground for me to run for other leadership positions including Member of Parliament in 2016.”

-Key Respondent, Mubende District

- **Working with women spaces, government and progressive social movements:** Working with women and/or interacting with women’s CBOs, NGOs and other spaces also inspired some women to join politics and electoral processes. The report findings indicate that women’s organisations provided trainings, exposed women to the media, and in some instances supported women candidates to run for office. In addition, through exposure many women were able to develop clear campaign messages that resonated with the needs of their communities. For other women, their prior involvement with Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies and District Local Governments as councilors and civil servants exposed them to the public space, created visibility, and equipped them with civic education, competence, and interest to join politics.

- **Participation in student politics:** Most women interviewed pointed to the fact that their participation in politics in school gave them the experience and impetus to join politics at local government and parliamentary levels.

"In 2002, I attended a FOWODE Training for Councilors at Pelican Hotel in Mbarara, this fired me up and buttressed my political ambitions"

"Mingling and interacting with my community exposed me to see what was lacking and compelled me to join political space to make a difference"

"I worked with an NGO in my district that not only exposed me to the development challenges my people faced but also nurtured networks that I later used to build a political base that was instrumental for my campaigns"

"I got a god-father who was a vocal community leader that often moved crowds when he spoke... once he identified and supported me, the rest is history"

"I was a Reform Agenda campaign manager for Dr. Kiiza Besigye in the 2001 elections, thereafter,
The politics of ‘being approached’: cajoled by community, constituents, male politicians, friends and family: Many women attested to the fact that they were persuaded to join by constituents, voters, male politicians and district leaders, spouses, friends and family who felt that these women had leadership potential and the ability to win the elections and offer effective representation. This, however, poses the problem of undue influence by those that have ‘propped them into power’, undermining their ability to make independent decisions and reducing their leadership effectiveness. These power dynamics affect women as they are subjected to the politics of patronization. On the other hand, men and boys are encouraged to take up leadership earlier in life, and they develop practical experiences of leadership that help them succeed in political leadership as well.

The ‘godfathers/godmothers’ culture: Some women reported that their involvement in the political space was a result of the ‘blessings’ and support of political godfathers and godmothers. The report findings indicate that godfathers are often vocal male leaders within the communities and include: key opinion leaders, religious and cultural leaders, business people and politicians. This form of patronage undermines women’s agency and voice, and in some instances has been cited as one of the vulnerabilities women face as it predisposes them to VAW-E through sexual exploitation.

Natural political growth and progression: The report also reveals that some respondents naturally grew from one leadership space to another with time. Some started all the way from women/youth councils, to women/youth councilors at sub-county level and grew through the ranks to district councilors and then to parliament as direct representatives or district women representatives or on special seats (youth, PWDs, army).

I joined the Democratic Party and was active in party politics ... My active involvement in the campaigns gave me impetus to contest in the 2016 elections

“I contested as a head girl at Kololo SS and was rigged out... Later stood as a Library Prefect and I won overwhelmingly... Later on in life I run for elective position at Law School in University”

“Personally, I have been following politics since I was a young girl. I got inspired to actively join while in secondary school because I was concerned about girls’ low participation in student politics”

“My active participation on politics at university prepared me for the dynamics and ambiguities of a parliamentary seat that I have successfully held for the last 15 years.”

“I joined politics as a Councilor representing youth; from there I became a Woman Councilor then an MP”

“I really didn’t plan to become an MP, I was encouraged by the male Constituency MP and my family.”

“My Community demanded that I stand as an MP during the 2011 general elections.... I was initially scared as it meant that I would contest against a powerful woman who was by then the Chair of the Uganda Women’s Parliamentary Association (UWOPA). Later on I became strong because I knew I had support from the Constituents.”

“I was approached by other District Leaders and asked to run for political office.”
4.2 Enabling Factors

The report found the following enabling factors for women to run for and win elective office:

a. **Support Networks:** From friends, family spouses, work colleagues, campaign managers and teams. These social networks also provide information that is very crucial for women’s candidature.

“It helps a lot if you have a strong support network around you... One time during my political party primaries campaigns, a rally became rowdy and my team surrounded me. This saved me from the wrath of young boda boda men who were stoning my campaign team...”

*Key Respondent, NRM Party Primaries, Mityana District*

b. **Association with Women’s Organisations:** At national and grassroots level, engagement with women’s organizations not only equips women with leadership and civic skills it also connects them to the voters, as they are able to tap into the grassroots networks of these organisations.

“Being a Member of FIDA, FOWODE and FEMRITE enabled me to stand for elective office as well as derive moral, financial and logistical support from women associated with these spaces”

*Key Respondent, Arua District*

c. **Window of Opportunity:** Almost all the interviewed key respondents attested to the fact that their running for and winning elective office was enabled by existing opportunities that were either as a result of newly created districts / constituencies, or leadership gaps left by the incumbents that made constituencies eager for leadership change. Perceived or real lack of impact on the part of incumbents creates fertile political ground which is often exploited by opponents.

“The creation of a cultural institution (kingdom) within my area was a great enabler for my candidature as I was associated with the team that lobbied for its creation as opposed to my opponent who was perceived as someone against it. I believe I won a lot of support using this platform.”

*Key Respondent*

Further, some respondents reported that their window of opportunity arose when incumbent male politicians on directly elected constituency seats were not responsive and credible which created an opening where women capitalized on that and run for the open seats with less gender stereotyping and bias from voters.

*The electorate is often hostile to sitting MPs because of so many reasons that include among others: non-performance, tensions between incumbents, lack of appreciation of the actual role of MPs. As such therefore, the electorate is always in dire need for change which makes incumbents very vulnerable to lose an election while the new persons are more likely to win”*

*Key Respondent, Bugiri District*

d. **Godfathers and Godmothers:** The existence of a strong opinion leader within the political party leadership, community, business community and persons, religious / cultural / opinion leaders that support a woman’s candidature is a very huge enabler. This godfather / godmother acts as a shock-absorber, financier, influencer within the political party or ethnic group, mediates with opponents and is a major shifter of public opinion.
Environmental Factors: As an incumbent, having a track record of delivering on promises made while campaigning; being responsive to societal pressing issues (such as health, education and economic empowerment); being reliable and supporting women, youth and community development.

Power Within and Agency: The belief in self and the capacity to run for elective office is a great enabler. This self-confidence, builds the power within that is a key driver to running and succeeding for political office.

Family Support: Support from immediate family that includes parents, siblings and in-laws was cited as a major enabler that provided financial, moral, logistical and other forms of support.

Spousal Support: 90% of the key respondents concurred that women who are in intimate relationships needed support from their spouses and intimate partners to successfully run for and/or win an election. This was attributed to three main factors: (i) Some women run for political office in areas where their husband was born and as such needed to have a spouse on their side; (ii) existing negative societal norms and values that view women’s leadership as defined by their marital and maternal capabilities; (iii) spouses and intimate partners are also a resource to the electoral process through moral and financial support, security and provision of free labour, leadership, and advice to the campaign team.

"Politics takes you away from your family... For married women, if you do not have a supportive husband; it’s difficult to manage.”

Key Respondent, Ibanda District

"As you are busy politicking, at the back of your mind you are thinking about the security of your marriage.”

Key Respondent, Kalibo District

"My husband was my biggest pillar of support.

Not only did he bankroll the campaign but also fundraised for me and was handy to drive me around to rallies.”

