



**Promoting Democracy in Preventing Electoral Violence:  
The Women's Situation Room**

A systematic review of evidence produced for the Sustainable Development Solutions  
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Challenges of Social Inclusion: Inequality, Gender, and Human Rights

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In order to guarantee free and fair elections, international and local actors engage in various activities, such as election monitoring and observation, technical and logistical assistance, and organization and supervision of elections. In West Africa, women's organizations in addition have created the Women's Situation Room (WSR) - an initiative that conducts bottom-up consultations, trainings, advocacy and monitoring aimed at preventing electoral violence and promoting peaceful and fair elections, with women's direct participation and engagement. This paper offers a systematic review of evidence on women's role in building peace and sustainable democracy by looking at their contributions and achievements concerning a key element of the democratic process: elections.

Recognizing the powerful potential of the WSR to strengthen democracy and good governance, the review analyzes the conditions of its success, with an eye towards refining this strategy and facilitating its replication in other electoral scenarios. It interrogates the link between gender and election monitoring in order to develop a deeper understanding of the way in which inclusive conflict prevention strategies can help foster sustainable democracy through an engagement with electoral processes.

The review is divided into three main parts. The first part develops a literature review on electoral violence aiming to provide the basis for understanding the contexts in which electoral violence can emerge and possible strategies for preventing its occurrence. It also examines the gendered dimensions of electoral violence, both in terms of its differential gendered impacts and mechanisms for conflict resolution. Key questions guiding this literature review are as follows: *What is electoral violence? What are its defining characteristics, triggers and enabling conditions? How is electoral violence gendered? How can it be prevented and mitigated?*

The second part synthesizes and analyzes evidence on experiences with Women's Situation Rooms. It explores the operational aspects, challenges, and achievements of such initiatives. The analytical focus is on Senegal, where the application of the strategy has been considered highly successful. Key questions guiding our analysis in this section include: *How do Women's Situation Rooms work? How were different actors involved and mobilized? Which (gendered) techniques and interventions were used? What have they been able to accomplish?*

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Data for the review come from three sources: First are existing documents and reviews of the Women's Situation Room produced by different organizations, such as Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC), UN Women, as well as reports in the press. This material covers experiences with the Women's Situation Room in Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mali, Guinea Bissau and Nigeria. Second, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 11 informants who were engaged with the initiative in Senegal. Selected interviewees are key individuals that reflect the diverse areas of intervention of the WSR: women leaders from the contact and pressure group, observers, analysts and journalist monitors (see annex I: list of interviewees). Third, I drew on extant film footage documenting the experience in Senegal.

The final part of the review is dedicated to identifying key drivers of success of the initiative and developing some preliminary reflections to feed into a road-testing strategy for the replication of the WSR in other cases.

### **Understanding electoral violence, conflict, and gender: a review of literature**

Elections and the consolidation of democratic institutions are considered to be key components in the promotion and maintenance of peace and stability (UNDPKO 2008; Höglund and Jarstad 2010). According to Höglund, "...elections have become part of the international peace-building strategy, which strongly links peace to democratic development" (Höglund 2009: 414; Reilly 2002). As an instrument of inclusion and participation, electoral arenas can provide a powerful momentum for conflict resolution in war-torn environments or divided societies (Odukoya 2007: 152).

Yet by their very essence, elections call for political competition and mobilization, which can lead to contention over the authority of the electoral agencies, the fairness of procedures, or the legitimacy of the outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The tendency to emphasize difference rather than commonality also can lead to violence (Höglund 2009),<sup>3</sup> potentially undermining democratic governance.<sup>4</sup> According to the Electoral Integrity Project (EIP), "estimates suggest that one in

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<sup>2</sup> "Contentious elections' are defined as contests involving major challenges, with different degrees of severity, to the legitimacy of electoral actors, procedures, or outcomes. In this understanding, contentious elections are apparent in contests experiencing popular disputes challenging either *the authority of electoral actors* (such as the impartiality, authority, and independence of Electoral Management Bodies); *the fairness of electoral procedures* throughout the electoral cycle (including the rules of the game used to draw boundaries, register voters, candidates and parties, allocate elected offices, regulate campaigns, cast ballots, and translate votes into seats), and/or *the legitimacy of outcomes* and thus of those winning office (including representatives and political parties)." (EIP [n.d.]) Available at: <https://sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/projects/electoral-violence>

<sup>3</sup> During electoral processes, "...differences are emphasized rather than common elements. For this reason, there is a danger that existing social conflicts and cleavages are intensified" (Höglund 2009: 421).

<sup>4</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/projects/electoral-violence>

five contemporary elections worldwide involve violence (involving at least one civilian fatality), and many also trigger post-election protests” (EIP [n.d.]).