Key Respondent, Luwero District

"My husband fully supported me through financing my campaign, mobilizing people to vote for me and organising my in-laws that guarded my vote as poll agents”

Key Respondent, Lamwo District
i. **Financial Resources:** With the commercialization of politics, financial resources are critical to run for office, sustain a campaign, and also win an election.

j. **Multiparty Politics** Political parties were cited as an enabler to women’s participation in electoral processes as they: (i) Provide choices and options for women through the alternative spaces for running for elective office, nurturing and building women’s leadership; (ii) political party primaries provide a platform for women to participate, grow their leadership and expose them to wider political platforms at national levels; (iii) respondents aligned to political parties attested to the fact that they received support from their respective political parties in the form of: political leverage, information, party structures and financial support; (iv) the biggest political parties have structures that not only create spaces for contesting from local to the national level but also support networks for women candidates.

k. **The Power of Knowledge:** Civic education, especially knowledge of electoral laws, constitutionalism and rule of law, processes and contemporary development issues was also highlighted as an enabler. This not only enabled women to engage with electoral officials and the police but also to articulate their issues, manifestos, and explain how different they were from those of other candidates.
4.3 Disabling Factors

Key barriers and challenges were indicated as:

a. **Financial Resources:** Increasingly, politics has been commercialized, evidenced by the widespread vote-buying and buying of political support. All the key respondents attested to the fact that one of the key disablers for women to participate in electoral processes was financial resources to sustain a campaign.

   “You can’t run away from the fact that the face of politics in Uganda has changed... Voters always request that you buy them booze ‘to wet their throats’. You need money and lots of it to win an election... I didn’t have a lot of money as most of the resources I had at my exposure were exhausted during the party primaries and the general campaign to an extent that on Election Day I did not have money to pay my poll agents. They ended up being co-opted and bought off.”

   **Key Respondent, Arua District**

   “In the 2011 elections, we were giving UGX 30,000/= per village for drinking alcohol. In 2016 we would give UGX 60,000/= per village and by 2021 each village will be receiving UGX 100,000/= I have 800 villages in my constituency and that means that in the 2016 election I spent close to UGX 50 million just buying alcohol for each village in the constituency. This is too much money for me as a woman! I don’t see myself being able to run again in 2021.”

   **Key Respondent, Abim District**

   “When I started the campaigns I didn’t even have a million shillings. I sold a plot of land to get campaign financing and this angered people in my family.”

   **Key Respondent, Luweero District**

   Increasing monetization of politics affects women and reduces their capacity to effectively participate in elective politics because of ring-fencing of political spaces by men and the wealthier women.

b. **Godfathers and Godmothers:** Persons of influence in communities, who are often power brokers, were also cited as a major disabler as they increase patronage and subject woman to various forms of VAW-E in return for political favours.

c. **Media and Women:** Women running for elective office face gendered challenges that include, negative portrayal and trivializing of women leaders in the media and unfair media coverage. While it’s undisputable that the media plays a major role in framing public perceptions and attitudes about roles for males and females, in Uganda it has often been used to the disadvantage of women in the public space.

   The media often propagates negative images that perpetuate inequality and subordination of women; women are trivialized and reduced to objects of entertainment and sexualization of their bodies. Further, the media is predominately male-dominated in terms of content, coverage, and ownership of FM Stations in various localities. Media coverage is unfairly distributed among male and female candidates. An analysis of three Ugandan newspapers during the 2016 General Elections reveals that not only were women misrepresented but they were also given poor coverage. Women were allocated less media time compared to their male counterparts which affected effective outreach and organising. All the above conspire to undermine women’s leadership, visibility, brand and outreach.
d. **Multipartism**: Multiparty Politics was cited as a great disabler as it not only puts women against each other but is also associated with a lot of violence and compromising of women. As some key respondents noted:

> “Uganda’s multiparty politics is not yet fully developed. People still vote individuals so individual merit also greatly applies in electoral processes... In such confusion, women are violated.”
> **Key Respondent, Maracha District**

> “I was terribly mistreated by my political party, it’s like they had never seen me.”
> **Key Respondent, Bundibugyo District**

e. **Ignorance Among Constituents**: The study also revealed that the high rate of ignorance at community level hinders women from standing for electoral office especially where they would like to vie for the direct constituency seats (open seats). There is a general belief that women can only stand for women’s seats and the direct seats are a preserve of men.

> “In my District and in Karamoja region as a whole, a woman can’t dare to stand for an open seat. Open seats are only on paper, the reality is different in the villages... people know that women should stand for women seats alone... Whenever a woman dares to stand for an open seat, she is attacked, heckled and encouraged to vie for the women affirmative action seats.”
> **Key Respondent, Abim District**

f. **The ‘Sacrificial Lamb’ Syndrome**: Some key respondents that contested for political office at the same time as their spouses attest to the fact that they were psychologically violated and often pressured to step down by immediate family, friends and constituents.

> “My biggest challenge was relatives and friends who thought that I was getting into the way of my husband’s political career. When they pressured me to step down and I refused they kept asking him ‘how do you manage such a woman in your home?’ This of course strained our relationship and worse still, we both did not go through the party primaries. This psychological violence humiliates you as a person.”
> **Key Respondent, Bugiri District**

> “We both stood in our area - I run on my party platform as the woman MP and he run as an independent for the county MP position. People started flocking our home to ask my husband to stop me from running for political office. In addition, his supporters started threatening not to support him. My party had a county MP candidate that would come to rallies and start abusing my husband who then withdrew his support to my campaigns. Fortunately, I won the election and sadly my husband lost! He didn’t take it lightly but quickly took it in with grace and joined me in my activities. Nonetheless his family and friends keep insinuating that they lost the election because I refused to step down and this has affected me psychologically. My coping strategy was being a good wife at home, be a mutually respectful partner with my husband and allowing him to take back his power as the head of the home. It is a conscious choice I made for the sake of peace so that the election doesn’t divide us. Luckily after 9 months, he contested again in a by-election and won.”
> **Key Respondent, Kasese District**

> “One of the things that broke me and spoil everything was that my ex-husband came to stand as a male constituency MP well knowing that I was running for the Woman MP seat in the same district! This ruined my election as the electorate would not vote two MPs from the same family”
> **Key Respondent, Kaliro District**

> “Unfortunately for me, my opponent’s sister married in my in-law’s family creating tensions within my in-laws camp as it split support between me and her. As if to make matters worse, my own Auntie (my father’s step-sister) also picked nomination forms and contested ... This totally split the vote and I of course became the sacrificial lamb”
> **Key Respondent, Abim District**
In the presidential election held on 18th February 2016; out of the 15,277,198 registered voters, the cast votes were 9,701,738; valid votes were 9,246,563 and invalid votes were 455,175 representing a voter turnout of 63.5%. While for the parliamentary election; cast votes were 10,329,131; valid votes were 10,329,131 representing voter turn-out of 67.61% and, the Local Government election held on 25th February 2016 had the lowest voter turnout.

The low voter turnout is attributed to a number of factors that include but are not limited to: lack of confidence in the Electoral Commission; violence that marred some parts of Uganda, and persistent challenges in Uganda’s electoral processes such: as voter bribery, intimidation, violence and rigging among others. In addition, there is a feeling of disenfranchisement as some voters have lost confidence in the electoral process as an engine of good governance. The late delivery of electoral materials especially in opposition strongholds; exclusion of polling stations from the national tally; in cancellation of voting in some polling stations and lack of voting materials in other stations characterized the 2016 presidential elections.

The 25th February 2016 Local Council Elections had the lowest voter turnout due to a number of reasons. The disorder with the February 18th Presidential and Parliamentary elections kept many people away from the subsequent local council elections held on 25th February 2016 as people felt that their participation in electoral processes was not valued. This was exacerbated by the uncertainty over the presidential elections. The fact that the local council elections were held during the time when the presidential elections were still being challenged in the Supreme Court led to a substantive decline in the number of voters. Voter turnout is expected to nose-dive in subsequent elections in Uganda.