Electoral violence can be a recurrent phenomenon, and is especially likely in new democracies and during presidential elections (Bekoe 2012: 5; Straus and Taylor 2012: 33; Laakso 2007: 226). More specifically on the African continent, the introduction or reestablishment of multiparty systems is regarded as a source for electoral tensions and disputes (EISA 2010: 2; Bekoe 2012). The African Electoral Violence Dataset (AEVD), which comprises all electoral processes on the continent from 1990 to 2008, shows that electoral violence occurred in 20 percent of all electoral contests (Straus and Taylor 2012: 23). In 2011 alone, 60 percent of the African countries undergoing electoral campaigns experienced some degree of violence during elections (Bekoe 2012: 1).

Electoral violence can endanger democracy itself as well as peace and stability for both objective and subjective reasons. It can affect the direct participation of the constituency and candidates in the campaigns, and it can interfere with their behavior towards and perception of democracy. Voters might feel insecure to support a certain candidate; candidates, on the other hand, might feel threatened to run for office. Subjectively, “citizens who experience repeated or intense electoral violence may view democratization in a less favorable light...” (ibid: 4), which can create an environment of discontentment with democracy<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, effective mechanisms to prevent and mitigate electoral violence are a fundamental step towards the consolidation of sustainable democratic regimes.

#### *Electoral violence: definition and characteristics*

Electoral violence “refers to physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to an impending electoral contest or announced electoral result” (Straus and Taylor 2012: 19). A more complete definition provided by the UNDP defines it as:

“Any acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process, or that arise in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the process of elections — such as efforts to delay, disrupt or derail a poll — or to influence the outcomes: the determination of winners in competitive races for political office, or securing the approval or disapproval of referendum questions.” (UNDP 2011)

Scholarly and policy-oriented research shows that electoral violence is a specific phenomenon that requires particular responses (Bekoe 2012; Höglund 2009; Höglund and Jarstad 2010). The specificity of election-related violence lies mainly in the following

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<sup>5</sup> Bekoe cites research conducted by the Afrobarometer that affirm that “71 percent of those who viewed their country’s last election as not free and fair or with major problems were not at all satisfied with democracy” (Bekoe 2012: 5). This point is also emphasized by EISA 2010: 6.

characteristics: motive, timing, actors, consequences and patterns (Bekoe 2012; Höglund 2009).

The immediate motivation for electoral violence is to influence the electoral process and/or its results (Höglund 2009: 415; Laakso 2007: 227-228). Its underlying causes, however, are usually related either to social, political or economic grievances (Laakso 2007: 229; IPI 2012: 5) or to political greed (IPI 2012: 5). While the former is especially likely in states divided by identitarian cleavages, the latter is particularly expected in contexts of patronage, i.e. “where politicians (...) use their access to state resources to reward individuals for their political support” (ibid; Odukoya 2007; Höglund 2009). Both of these issues have the potential to forge an environment of rivalry and antagonism (EISA 2010).

The presence of a large, unemployed youth population - especially young males - also increases the possibility of electoral violence (IPI 2012: 5; Laakso 2007: 234).<sup>6</sup> Unemployed youth becomes more easily coopted if electoral violence increases their access to power and resources. During the 1992 and 1997 elections in Kenya, for instance, local unemployed youth played a key role in the violent outcome of the polls (Laakso 2007: 234). Other identified risk factors are: elections conducted in post-conflict settings where parties are not totally demobilized or disarmed; previous history of electoral violence; and a culture of impunity (Höglund 2009).

Using a database of all elections from 1982-2004, Hafner-Burton et al. found that the highest incidence of electoral violence is state-sponsored (Hafner-Burton et al 2014: 120). State-sponsored election violence can be perpetrated by incumbent governments or their political allies (such as political parties or militias), and it is usually observed in cases in which those in power fear the outcome of the elections (ibid: 150; Scot and Taylor 2012: 20; Höglund 2009: 416). Yet, voters as well as opposition groups/political parties who do not control the state machinery can also engage in electoral violence, usually seeking to challenge the status quo (Scot and Taylor 2012: 20). The targets of electoral violence can be people (i.e., voters, candidates, monitors and media representatives) or objects (i.e., ballots, campaign materials, ballot boxes, etc.) (Höglund 2009: 417; UNDP 2009: 4).

Electoral violence can be manifested in many forms. In addition to targeted murders and direct physical violence against voters and candidates, intimidation, harassment, unlawful detention, torture, forceful displacement of voters, suppression of newspapers, destruction of campaign or electoral material or any act that intends to hamper the participation of the opposition or of the constituency can constitute election-related violence (Straus and Taylor 2012: 17-19; Bekoe 2012: 8). Indeed, electoral violence is an overarching category that also

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<sup>6</sup> This point will be further explored in the next subsection.

embraces coercive acts that intimidate voters and candidates, and/or constrain public engagement, thus hindering authentic democratic deliberation.

Elections that experience a high incidence of electoral violence can suffer low voter turnout, lower registration, and resignation of candidates, which directly impact the inclusiveness and representativeness of the polls and, consequently, the input legitimacy of the democratic government. When it comes to security implications, electoral violence can deepen social and political polarizations, triggering conflicts and opening space to extremist ideologies (Höglund 2009: 417).

Although most episodes of election-related violence erupt before the polls, the phenomenon can occur anytime during the electoral cycle (before, during and after the elections) (Scot and Taylor 2012; EISA 2010). Consequently, “elections should be viewed as a process rather than as event” (IPI 2012: 1). This consideration should be reflected in election-related interventions aiming at promoting sustainable democracy and protecting political participation as key pathways to good governance.

#### *How is electoral violence gendered?*

Violence and conflict are deeply gendered phenomena. Quantitative studies demonstrate a positive correlation between gender inequality and militarized conflict between and within states (Caprioli 2000; 2005). Countries in which women are excluded from social, political and economic structures tend to reproduce insecurities, thus making sustainable peace difficult to achieve (Caprioli 2005:165). Entrenched social attitudes and stereotypes affect the way men and women participate in, experience and respond to violence and insecurity. Gendered hierarchies reinforce masculine agency and entail the institutionalization of female inferiority, thus naturalizing and reproducing different forms of structural and physical insecurities (Hudson, 2010; Blanchard, 2003).

Different bodies of research have shown how considering gender and including women can increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding, help prevent violence, and mitigate the risks of conflict and instability (Caprioli 2005; Gizelis 2009; 2011; see also Regan and Paskeviciute 2003; Tessler and Warriner 1997). Not all women are inherent peacemakers, but women can play a strategic role in advancing support on the ground and in having a stabilizing role in the management of local tensions (Anderlini 2007; Mazurana and MacKay 1999). In particular, women's organizations have a distinctive capacity to engage with and mobilize local networks to support peacebuilding endeavors (Gizelis 2011: 525). Despite marginalization and exclusion, feminist networks and women's organizations have played an active part in struggles to consolidate peace and democracy in various parts of the world.

They also have actively worked to challenge barriers that limit women's rights and political participation in different contexts (Anderlini 2007; Paffenholz 2009).

When women are included in negotiations, gendered logics may change the dynamics around the table and increase the likelihood of conflict-resolution. While male negotiators tend to behave more competitively, women usually display a more cooperative, flexible and creative behavior at the bargaining table (Eckel et al. 2008; Boyer et al. 2009). Moreover, gender stereotyping influences the outcome of the negotiation. An experiment conducted with students imitating Palestinian and Israeli peace negotiations demonstrated that proposals made by female negotiators tended to be regarded as more trustworthy than those offered by their male counterparts (Maoz, 2009).

The importance of advancing gender-sensitive analysis in electoral contexts thus goes far beyond a narrow approach of inclusivity and participation. It can provide a promising tool for understanding and responding to the differential gendered impacts of electoral violence, and to advancing mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

As briefly mentioned above, studies on electoral violence have shown that high rates of (male) youth unemployment can increase the risk of insecurity during electoral periods (Markussen and Mbuvi 2011; IPI 2012: 5; Laakso 2007: 234). This is not only a result of the potential economic rewards attached to electoral violence, but also of unfulfilled gendered roles and expectations. Men who are not able to match social expectations concerning their role as family breadwinners can experience extreme frustration, feelings of marginalization and 'emasculatation' that can lead to violent behavior (Freedman and Jacobson 2012: 11). Accordingly, "failure to live up to perceived expectations of masculinity is thus compensated for through an exaggeration of other forms of perceived 'masculine' behavior..." (ibid). Greedy politicians are able to capitalize on this situation by recruiting, training and inciting radicalism among large contingents of unemployed youth.

There are, however, other gendered dimensions to electoral violence. First, election-related violence is an obstacle for women's political participation as voters and candidates. Over time, women's increasing politicization has challenged masculine structures in politics and the persisting cultural stereotypes of women as domestic/apolitical beings. This has produced a backlash to women's security in electoral contexts, making them more susceptible to physical and psychological violence that draws on traditional gender stereotypes (Bardall 2013: 3).

Hence, "the evolution of women's roles in democratic political processes has diversified the ways in which women become victims of electoral violence" (Bardall 201: 9). In Guinea, for instance, more than 100 women were raped by security forces for participating in a political demonstration (UN Women 2012: 12). During the 2010 elections in Afghanistan, 9 out of 10 threats were proffered against women candidates (ibid). In 2009 in Sierra Leone, a

female candidate received death threats and her supporters were physically attacked as a reprisal for her candidacy (Bardall 2011: 14).