Violence experienced during political party primaries could also account for the low voter turnout in the general elections. In the case of women, the possibility, likelihood, and experiences of VAW-E also contributed to their low turnout and participation in electoral processes. Although statistics on voter turnout are not gender-disaggregated, indicators of the existence of VAW-E was reflected in: women preferring to conduct door-to-door campaigns as opposed to open
rallies; generally women voters not participating in public rallies (staying at home) while campaigns were ongoing; observation of women outside their doors following events, indicating they were eager to know more about the campaign events, but did not dare to step out and attend the campaigns and other election-related events.

Generally, key respondents reported that low women’s voter turnout and major obstacles that prevented women from exercising their right to vote was attributed to: women denied permission by their spouses/parents to step out of the homesteads to go and attend campaign events / participate in electoral processes; fear of going to rallies, campaigns or voting due to violent occurrences; lack of national IDs (used for voting); and spousal pressure.

VAW-E, therefore, is one of the main contributing factors that deterred women from participating in electoral processes. These VAW-E cases include: physical abuse, use of abusive language and insults, controlled voting through confiscation of voter registration cards, spousal and family pressure.
There has been an increase in the number of female legislators since 1989 due to the policy on affirmative action. By 2016, parliament had registered 33% female representation with an increase in the number of women elected on direct seats from previous 11 in 2011 to 18 in 2016.

The emergence of an increasing number of women independent candidates standing for open seats yet aligned to political parties points to the fact that most political party structures do not offer fair ground for their members. Further, it reflects that most political parties still hold notions that women should not vie for political office on open seats. Due to the competitive nature of politics, most political parties do not want to risk having women compete for the sake of promoting gender equity and equality in case they lose.

This is compounded by the fact that Uganda’s electoral system is first-past-the-post system as opposed to proportional representation that doesn’t oblige political parties to ensure gender parity on open seats. Women face more challenges within their political parties when vying for open seats as often political parties reserve only affirmative action seats for women. This status quo questions political parties internal democracy, their gender responsiveness and casts doubt on the commitment of political parties to gender equity within their structures and at the wider governance level.
4.6 Patronage

The study underscores the significance of patronage in fueling violence against women in the 2016 general elections in Uganda. In most cases, there were patrons (mostly men) of influence, also known as “God fathers” who would determine the fate of the female political candidates. Female candidates reported that they were often coerced to ‘dance’ to the tunes of the “God fathers”, some of which were violent in nature. Below are some of the manifestations of patronage in the 2016 general elections;

4.6.1 The ‘Mzee’ / ‘Strong Man’ / ‘Alpha Male’ / ‘Maama’ Syndrome

The study established that there is an emerging phenomena called the ‘Mzee / Maama / Strongman / Alpha Male Syndrome’ where women seek male approval on affirmative action seats and direct seats. This is a situation where an influential community leader becomes the kingmaker, determining who wins an election. These powerful (often male) politicians popularly known as Mzee include powerful politicians, opinion leaders and businessmen endorsing who should stand for women positions in electoral politics. This is fast becoming the norm thereby accentuating patronage and male privilege.

A previous study undertaken by Women’s Democracy Group (Nov 2015- Jan 2016) also attests to this phenomena which affects women’s participation and their capacity to deliver as leaders. Within the ruling NRM party candidates and NRM-leaning independents, this phenomena was perpetuated due to internal competition for the favor of national party leadership. Having a powerful woman from the same area often created fear and implied reducing the chances of the men being appointed to cabinet positions or heading parliamentary committees at national level and speakership and district executive at local government levels. Alpha males, therefore, tended to sponsor weaker opponents they could patronize to challenge powerful women candidates. Also, in instances where the alpha males were running for political office themselves, the strategic use of women vying for office was to enable them to access wider constituencies and networks with limited resources given that the women often have wider constituencies geographically.

Key respondents reported that in addition to the male mzee, there were also women often referred to as maama (businesswomen, party leaders or women in higher political ranks) that were power brokers. Findings indicated that the same hegemonic and hierarchical notions of exercise of patriarchal power as reflected in the ‘mzee alpha male syndrome’ were replicated even within women as a social group and were known as the ‘maama syndrome’. In this case, decisions on which woman runs for which political position, and at what level, were dictated by women in higher ranks. As such, women in national level political spaces like the Central Executive Committees or political party leadership would anoint who stood in their area as MPs. Women MPs would also determine who stood as Councilors at district level, who in turn would influence the choice of those that stood as councilors at sub-county and parish levels. Furthermore, these maamas often fought off powerful women candidates within their political parties, constituencies or regions while at the same time giving blessings (being godmothers) to weaker women candidates. This ‘maama syndrome’ was one of the most disturbing forms of patronage as it replicates patriarchal notions of punishing those that dare challenge dominance and question power.
4.6.2 Capture of the Space by Business and Political Elite

Further, in all the political parties and within the state, the existence of parallel power structures promoted influence peddling. In Ugandan governance structures and culture, political appointments are doled out to appease supporters, although the appointments/positions come without power or in other instances power without formal positions. Similarly, in most political party primaries, the informal power structures greatly determined who got elected as the flag bearer within the formal political party structures. This phenomenon leads to many powerful people being unaccountable and promotes impunity. Additionally, it weakens the capacity of formal institutions to function effectively.

“Some people seem to own the NRM political party while the others are perceived as outsiders…They dictate who should be in the party and impose on you flag bearers.”

Key Respondent, Abim District

4.6.3 Other Forms of Patronage

The findings also showed that patronage further normalized women’s suppression through ‘the deputizing syndrome’ as well as limiting opportunities for women, majorly relegating them to affirmative action seats. This demonstrates tokenism while appointing women into leadership positions.

Sexual harassment was also a big challenge for women, impacting on their effectiveness as elected leaders. At the local government levels, women’s high illiteracy levels, lack of exposure and social networks, and skills gaps led to low levels of articulation of issues and ineffectiveness, hindering their effective participation in the public sphere.

4.7 Male-Dominated Campaigns and Teams

Worldwide, there is inequality in terms of voice due to male domination of political campaigns, teams and advertising. Electoral processes are tedious, affecting the individual’s personal relationships and self-esteem, while requiring long working hours and subjecting political campaign teams to overtime activities away from home. Campaigns also require significant time investments which women, may not often be able to allocate over a long period of time given their other responsibilities as mothers, wives and primary caregivers. It was found that most campaign teams for women candidates comprised majorly men which hindered women’s participation in decision-making, subjecting them to male notions of power and brutal forms of defeating opponents.

“Politics is full of men, every conversation is full of men...It is rather brutal and very rigorous exposing many women to insecurity and violence... It scares women and many drop off or support from behind the curtains”

“Violence at rallies and tensions between opposing camps lead to fights that make women scared of being part of campaign teams”
5.1 The Python Effect

Akin to a python, the lived experiences and fear of VAW-E restrict women from effectively participating in and benefitting from elective politics. While on one hand VAW-E constricts, subdues and crashes the individual women candidates, voters, poll agents, electoral officials, families and communities involved, on the other hand it also affects the wider environment, political parties, leadership space, the women’s movement and national progress. This leads to apathy and low women’s participation in elections, as well as entrenchment of patriarchal male-domination of elections and governance.

This section presents findings on the prevalence and magnitude of VAW-E during the 2016 general elections in Uganda and discusses the coping mechanisms used by women and the proposed remedial strategies.

5.2 Reported Incidences and Magnitude of VAW-E

This report documents the incidences and magnitude of VAW-E in its major three forms (psychological, physical, sexual violence) and other forms.

Forms of VAW-E Encountered by Women in the 2016 General Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Violence</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Violence</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Violence</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Violence</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Forms</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This graph indicates that the most common form of violence was psychological at 40% followed by other forms of violence at 35%, physical violence at 18% and sexual violence at 7%.