According to Bardall, female voters are four times more vulnerable to electoral violence than men (Ibid: 16). By using data collected from 2006-2010 in six countries, Bardall found that during elections women are especially targeted by intimidation, verbal harassment, arbitrary arrest and physical harm, such as sexualized violence (ibid: 10-11). Women are also frequently subjected to sexist rhetoric “designed to inhibit and intimidate female candidates, voters and activists.” (ibid: 1). For not fitting into traditionally expected social standards, female candidates and voters are more frequently victims of moral harassment, being regularly offended as prostitutes, lesbians and social/sexually deviant (ibid.).

Women are also vulnerable to electoral violence in their own households. The most common forms of domestic election-related violence are physical and psychological abuse and intimidation, such as battering by male relatives for voting for a certain candidate, impediments to leaving home to vote or to express opinions in public as well as domestic pressure to coerce electoral choices (Bardall 2011).

These various forms of violence against women during elections serve to perpetuate existing gender gaps in women's political participation and leadership.<sup>7</sup> Women are not only less likely to vote and be elected than men. They are also less likely to participate and work in political campaigns, and to contact politicians in order to voice their opinions and concerns (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2012: 63). Moreover, in post-conflict states, women are rarely included in peace negotiations and as a result prevented from contributing to decision-making in the reorganization of their societies. But women's political disempowerment contradicts the principles of equality and non-discrimination and thus the establishment of sustainable democracy. It also an obstacle to achieving peace and stability, a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. Therefore, rather than simply focusing on the monitoring of electoral outputs, election-related policies and programs should seek to increase the quality of processes of democratic participation. This requires a close commitment to inclusiveness, equality and consequently to women's active political engagement in all stages of the electoral cycle.

*How can electoral violence be prevented and mitigated?*

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<sup>7</sup>According to the UN women, only 20.9 per cent of national parliamentarians were female as of 1 July 2013. See: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20womenlgthembriefuswebrev2%20pdf.ashx>; See also: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>;



Local and international stakeholders draw on an array of strategies to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process. Electoral monitoring and observation have become the most frequently employed interventions since the 1990s, playing an important role in ensuring accountability and reducing the chances of impunity. They aim to produce assessments concerning the fairness and legitimacy of the polls based on solid documentation. Yet, these are passive observation activities, with limited or no capacity to promptly react to episodes of violence or other irregularities (OSIWA 2012: 4; EISA 2010: 4-6).

More recently, there has been a recognition of the need to supplement electoral monitoring with more proactive conflict prevention strategies (IPI 2012; OSIWA 2012), which can range from electoral mediation and the implementation of rapid response mechanisms to programs that foster social cohesion in electoral contexts (UNDP 2009: 37). According to the UNDP, the promotion of social integration is one of the most effective mechanisms to build trust in the electoral process and to curb tensions that can lead to the outbreak of violent episodes (ibid: 38). Key activities include voter education, peer-to-peer peace advocacy, engagement with the media, creation of structures of dialogue among stakeholders and direct engagement with vulnerable populations (UNDP 2009: 38).

Preventive strategies can be more effective if combined with the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Civil society initiatives, such as the Women's Situation Room, have been particularly creative in making technology a key ally against electoral violence (Bardall 2013). For example, they rely on crowdsourcing<sup>8</sup> in election monitoring, increasing citizen participation in election observation. By sending reports via SMS, social media platforms or specific websites, ordinary citizens can actively participate and report election-related violence and other bad electoral conducts, such as frauds and vote buying. Mobile technology can facilitate communication between actors and the delivery of real-time reports from the ground. By speeding up the flow of information through SMS-messaging or internet-based platforms (email, twitter, and other websites), ICTs help expedite responses to violence or misconducts, thus contributing to a peaceful and fair election process.

The particular features of election-related violence thus point to the relevance and potential of initiatives that combine social inclusion, crowdsourced election monitoring, and mobilization of youth and women. Consequently, there are good reasons to believe that the Women's Situation Room is one of the promising strategies to provide early warning and ensure peace and stability during elections while forging social cohesion and increasing women's political participation. According to Bardall

the Women's Situation Room initiative ... has used incident reports collected via SMS, cell phones and other ICTs to provide rapid response to victims. The use of

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<sup>8</sup> See: <https://sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/projects/crowdsourcing>

ICTs in the Situation Rooms empowers women to act as stewards of the peace. Through mobilization, mediation and multi-sector coordination, these programs reinforce this key civic role performed by women in many countries. (ibid: 6)

In sum, this initiative has the potential to contribute to the electoral process by engaging with both ends of the electoral spectrum. On the one hand, it reaches the grassroots through a coordinated mechanism for inclusive deliberation and political participation. On the other hand, it constitutes an impartial interface that can serve as a bridge to high-level representatives and official structures, guaranteeing responses to reported episodes of electoral violence and other wrongdoings.