5.2.1 Psychological Violence

Similar to the IFES study, psychological violence was reported as the most dominant form of VAW-E in the Uganda 2016 general elections. Graph 4 below indicates an overwhelming total of 56 responses that pointed to experiencing varying forms of physiological violence.

Women reported that psychological violence especially verbal harassment, insults, use of abusive language and being booed while on stage greatly demoralized and dehumanized them. Moreover, it was so predominant that some women candidates and voters didn’t critically analyse it as a form of violence at the time. They thought it was how politics operates so they played along and devised coping mechanisms.
According to the above graph, majority of the women candidates and their supporters reported that they had experienced varying forms of physiological violence that included: abusive language at 20 (39.3%), character assassination at 7 (12.5%); ridicule, criticism and disapproval at 10 (17.9%), abandonment by spouses, family, friends and political party at 5 (8.9%); exclusion from social spaces and discrimination reported at 4 (7.1%); rowdy rallies that were often characterized by rowdy youth and boda boda riders that posed security threats or engaged in fighting at 2 (3.6%); emotional witch-hunting that included instances where candidates were declared dead or allegedly pulled out of the race at 2 (3.6%) and ageism that affected older women and younger women reported at 4 (7.1%).

**Tales of psychological violence**

“At one time the men I was standing with on the District Councilor direct seat announced on local radio that I was dead. This threw my camp in disarray and emotionally affected my family.”

*Key Respondent, Luweero District*

“Boda boda riders would be bought off and compromised not to transport me and my supporters.”

*Key Respondent, Kasese District*

“I was labeled a mad woman and my supporters were often heckled for supporting a mad person. The verbal abuse, attacks and character assassination was too much... I would leave the campaign rallies and go back home crying... It got so bad that my spouse and family asked me to step down for my own sanity”

*Key Respondent, Kasese District*

“There was massive army deployment on polling day. Opposition agents were blocked at Bwera and beaten up at Kaveera Baracks by stick-wielding goons supervised by the army. This gravely intimidated voters.”

*Key Respondent, Kasese District*
In some extreme cases, some women were subjected to unimaginable psychological trauma.

“One time I was on a live radio call-in-show and my in-law called in and asked whether I had divorced them because I had stood in my maiden county. He had the audacity to intimidate me and threatened to banish me from the family despite my being widowed.”

Key Respondent, Arua District, West Nile Region

“My husband eloped with another woman during the campaigns and his relatives went on radio and alleged that I had ritually sacrificed him so that I win the elections. He only appeared two days before the polling day and by then the damage had been done; I couldn’t redeem my image. I lost the election.”

Key Respondent, Abim District, Karamoja Region

Gender discrimination was a huge challenge faced by women candidates, cutting across all age groups. In some instances single, divorced women and widows were tasked to identify a man to pose as the husband during the campaigns. Similar demands were not applied to men of the same status. For women that had married across ethnic lines, they would often be told to go and stand where they were married.

“I can never forget this attack by a fellow woman at a rally who said that they were tired of electing unmarried young women who would only go to parliament to steal other women’s husbands.”

Key Respondent, Mubende District

“When you marry outside your ethnic group, you are perceived as being homeless. Your own people don’t recognize you. It becomes worse when you are widowed or divorced as you belong to neither the marital home nor the natal home.”

Key Respondent, Arua District

“My campaign team at one time suggested that I get a man to pass off as my boyfriend so that we pose as a couple during the campaigns.”

Key Respondent, Mubende District

“My marriage to a Langi yet I am an Acholi was a disaster as it was always used to attack me and challenge my credibility. Men in Acholi felt that I had snubbed them.”

Key Respondent, Lamwo District

“One of the factors that affected me was that I had married a Turkana from Kenya. My opponents and community kept insisting that ‘She is already a Turkana’s wife, let her go and contest in Kenya where she married.’”

Key Respondent, Abim District
In addition, 30% of the women candidates reported that their husbands did not support their decision to contest for an elective post which greatly affected their intimate relationships. The magnitude and impact of psychological violence is strikingly high, calling for deliberate interventions to redress the situation as it undermines the dignity and personhood of women in electoral processes.

“I am a Mwamba married to a Mukonzo which greatly affected my personal life and candidature that I didn’t even win at the polling station in his village. My husband and in-laws didn’t support my candidature; he abandoned me a day after nomination and only re-appeared 4 months later upon hearing that my name was announced on the Cabinet list. We later separated after failing to resolve our political differences.”

Key Respondent, Western Uganda region

“I had a boyfriend by the time I went to vie for a woman MP seat; by the time the elections ended, we had split. It was too much for him, I would always come home late. I was always clad in the traditional ‘gomesi’ and at one time he complained: ‘they will say that I am dating an old woman’. We tried to stay together but somewhere along the way, the steam run out and we called the relationship quits.”

Key Respondent, Central Uganda region
5.2.2 Other Forms of Violence

Other forms of violence accounted for 35% and included, forced joint campaigns, monetization of politics that disenfranchises poor people and women, family pressure not to participate in politics among others as detailed in the table below:

Modes of Other Forms of Violence Experienced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incidents</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forced joint campaigns</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Violence / Monetization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witchcraft and Sorcery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bribery and Corruption</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation &amp; Harassment of Voters and Poll Agents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed / Unheard Election Petitions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigging</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouritism by Electoral / Party Officials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Electoral Violations of Candidates &amp; Supporters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Malpractices</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate Confusion of Electorate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents further reported that corruption, bribery, and extortion were commonplace with the key perpetrators being political party leaders, district officials, electoral officials, state security agencies and the media.

“Security personnel approached me for UGX 11 million bribe to ensure that I win. Shortly a journalist from The Red Pepper Publications called me saying that they had a personal story about me that will ruin my campaign in the hope that I would give them UGX 6 million. I refused to yield to their demands”

**Key Respondent, Arua District**
5.2.3 Physical Violence
The report indicates that 18% of respondents encountered physical attacks, which included: physical attacks like beatings, stones thrown at them; being undressed; kidnapping; arbitrary detention especially towards the election day; domestic abuse and battering of their supporters by spouses and family members that wanted them to support their candidates; murder, and defacing of posters.

5.2.3 Sexual Violence
About 7% of women candidates respondents reported that there were some indications of solicitation for sexual favours. Sexual harassment was reported to be prevalent during activities of the political party primaries. The sexual violence reported was in the form of expectation of exchange of sexual favours by party officials, leaders in the district and potential financiers. Two cases of non-spousal rape and sexual innuendos objectifying women’s bodies were reported. No case of marital rape was reported.

Nonetheless, based on anecdotal accounts from the interviews, some of the women aspirants and candidates reported that they were subjected to sexual demands from party leaders and campaign managers, which demoralized them, hindering their effective participation and lowering their motivation to contest.

In most cases, lack of appropriate systems for representative democracy, have enabled the wide use of “sextortion” within institutions as a way for upward mobility. Women aspiring for leadership positions are faced with many challenges, including unethical political leaders who use their positions to demand sex from them in exchange for ‘support.’

More generally, young women and new entrants into the political scene reported cases of sexual violence targeted at them as opposed to older women and incumbents. The perpetrators were usually
campaign team managers, male district leaders, male politicians especially councilors and legislators (incumbents and aspiring), political party leaders, godfathers and business men.

“Some men ask for sexual favors and use sexual innuendoes and language when you solicit funds from them. One of them asked me to sleep with him for at least 2 days before he could give me financial support towards campaign materials. Some of my supporters gave me campaign materials then started demanding for sex. And to make it worse; I didn’t have a house in the district so I had to sleep in a hotel during the campaign trail yet my campaign team comprised mainly of men, as a result, some people slandered me with propaganda that I am sleeping with my campaign team members.”

*Key Respondent, Mubende District*

“It’s so sickening how your life as a woman is totally sexualized and you are reduced to a sexual object by men. Male politicians in the same district make it difficult for women to run for elective office as they are always asking for sex from you. The sexual harassment and activities during the political party primaries equated if not superseded the general campaigns.”

*Key Respondent, Arua District*

“"My opponents sent someone to tell me that I should stop moving at night or I will be raped. This greatly traumatized me and instilled a lot of fear in me.”

*Key Respondent, Kasese District*

“Sexual violence and innuendos out there are terrible! The Lamwo District godfather and a Cabinet Minister kept saying: ‘You know now she wants to be a man. If she wants to be the man of this District I will cut off my penis and put it into her.’

*Key Respondent, Lamwo District*
In addition, some women voters were also violated as they expressed their civil rights and supported candidates of their choice. Three key respondents (all from the political opposition) reported gross sexual violations. One respondent was kidnapped, drugged, and gang-raped by male security operatives and injected with unknown substances that have since affected her health. While another woman was violated by police officers upon arrest and undressed. Another respondent reported that prison warders ask women to take off clothes and intimidate them. Her story reflects gross violations as summarized below:

“I am an FDC supporter and during the campaigns, I and many other Dr. Kiiza Besigye supporters were arrested and sent to prison. We were taken to Central Police Station where a female police officer kicked me and pushed my head against the wall. When we were being taken to court in the police van, police officers pulled my breasts, hair and also tried to undress me. At court all the men that I had been arrested with were given bail except me, who was told that I had to be taught to be a good woman. I was then remanded to Luzira Prison. While there, a prison warden seriously beat me up saying that Dr. Besigye and his supporters are idle. I was given a prison uniform with holes around the bosom and my breasts were exposed. Wardens sometimes ask women serving political or election related sentences to take off their clothes while they laugh as you stand in the sun. This is dehumanizing and unacceptable especially when women are sexually abusing other women in such ways”.

Key Opposition Respondent, Forum for Democratic Change

This case above is indicative of the magnitude of violations targeting women in the political opposition as way higher and more gruesome than women aligned to the ruling NRM political party. Violations targeted at women in the opposition reinforce patriarchal notions and exercise of power that uses fear, force, intimidation as well as violence to punish and oppress women that challenge the norm and dominant narrative. In many instances, as these women were being violated they were reminded that they were ‘bad women’ who supported opposition and had to be taught to be ‘good women’ that do not challenge dominant narratives and notions of power.

“I have never been so scared in my life. A male MP sent many emissaries demanding for a meeting with me until I met him in his car. When I met him, he introduced me to the idea of seeking spiritual powers to win the election. He was insistent that I practice witchcraft and even begged me to go and visit his witchdoctor to give me charms and herbs to bewitch my opponent. When I refused to go, it became such a big issue between me and him. Unbeknown to me then, he was scheming to become a cabinet minister from our district and was threatened by my opponent who has since been appointed to the cabinet as a State Minister.”

Key Respondent, Central Uganda Region
5.3 Causes of Violence Against Women in Elections in Uganda

This research delved deeper into unearthing the causes of violence against women in elections that are majorly classified as: structural, political and social.

Structural Causes of VAW-E

5.3.1 Uganda’s Electoral System
Uganda’s electoral system is a Plurality Voting System. In this system, the candidate(s) with the highest number of votes wins, with no requirement to get a majority of votes. In cases where there is a single position to be filled, it is known as First-Past-the-Post / Winner Takes it All. This is the second most common electoral system used for presidential and national legislature elections around the world, the vast majority of which are current or former British or American colonies or territories. This winner takes it all system is problematic and contributes to a lot of competition that predisposes women to violence.

Findings from this study indicate that for the ruling party, the toughest competition and resultantly, the higher rates of violations were faced in the 2015 NRM party primaries while for women in the opposition, the highest rates of violations were reported in the general election. All these elections were conducted under the same electoral system. There is therefore need to work towards having fairer electoral systems like Proportional Representation.

5.3.2 Misogyny and Sexism
Sexism and misogyny are deeply rooted in cultural norms, customs and practices. Society generally believes and thinks that women are a weaker sex that should be controlled. Patriarchal notions of power promote misogyny and sexism through: (i) Controlling and punishing women who challenge dominance and male privilege; (ii) Rewarding women who reinforce the status quo; (iii) Reinforcing the narrow definition of static gender roles and the place of women. As a result, there is hostility and violence meted out to women who violate and challenge patriarchal norms and expectations. Women in the political space face hostility because they are ‘in a man’s world’ and have crossed over from the private space to the public space.

5.3.3 God-Fathers – The Mzee / Alpha-Male /Strong Man Syndrome
Patriarchal social institutions including politics are bastions of male privilege where dominant men feel privileged and entitled to (and often receive) feminine care, attention and ‘overstepping’ on women. Further this privilege is translated into deciding on who the women representatives should be which was cited as one of the major causes of VAW-E in the 2016 elections. The research found out that many women blamed god-fathers for meting violence on those that stood to oppose the women they were supporting. One respondent from Lamwo District shares the ordeal she faced during the party primaries and the general election.
“Undertaking a lot of development work in Lamwo District as its Woman MP, got me the wrath of Lamwo District godfather. The fact that I was by then chairing a key Committee in Parliament scared the godfather who thought that if I returned, I would become a minister. My efforts and work didn’t please him as he felt he should be the only bull in the kraal. He started fighting me.

During the party primaries, the godfather bribed the District Police Commander to beat and intimidate my supporters; told my husband that I am a prostitute and that he should use five condoms when sleeping with me, and connived with the NRM District Returning Officer not to undertake polling in areas where I had strong support. We were 3 women in the party primaries and where I had strongholds, the party primary elections weren’t conducted. Where they were held, polling started at 5pm and ended at 6 pm. As such therefore, voters in 5 out of 11 sub-countries were denied their right to vote giving an edge to my two opponents. Due to all this harassment and irregularities in the primaries, I decided to run as an Independent candidate in the General Elections.

In the General Elections, the godfather teamed up with the District Internal Security Officer (DISO) and District Police Commander (DPC) to further harrass me. They intimidated my poll agents and supporters, impounded my car until after the elections, bribed my supporters and poll agents and threatened the Electoral Commission Returning Officer not to respond to irregularities that I would report. The worst case was sending people to rape me during night campaigns from which I was saved by an informer who warned me.

On polling day, using his influence as a Minister, he brought ineligible voters on trucks who voted for him and my opponent. They didn’t use the biometric voter system and in all these places, I lost terribly and yet in areas where the system was used, I won overwhelmingly.”

5.3.4 Campaign Timetables

The issue of unfriendly timetables affected women's participation in elections and created room for violations. Although time tables for campaign rallies in the general elections were scheduled to start at 9.00am and end at 6:00pm, in certain instances, they ended late due to the fact that some campaign venues were in distant locations. This mainly affected candidates running for women MP position who had to traverse the whole district. Women candidates were therefore faced with the choice of either risking their safety and security to attend the campaign rallies and meetings in far off locations or abandon their civil and democratic rights and stay at home or campaign in nearer locations. In some instances, women reported being forced to have joint campaigns with opponents which created fertile ground for rowdy rallies and fights between supporters.

“The campaign programme is problematic because it increases security risks for women. This affected me so much and increased my insecurity. At one time I was ambushed and put at gun-point in Atopi Sub-County, Apac District and another time in Apire, Kwania Constituency. Up to now I do not know who organized those ambushes and this still freaks me out so much even if the elections ended a long time ago.”