### **Promoting sustainable democracy and good governance in electoral contexts: The Women's Situation Room**

The WSR can be defined as a non-partisan political process lead by women aiming to promote peaceful and transparent elections, to prevent electoral violence and to increase democratic participation. As a result, it puts in practice strategies that employ women's experiences as bottom-up peace builders while training, engaging and empowering them as active political agents. The strategy can thus be regarded as "a continuation of peacebuilding through consultations, trainings, and advocacy" (UN Women [n.d.]). Perhaps most importantly, the WSR advances principles of deliberative democracy and good governance by engaging with political processes and institutional practices that enable the ideal of public deliberation and inclusive participation.

The idea of setting up the structure of the WSR was first introduced during the 2011 elections in Liberia. Facing a turbulent electoral process, about 30 women's groups decided to coordinate their efforts to advocate and work together for peaceful elections. Under the coordination of the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC), Liberian women paired-up with youth groups to promote dialogues and trainings on peace advocacy and election observation (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5 2015). The need to provide such a structure with rapid response capacity encouraged women to work collaboratively with state entities and traditional leaders (Yvette Chesson-Wureh, audio recording; Bineta Diop, interview, February 5 2015).

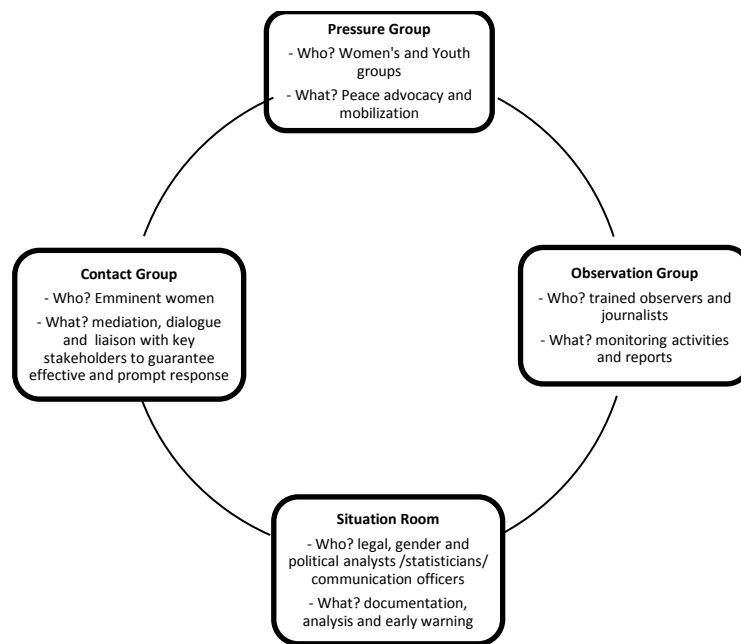
In January 2012, only a couple of months after being established for the first time, the "Gender is my Agenda Campaign" (GIMAC) at the African Union adopted the Women's Situation Room as "best practice" and asked for its replication in other African electoral processes (UN Women [n.d.]). Since then, the Women's Situation Rooms have been set up during elections in Senegal (2012), Sierra Leone (2012), Kenya (2013), Zimbabwe (2013), Mali (2013), Guinea-Bissau (2014), and Nigeria (2015).

The activities developed by the WSR are based on three main premises – also known as “the triple M factor”: mobilization, monitoring and mediation (Diop 2012). Mobilization focuses on organizing multiple and diverse civil society segments, especially women and youth, encouraging their full peaceful engagement at all stages of electoral process. Monitoring combines mobile technologies, deployed observers and close collaboration with the media in order to observe whether the electoral process was fairly and peacefully conducted. Considering the specific nature of electoral conflicts, mediation does not necessarily involve the traditional image of a third party mediating a final agreement to end or de-escalate tensions or violent clashes between two rivals. In electoral violence, “the peace table is the polling system” (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015) and mediatory activities consists of undertaking preventive diplomacy strategies, such as meeting key actors - bilaterally or multilaterally- in order to get their compromise for a peaceful and inclusive environment before, during and after electoral polls (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015; Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015; Dalla Sidibé, interview, March 31 2015).

**Box 1: “The Triple of M factor” of the Women’s Situation Room (Diop 2012)**

**Mobilization** of women and youth across identitarian divides to broaden political participation and to pressure stakeholders to hold a free, fair and inclusive election;  
**Monitoring** the electoral process to guarantee its integrity, inclusiveness and peacefulness with the support of the media, mobile technology and observers deployed across the country;  
**Mediation** to respond, prevent and mitigate reported episodes of electoral violence and to encourage dialogue between different parties with the support of eminent personalities and key stakeholders.