Key Respondent, Apac District

“One time we had a clash with my opponent the incumbent woman MP at a rally because the same location was allocated to both our teams on the same day. Our supporters viciously fought and I saw a woman with her baby on the back being trampled on.”

Key Respondent, Mubende District
5.3.5 Night-Time ‘Strategizing’ Meetings
Campaign strategy meetings are a very necessary part of an electoral process and given the fact that while campaigns are ongoing, daytime is used to attend to rallies. These meetings provide an opportunity for women to find out about issues affecting constituents, reflect on strategy, get their voice heard and also debrief after the day's campaigns.

Unfortunately, most strategising meetings, whether within the candidate's camp, or with other political party leaders, supporters and other stakeholders, are often held at night. This creates fertile ground for women's insecurity subjecting them to physical and sexual violence. Although Uganda's electoral laws clearly stipulate that campaigns should end by 6pm, it is silent on any other form of meetings like: strategy meetings, campaign team meetings and the door-to-door soliciting of votes popularly known as 'kakuyege'. Findings from women candidates and supporters revealed that logistics and strategy meetings were conducted at night and therefore, tended to subject women to insecure situations, making them susceptible to physical and sexual assault. More often when these meetings were held at night, some spouses and relatives of women candidates would not allow them to participate in such meetings due to safety considerations.

5.3.6 Inadequate Support and Lack of Impartiality by the Political Party Leadership
The report findings point to the fact that one of the major causes of VAW-E was lack of fairness, inadequate support, and favoritism exercised by political party leaders which affected political party primaries and also coerced some women to run as Independent candidates even though they were aligned to political parties. The violations ranged from: forced joint meetings as candidates; refusal to announce political party primaries results; tampering with electoral results; selective allocation of campaign funds; and de-campaigning candidates among others. Respondents further reported that even seeking redress through petitions submitted to political party electoral commissions were not adequately responded to and justice was not served. Key respondents attested to this and shared their stories.

"In the political party primaries, The NRM District Registrar insisted that we hold joint campaigns which increased way-laying, ambushes and clashes between supporters. I won in 13 out of the 15 sub-counties amidst massive rigging and partiality exercised by the NRM district leadership in my district. After winning the primaries, the challenge was that no one from my political party was willing to declare me as the winner. I was still not declared and the district party registrar declared my opponent as the NRM flag bearer."

Key Respondent, Bundibugyo District

Kakuyege is done at night yet night meetings pose a huge problem to us as women. Sometimes I would sleep in all these places where I was doing kakuyege or having strategy meetings. Though it wasn't safe to sleep away from home, it was still safer than coming back at night and being ambushed or waylaid. But then also one time, the male constituency MP and Cabinet Minister sent people to rape me during the kakuyege meetings, I was only saved by well-meaning informers that alerted me."

Key Respondent, Lamwo District
Findings further highlighted the fact that whereas women enjoyed the support accorded to them by their friends, families and supporters, the level of support within their political parties especially at grassroots level was minimal hence creating fertile ground for violations during the party nominations, primaries, and later on in the general electoral processes and the post-election era.

Social Causes of VAW-E

5.3.7 Negative Cultural Norms, Beliefs and Practices
During the 2016 general elections, some of the reported VAW-E incidents were as a result of negative cultural beliefs and practices that undermine the integrity and personhood of women. As a result, women were treated as intruders in democratic processes and reported cases of violence ranging from the domestic space (family level) to the public space (campaign platforms). Qualitative study findings indicate that spouses of some women candidates did not support the idea of their wives/partners vying for council and parliamentary positions. Negative beliefs about the role and space of women in society, often justified battery and emotional abuse meted by family members to ‘push women back to their place’. In some extreme cases, some women were violated for refusing to step down in favor of other family members like husbands, brothers, and in-laws.

5.3.8 Family and Spousal Control
Women suffered VAW-E meted to them by family members, spouses and male relatives (especially husbands). Wives mainly suffered psychological and physical violence during and around elections in the form of being beaten by husbands, alienated, abandoned, and harassed by family and in-laws with some marriages irretrievably broken. Anecdotal evidence suggests that young women voters and campaign agents suffered VAW-E perpetuated by parents, guardians and brothers while older women voters and campaign agents were harassed and subjected to violence by their husbands and sons after they were discovered to openly support candidates from a different political party than those supported by their sons or male relatives.

5.3.9 Use of Controlled Voting for Women
For the women voters, poll agents and supporters, the use of social sanctions and punishment commonly referred to as “controlled voting” was a major cause of VAW-E. Controlled voting refers to women being dictated upon by their male relatives - husbands, brothers or sons on who to support, vote for and how to cast their votes. Refusal to abide by the controlled voting often resulted in reprimand. This majorly propagated violence especially within the private sphere which was difficult to detect during the study though some respondents pointed to it as one of the causes of VAW-E.

5.3.10 Inadequate Support from Local Leaders
Additionally, findings indicate that there was inadequate support from local leaders such as opinion leaders, elders, religious and cultural leaders at grassroots level. Respondents reported that some of these local leaders were actually fueling VAW-E at grassroots level through interference in candidate selection processes, favoritism, de-campaigning candidates all of which perpetuated violence against women.
5.4 Implications of VAW-E

Violence against women in elections can have a myriad of devastating consequences on women’s short and long-term health and wellbeing. Along with the immediate physical and emotional impacts of VAW-E, women’s overall quality of life and interest to participate in governance processes can be adversely affected over an entire lifetime, which can, in turn, impact their participation and engagement in various aspects of life and society including politics and electoral governance.

Findings on the implications of VAW-E:

a. Fewer women participating in politics and decision-making for fear of being violated.

b. Increase of independent candidates as more violence is reported in primaries as opposed to the general elections.

c. Reduction in the quality of women’s leadership and their representation. Due to VAW-E, many women candidates prefer not to participate in electoral processes and it is left to those that are able to tussle it out and deal with the violence.

d. Some women reported that the cost of the election took a huge toll on their finances and eroded their savings. Elections and primaries that were characterized with VAW-E required more resources than those with less VAW-E.

e. There are also challenges of women being able to deliver on their mandates especially where VAW-E increases women’s vulnerability and reduces their capacity to deliver and independently engage within leadership spaces.

f. VAW-E promotes exclusionary politics as political space cannot be expanded, and there is less renewal and fewer younger women able to participate.

g. It is a gross violation of women’s rights and undermines their integrity and personhood.

h. VAW-E also entrenches the patriarchal notions of power that are often hierarchical, exclusionary, and violent. As a result, the continued existence of VAW-E promotes impunity.

i. With the continued existence of VAW-E, Uganda cannot achieve its gender targets and commitments to women as set out in Vision 2040, NDP II and the regional and international commitments under various standards and frameworks like Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, AU Agenda 2063 and the AU Women’s Decade.

j. VAW-E threatens the integrity of the electoral process, as well as the commitment of government to a free, fair, and inclusive democratic process.

“Personally, I wouldn’t go back and run for political office. Now, I see it as a waste of my energy, time and money… With continued violence; the key implications that I see are: leaders will be imposed on the people; high political turnover of women’s representation; good serious and credible women won’t get into leadership but leave it for the hooligans and above all; my political party will not survive beyond the President.”

**Key Respondent, Mityana District**

“The 2016 election was a do or die. Women did unimaginable things to other women all in the name of winning elections at various levels. We lost our dignity and humanity as women and mothers of the nation.”