Although the WSR can be adapted according to the setting in which it is being replicated, the process is generally structured around four organizational entities: the pressure group, the observation group, the situation room (*stricto sensu*) and the contact group. The pressure group is the mobilization branch of the WSR. It organizes mass mobilizations and other activities to advocate for peaceful and inclusive elections. The observation group is the monitoring branch, composed of observers and journalists that are deployed to monitor the electoral contest and relay information to the WSR. These actors are trained to report information concerning not only the fair conduct of the electoral process, but also the participation and treatment of female voters and candidates. The situation room *stricto sensu* functions as a watch room that receives, analyzes and responds to election-related violence. It is equipped with technical and analytical expertise as well as logistical capacity to document, assess and react to incidents. Finally, the contact group is composed of eminent personalities that provide advisory capacity, high-level mediation, and liaison with key stakeholders in order to promote peace and guarantee prompt responses to reported incidents (ABIC [n.d.]).



**Figure 1: The basic structure of the WSR**

In a nutshell, the WSR formula combines a field monitoring, an analytical and a response component that jointly contribute to the occurrence of transparent, fair, inclusive and peaceful elections. The WSR complements and strengthens traditional electoral monitoring by combining women's roles as peace brokers and their capillary reach on the ground for information gathering and awareness raising with early warning and rapid reaction mechanisms.

### *The WSR experience in Senegal*

In the run-up to the 2012 Senegalese elections, President Abdoulaye Wade declared that he would run for a third term office and attempted to amend the Senegalese Constitution to lower the votes required to elect a candidate from 50 to 25 per cent in the first round. His maneuvering triggered mass mobilization and pre-electoral violence throughout the country. In view of this political crisis, women's groups assembled in 19<sup>th</sup> GIMAC consultative meeting called on Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) - an international non-governmental organization recognized for its work on issues related to women's empowerment and conflict resolution - to take initiative to prevent electoral violence in Senegal and other African countries (Ëttu Jamm, [n.d.]). Responding to this call, Bineta Diop, President of FAS, mobilized women's organizations at the local, national and regional level (Khadija Guèye, interview, March 27 2015; Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015) as well as eminent

personalities, businesswomen and female leaders from different areas and background (Colle Sow Ardo, interview, March 25 2015).

Under the coordination of FAS, they established the Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections (also known as Èttu Jamm) to guarantee peace and stability and to advance gender equality in the country before, during and after elections. The founding members of the Platform were renowned local, national and regional organizations working in different areas of security and development (Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015; Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015). For instance, AFAO (*Association des femmes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*) is acknowledged for its work on food security and economic empowerment of rural women. AJS (*Associations des Juristes Sénégalaises*) is an association of female jurists that work for the protection and advancement of women's rights in the country since 1974. FAFS (*Fédération des Associations Féminines au Sénégal*), CLVF (*Comité de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes*) and RSJ (*Réseau Siggil Jigéen*) dedicate their work to eradicating violence against women and promoting gender equality and women's political participation.

In total, the initiative involved about 50 women's organizations<sup>9</sup> - both Senegalese and regional - representing women from a diversity of backgrounds and regions. The aims of the platform were twofold: first, to mobilize women and youth for conflict prevention, implementing strategies to prevent and mitigate episodes of electoral violence; second, to encourage the active involvement of women in the electoral process, thus increasing democratic participation in accordance with UNSCRs 1325 and the Senegalese Parity Law (Safietou Diop, interview, March 26 2015). Accordingly, they agreed on a joint strategy that included the replication of the WSR in Senegal in partnership with ABIC, UNDP and UN Women.

The Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections in Senegal reflected and mobilized dual gendered images. The first articulated the female essentialist "triad": motherhood/victimhood/peacemaking. The second portrayed women as fearless actors, trustworthy agents and a source of moral authority. On the one hand, the underlying logic of

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<sup>9</sup> West African Women's Association (WAWA/AFAO), Associations des Facilitatrices Africaines (AFA Nenuphar), Association Femme Solidarité (AFS), African Women's Millennium Initiative (AWOMI), the Associations des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS), the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), Caucus des Femmes Leaders pour le Soutien de la Loi sur la Parité, Colle Ardo Sow, Comité de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes (CLVF), Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF), Union Diocésaine des Associations Féminines au Sénégal (CUDAFCS/UDAFCD), Fédération des Associations Féminines au Sénégal (FAFS), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Femme Développement et Entreprise en Afrique (FDEA), Groupe d'Initiative de Femmes (GIF), the Gorée Institute, Réseau Siggil Jigéen (RSJ), Society of Women living with Aids (SWAA), Tostan, Réseau Africain pour le Soutien à l'Entrepreneuriat Féminin (RASEF), Réseau National des Femmes Rurales du Sénégal (RNFRS), Women in Law and Development in Africa-Sénégal (WiLDAF-Sénégal). Some of these members are actually a network of NGOs.

women as mothers of the nation, peace lovers and the main victims of the conflict were a key element for the mobilization of Platform members internally. According to Khady Fall Tall, one of the women leaders of the WSR: “we are the mothers of these children and students, the perspective that we provide is not the same as the perspective of syndicalists and other actors” (Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015). Another interviewee affirmed: “Women are different from men, a woman is a mother (...) and we were calmer and we got together for peace in our country” (Cole Sow Ardo, interview, March 25 2015). Portraying women as mothers, victims and peacemakers helped women from different walks of life to find a common cause beyond their social and political divergences. According to Ardo Sow: “Each of us had our own candidate, but when we were there, we forgot about our candidates (...), nobody knew who voted for whom because we were there for our country, not for a candidate (...)” (Ibid). In this sense, women's organizations used “strategic essentialism,” mobilizing feminine stereotypes (mothers/nurturers/peace-lovers) as an element of cohesion during their peace building work (Anderson 2010; Cockburn 2007).

On the other hand, gendered images of women as trustworthy, fearless and a source of moral authority provided them with leverage vis-à-vis men and youth. “Men did not want to confront women because we are their mothers and sisters (...). As women, we give our tradition, we demand forgiveness and people listen” (Dalla Sidibé, interview, March 31 2015). “Women are not afraid (...); they are more courageous, more audacious (...)” (Khadija Guèye, interview, March 27 2015). The local understanding of women (especially elderly women) as a source of social authority opened space for their voice to be heard by different sectors of the Senegalese society (Bineta Diop, interview, February 5 2015; Colle Sow Ardo, interview, March 25 2015). More examples in this regard will be provided below (see section “key indicators of success of the Senegalese experience”).

Although women's organizations are at the forefront of this endeavor, the initiative was implemented in close partnership with youth and other key stakeholders, such as political parties, media, incumbents, as well as legal and security institutions. The Platform made an effort to reach different sectors of civil society, including not only NGOs and grassroots movements, but also the private sector or any person or group that was not a political or military institution/organization (Woré Kandji, personal communication, 16 April 2015). Accordingly, the WSR in Senegal combined an inclusive and coordinated platform for deliberation and action with a structure to assess, document, and analyze information coming from the ground.

As they were responding to an emerging crisis, initially there was not a budget available to put the WSR into practice (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015; Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015). Platform members and partners provided the necessary human resources, such as observers and analysts (Marieme Dieye, interview, March 24 2015;

Khadija Guèye, interview, March 27 2015; Dalla Sidibé, interview, March 31 2015). Although analysts and experts working in the situation room *stricto sensu* were paid for their work, local observers worked *pro bono* and only received a small stipend for their cell phones, food and transportation (Marieme Dieye, interview, March 24 2015; Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015; Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015; Rose Diop, interview, March 27 2015). In this sense, there was a significant amount of voluntary work involved in the WSR, including of eminent personalities (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015; Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015).<sup>10</sup>

With the support of the contact group, women visited key actors and guaranteed financial and logistical support from the UNDP, UN Women, as well as from the private sector (interview Bineta Diop, March 6 2015). For instance, CCBM Electronics provided water to the situation room and cell phones for observers (Woré Kandji, personal communication, 16 April 2015; Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015). The support of these partners was crucial to training observers, to monitoring the electoral process and to mobilizing Senegalese society around peace. Annex II provides an overview of the Platform's budget concerning the 2012 elections in Senegal. This budget was provided by FAS finance team and is also indicative of a budget necessary for preparing the situation room on short notice (about 10 days before the elections).

#### *The WSR cogwheel: structure, strategy and planning*

The Platform elaborated a concept note defining the objectives, activities and strategies for action during the different stages of the electoral cycle (Éttu Jamm, [n.d.]). Members' participation in the situation room followed a code of conduct to maintain neutrality and nonpartisan engagement throughout the process (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6 2015). In order to guarantee speedy and effective responses, the WSR liaised with the Elections Commission (CENA), the Ministry of Interior, the police, and traditional and religious leaders, among others (Éttu Jamm [n.d.]). In this sense, the WSR combined both horizontal (community-level) and vertical levels of mobilization, providing it with significant social capital for action and response (Gizelis 2011: 524)<sup>11</sup>.

In the pre-electoral phase, the contact group, composed of eminent female personalities from Senegal and neighboring countries, conducted mediation activities. As

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<sup>10</sup> According to Khady Fall Tall, some of these eminent personalities approached the platform themselves and asked to partake in the initiative due to the reputation and credibility of the Platform (Khady Fall Tall, interview, March 23 2015).