**Key Respondent, Bundibugyo District**
5.5 Coping with VAW-E

Key respondents reported the following coping mechanisms:

- **a.** Consistency and keeping one’s eyes on the bigger picture and not allow to be distracted by violence.
- **b.** Beefing up personal safety and security especially for women candidates.
- **c.** Seeking redress through reporting incidences of violence to the Electoral Commission, Police and Political Party Structures.
- **d.** Having a clear campaign manifesto that enabled voters to keep focused on the plan of action rather than being disrupted by some forms of violence like insults and character assassination.
- **e.** Seeking support of spouses, intimate partners, friends and family.
- **f.** Stepping back, keeping a low profile and taking care of self through: seeking psychosocial, healthcare support and spiritual growth.
- **g.** Diverting energies and attention from politics to other interests such as: education, development work and business.
- **h.** In extreme cases, some respondents sided with their perpetrators and also played along through dialogue and hitting back.

“My coping strategy was support from my family especially my husband who drove me to rallies, gave me space to exercise my civic and political rights and mobilized money from my campaigns.”

*Key Respondent, Luwero District*

5.6 Suggested Recommendations to Address VAW-E

This report also delves into possible strategies that can reduce VAW-E. Respondents shared the strategies they had used to cope as well as made recommendations for addressing VAW-E:

**Breaking the Silence:** Develop programmes of support for women that specifically address VAW-E. The fact that VAW-E is hardly discussed even within the women’s movement or during the trainings that prepare women to get into elective politics itself is problematic.

**Male-Engagement Programmes:** Establish specific VAW-E male engagement programmes that target men in political spaces (godfathers, opinion leaders, male voters, electoral officials) and at community levels (spouses of women in politics, families and boda boda riders).

**Engagement with Political Parties:** Engage the major political parties on addressing violence through: strengthened support to women’s wings; undertake personal mastery training for women in political parties; lobby parties to set up codes of conduct that specifically acknowledge and commit to addressing VAW-E and; set up non-matronizing mentorship programmes within political parties between the younger and older women.

**Legal Reform:** Integrate UNSCR 1325 in electoral processes so as to address impunity of SGBV perpetrators; enactment of laws to regulate electoral financing as the current electoral laws especially The Political Parties and Organisations Act do not adequately address electoral financing or prohibit commercialization of politics; and ensure that existing electoral legislation addresses VAW-E and GBV in elections.
Electoral System Reform: The Plurality Voting System (first-past-the-post / winner takes it all system) is problematic and must be addressed if VAW-E is to be eliminated. Key targets under here would be to work towards adoption of Proportional Representation (PR) as an electoral system. PR not only has the potential to offer minority political parties and independent candidates a better chance of winning seats in Parliament and Councils, it also ensures that parties appeal to their core supporters, rather than a small number of so called ‘swing voters’ in marginal seats. Furthermore it ensures achievement of the 50:50 gender parity in electoral processes, especially through the Zebra Model as it obliges political parties to ensure that women are included in the party lists.

“I really don’t see why I should continue fighting with another woman to get into Parliament. I think I have now been baptized by fire. I have decided to stand for the Constituency (Open) Seat, tussle it out with the men and face it off with the political god-father. I need to give these men and that godfather a reason to fight me. Come 2021, I am standing for the Constituency seat in my district”.

Key Respondent, Lamwo District

National Women Symposium: Convene regular National VAW-E Women Symposium to open wider discussion on the matter, lay strategies and raise awareness on the magnitude and impact of VAW-E. This symposium would also provide some space for women candidates, voters and electoral officials to find closure and healing.

Taking the Bull by the Horns: Women that were harassed and violated by male counterparts / godfathers in the 2016 elections feel the best way to cope is addressing the patriarchal notions of power and challenging their male counterparts for the open constituency seats. In their purview, they feel that women continued struggling for the affirmative action seat and not challenging men for the open seat only reproduces the same system of oppression, excludes women, and increases violence between and among women as a social group.
6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Overall, this report concludes that, the 2016 general elections were highly competitive and arguably the most competitive in Uganda's history pitting men and women alike against each other and creating fertile ground for violence.

Violence against women during the 2016 elections occurred in three main forms namely: psychological, physical and sexual. Findings indicate that psychological violence was the most dominant form of VAW-E followed by physical violence and the least reported was sexual violence.

Findings further conclude that perpetrators of VAW-E were largely: spouses, family members, male candidates, godfathers and godmothers, political party supporters, party officials, electoral officials, youth, boda-boda riders, state security organs, media, police and prison officers.

VAW-E was meted either directly through outright attacks undermining the women candidates, propaganda gender-based hate speech, organising youth, thugs and criminals with a purpose of instilling fear, physical violence and sexual abuse. Indirectly, VAW-E was perpetuated by supporting opponents to frustrate the women candidates as well as intimidate spouses and family members of women candidates and political activists among others.

The report deducts that VAW-E differs from general electoral violence because it represents an important deterrent for women to participate freely in public life and in exercising their civil rights. It is the type of violence aimed at women during elections specifically because they are women, as opposed to general election violence that stems from differences in candidates’ or parties’ positions and struggles for power. Women in the 2016 election in Uganda were targeted as voters, candidates, political party supporters and activists, candidates’ families, campaign workers, journalists, electoral officials and staff, security forces and electoral observers. They were targeted just because they were women participating in the electoral process.

Further still, as women’s political visibility increases so do the incidents of electoral violence targeting them. Stories shared by key respondents indicated that women across the political divide were affected by VAW-E especially where their visibility was prominent at national level, for example, committees in parliament, heading national spaces within the political party ranks, being part of national processes and also engaging with development projects within the constituency.

The violations were majorly meted by Male MPs on representing Constituency (Open) Seats or Cabinet Ministers or Male Councilors / District Chairpersons within the same location/area/political party. These male counterparts preferred supporting weaker women candidates as opposed to the stronger women candidates who threatened their positions. They were fearful that these women would outshine them or probably one day aspire to stand for the open seat or be appointed to the cabinet.

These developments are reflective of negative patriarchal norms that create a public private dichotomy where men are supposed to be in the public domain (politics) and women in the private domain (home). And as such women that cross from the private domain into public domain are often violated.

The report further concludes that, whereas, general incidences of electoral violence have been widely documented in many parts of the world, violence targeting women during elections remains largely under-explored thereby making it very difficult to design interventions to eliminate it. And in Uganda, documentation of VAW-E is in its nascent stages with very limited research and strategic engagement. Furthermore, this report unearths that VAW-E is not explicitly included in the list of election offences in electoral laws and regulations. Similarly, the laws on GBV are silent on the issues of VAW-E thereby necessitating the harmonization of the two.
In addition, the major causes of VAW-E were structural, political and social. Structurally, the major causes were the electoral system, misogyny and sexism and the emergence of the godfather syndrome. Uganda’s Plurality Voting System (fast-past-the post / winner takes it all) was a major source of violence as the elections tended to be a do-or-die matter and often victors had to beat off all other contenders.

Politically, the inadequate support by political party leaders, election timetables and night-time meetings were a major cause of VAW-E. Findings demonstrate that the timetables were found to be unfavourable for women’s effective participation mainly because women’s constituencies are often vast geographically and women have to move long distances (sometimes at night) for strategising meetings in insecure environments.

Socially, negative cultural norms, beliefs and practices about the role of women, family/spousal control, use of controlled voting and inadequate support from local leaders causes VAW-E. The use of social sanctions as a way of controlling women voters and supporters, deterred meaningful participation in the 2016 electoral processes. Incidents were reported where women voters were beaten by their husbands, family members, and security agencies causing severe bodily harm. There were also reports of spouses not providing support to women candidates, families being split because of multiple candidates within the families, women being sacrificed at the expense of their male relatives who were candidates as well, and husbands deserting their wives during hectic electoral processes.

The research unearthed various forms of patronage that women faced including: ‘The deputizing syndrome’ where women were elected as deputies in the various party primaries. Other forms of suppression focused on limiting women to affirmative action seats rather than open constituency seats, capture of state power by business and political elites; and sexual harassment. At the local government levels, women’s high illiteracy levels, lack of exposure and social networks, and skills gaps led to low levels of articulation of issues and ineffectiveness hampering their effective participation in public life.

The report also unearthed an emerging phenomena called the mzee / strongman / Alpha male syndrome where women seek male approval
even on reserved affirmative action seats and constituency (open) seats. Findings further indicate that the same hegemonic and hierarchical exercise of patriarchal power as reflected in the mzee / strongman / Alpha male syndrome was replicated even within women as a social group – known as the 'maama syndrome'. As such therefore, these ‘mzees’ and ‘maamas’ became the kingmakers determining election candidates and winners.

Women voters and political party activists (especially those aligned to opposition political parties) also suffered VAW-E. Within the public domain, many of these reported being violated by state security operatives especially DISOs, police officers especially DPCs and arresting officers, and prisons warders. While in the private sphere, perpetrators were majorly intimate partners, spouses and family members especially in instances where they supported different candidates or political parties. These violations targeted women in the political opposition as a way to reinforce patriarchal notions and exercise of power that uses fear, force, intimidation and violence to punish and oppress women that challenge the norm. In countless instances, as these women were being violated they were reminded that they were ‘bad women’ who supported the political opposition and had to be taught to be ‘good women’ that do not challenge dominant narratives and notions of power.

The increment of fees for Presidential nomination (from Uganda Shillings 8,000,000/= to Uganda Shillings 20,000,000/=) and Parliamentary nomination (from Uganda Shillings 200,000/= to Uganda Shillings 3,000,000/=) was a major barrier that was classified as VAW-E in as far as economically excluding women. These increments were introduced during the electoral law reform debate particularly the Presidential Elections Act and Parliamentary Elections Act. This was coupled with the introduction of nomination fees within some political parties such as the NRM and FDC parties for aspirants seeking to contest on party tickets.

Many observers approximate that the nomination fees were aimed at closing intra-party and inter-party civic space by financially deterring rivals from challenging incumbents and as such it protected the power bases of incumbents at all levels. Analysts further contend that this move was classified as an economic form of VAW-E that promotes classism, gave incumbents relative advantage, and increased exclusion within the political space, affecting many young women, rural women, low income earners and women from lower social classes from accessing political space.

More generally, campaigning is always grueling and dangerous given the fact that it requires enormous financial resources and exposes one to enormous risks. Women candidates from the Opposition and the Independents attested that the 2016 elections were economically violent to them as they were up against ruling party candidates who had more comparative advantage. Campaigning against NRM candidates is often grueling because the party has enormous financial resources, leverages and uses the control of state institutions at national and local government levels to support its candidates, intimidates, arrests and buys off opponents and uses tactics of threats, propaganda, and vote-buying.

Lastly, this report found that VAW-E is a fundamental barrier that hinders women from effectively participating in elections and other governance processes. It is an important deterrent for women’s full and free participation in public life and exercise of their civil rights. Whether the violence is real or imagined; it greatly affects women physically, emotionally and socially.
6.2 Recommendations

Major recommendations to the key actors:

6.2.1 Government of Uganda

Legal and Policy Framework

a. There is need to review the legal framework that governs elections and political participation as a whole in order to include aspects of VAW-E as part of the specific offences.

b. Parliament to expeditiously enact a law that regulates electoral financing; this can be either through: enactment and resourcing of an Elections Expenses Act or Amendment of the Political Parties and Organisations Act.

c. Undertake an electoral system reform with a view of creating a fairer system like Proportional Representation that enables women’s effective participation and reduction of VAW-E.

Registrar of Political Parties

There is need to functionalise the existing database of political parties with an aim of generating gender disaggregated data to monitor and track political party processes from a gender perspective. Key among the issues to monitor under each political party is VAW.

Independent Electoral Commission

• The Uganda Independent Electoral Commission should include issues of VAW-E in their training materials for civic and voter education in order to raise public awareness on the matter throughout the electoral cycle.

• Review the existing electoral guidelines for observers to include indicators of VAW-E as mandatory during their observation process.

The Uganda Police Force, Prisons and Armed Forces

• Armed forces and law enforcement officers as duty bearers should desist from perpetrating violence against women in elections and where violations have been reported the perpetrators should be held liable and prosecuted.

• The gender desk in the Uganda Police Force should expand its activities to include systematic follow-up of VAW-E including setting up a toll-free hotline telephone number where people can call and report cases of VAW-E as they occur in various places and take immediate action against the perpetrators.

• The police gender desk should demand allocation of adequate resources / budget to facilitate the desk to deal with VAW-E issues.

6.2.2 Political Parties and Organisations

• Political parties should put in place specific mechanisms to detect and prevent VAW-E in order to expand women’s space and opportunity to effectively participate in multiparty politics.

• Roll out a massive awareness campaign for their members and supporters on VAW-E and its negative consequences to women’s empowerment.

6.2.3 Development Partners

• Prioritise the support of national programmatic interventions that addresses VAW-E

• Support CSOs and other institutions to carry out periodic studies to assess the prevalence of VAW-E throughout the election continuum.

• Support CSOs and other institutions to carry out expansive and sustainable civic and voter education programmes throughout the election cycle.

• Support public sector initiatives aimed at curbing GBV in general and VAW in particular.

6.2.4 Civil Society

• Undertake nation-wide ongoing civic education, voter education and public education campaigns from grassroots level aimed at preventing perpetuation of VAW-E.

• Design specific programs in order to build the capacity of various groups on how to detect and prevent cases of VAW-E. These groups include leaders of political parties, religious leaders, community leaders, media personnel, the police force, armed forces, prisons, election management officials and relevant government officials.

• Develop gender-responsive data collection tools that enable collection of data on VAW-E that includes all forms of VAW-E (physical, psychological, sexual).

• Develop programmes of support that enhance women’s political and electoral participation (in both the public and private spheres) through the mitigation and prevention of violence in all its forms as well as appropriate remedies for survivors.

• Lobby for instituting of legal and punitive measures against perpetrators of VAW-E. This could be through stepped up advocacy for the integration of commitments that bind
Uganda under UNSCR 1325 and ICGLR Kampala Declaration into electoral processes as a means of addressing impunity.

- Advocate for the regulation of electoral financing through enactment, resourcing, and implementing an Elections Expenses Act or amending the Political Parties and Organisations Act.
- Develop referral systems and support to victims and survivors of VAW-E.

6.2.5 FOWODE

- In the next electoral cycle; undertake a more comprehensive nationwide research on VAW-E that includes a cross range of methodologies like: desk review, research-based findings, use of field monitors on an on-going basis and working with local partners at district and lower levels to document the manifestations of VAW-E experienced by women voters, candidates, electoral officials and campaign agents throughout the electoral cycle.
- Design and roll out a bolder Violence Against Women in Elections Project/Intervention as a way of bolstering existing knowledge, developing analytical tools and a robust framework for assessment, ongoing documentation of women’s experiences with electoral violence, enhancing programming that addresses the impact of electoral violence on women and providing leadership on VAW-E in-country.
- Lobby existing civil society electoral monitoring mechanisms and processes to ensure that the election monitoring tools used also capture incidences and manifestations of VAW-E.
- Undertake mass awareness sessions / civic education with a strong emphasis on gender-based violence so as to raise consciousness of families, communities and political actors on the forms, manifestations, and effects of VAW-E.
- Design a Training Module on VAW-E and integrate it in the training curricula for women candidates, poll agents, political parties and electoral officials.
- Convene periodic National Women Symposia on VAW-E.
- Broadly disseminate these report findings to state and non-state actors, democracy and governance practitioners, funding partners and other stakeholders working on GBV so as to inform advocacy, resourcing and action on VAW-E.
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