<sup>11</sup> According to Gizelis: "Social capital can be defined as resources embedded in social structures that can be mobilized towards a purposive collective action. This definition incorporates vertical forms of social networks, that is, formal and centralized, as well as horizontal community-level networks." (Gizelis 2011: 524)

mentioned above, mediation consisted mainly in undertaking preventive diplomacy measures. Thus, women leaders promoted face-to-face meetings with key actors such as political parties, the elderly, religious leaders from all faiths, etc. (Safietou Diop, interview, March 26; Bineta Diop, interview March 6). These meetings were intended to forge dialogue with all stakeholders and gather their support for peaceful and fair elections, preventing disputes and tensions from arising. Meetings were also conducted with female leaders from all political parties to ask for their commitment towards a peaceful electoral contest and the advancement of women's political participation (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6; Safietou Diop, interview, March 26). Female relatives of politicians, such as the daughter of the sitting president, and all presidential candidates also met with the contact group for bilateral or multilateral meetings (Bineta Diop, interview, March 6). One of the main achievements of the mediation activities carried out by the WSR was the resolution of the school crisis<sup>12</sup>, which was paralyzing Senegalese education system at that time and creating social unrest among the youth. After consulting with youth movements, the Platform "actively engaged with all relevant actors in education, among them the authorities as well as university, trade unions and student representatives." (Éttu Jamm 2012: 10).

The pressure group was in charge of mobilizing women, from all ages, social and economic backgrounds. They paid particular attention to the youth. The group organized peace rallies and mass mobilization of urban and rural women to advocate for peaceful elections and for improving women's political participation. Roundtables of youth and women's groups were organized to share and discuss their concerns and priorities. A very coordinated media strategy was put in place to widely disseminate messages of peace and other activities of the Platform through different media outlets (online, radio, TV).

Capacity building activities were also carried out during the pre-electoral phase. Monitors attended workshops and training courses on election monitoring. These courses followed the BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) program developed by the UN and were facilitated by the Gorée Institute (Dalla Sidibé, interview; Khadija Guèye, interview; Rose Diop, interview; Yadicone Sané, March 25 2015). FAS partnered with a local university to add a gender component to the BRIDGE curriculum. This allowed monitors to observe and convey reliable information on the participation of local women during the electoral process. At the end of the training, monitors received a

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<sup>12</sup> In the run-up of the 2012 elections, the Senegalese public education system faced a major crisis. Recurrent strikes by teachers and lecturers led to the paralysis of schools and universities since late 2011, compromising the 2011/2012 school year and leaving students locked out of classrooms for more than four months. During the electoral period, this issue was raised as a major concern by youth groups, worried about the involvement of unoccupied students with electoral violence.



certificate and became official election observers, accredited by CENA (*Commission Électorale Nationale Autonome*).

In order to guarantee that information would flow not only rapidly, but also accurately, the WSR in Senegal employed a “bounded crowdsourcing” monitoring strategy. Contrary to an “open crowdsourcing”, in which any citizen can use ICTs to report incidents and act as monitor of electoral violence, “bounded crowdsourcing” relies on a network of trusted individuals who are qualified to identify and report risks to the electoral process.<sup>13</sup> Trained observers also received facilitation for communication and transportation to guarantee that they would reach multiple polling stations across the country and communicate relevant information in a timely manner to operators and analysts based at the WSR (Ëttu Jamm [n.d.]; Ëttu Jamm 2012). Besides the use of mobile technology for crowdsourcing monitoring, a specific online platform ([www.dissoo.org](http://www.dissoo.org)) was also set up to disseminate information on the elections and to promote the exchange of best practices on conflict prevention (Ëttu Jamm [n.d.]).

In total, more than 50 observers were trained and deployed to 13 of Senegal's 14 regions,<sup>14</sup> covering more than 500 polling stations. More than 15 journalists also received training to observe elections and to produce gender-sensitive reports during the elections period (Ëttu Jamm, 2012; Ëttu Jamm, [n.d.]; Mahamadou Lamine Barro, interview, April 2 2015). Monitors were deployed in groups of two to three people who visited the polling stations to observe their functioning from the opening to closing of the voting (Rose Diop, interview; Dalla Sidibé, interview and Khadija Guèye, interview). In case any incident was observed on the ground, monitors and journalists immediately relayed the information to the analysis and rapid response team - composed of political, electoral and gender experts as well as 13 eminent women from neighboring countries - for analysis and action (Rose Diop, interview; Dalla Sidibé, interview; Lamine Barro, interview). The WSR was supported by the work of a statistician, data and phone operators. More specifically, the technical room was composed of ten operators, a statistician and two data operators that received and systematized data and reports from the monitors and journalists (ËTTU Jamm 2012).

The WSR transmitted the relayed incidents to the responsible local authorities for real-time response. All observed incidents and other general information, such as influx of female voters and waiting time, were registered on specific sheets that were transmitted to the WSR for documentation and further analysis after the elections (Rose Diop, interview; Dalla Sidibé, interview). The box below summarizes the women's situation room in numbers.

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<sup>13</sup> See: <https://sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/projects/crowdsourcing>

<sup>14</sup> Dakar, Thiès, Diourbel, Kaolack, Saint-Louis, Louga, Fatick, Ziguinchor, Matam, Tambacounda, Kolda, Kédougou, Sédhiou.

**Box 2: the women's situation room in numbers**

More than **800 women** (from urban and rural areas) participated in mass mobilizations for peaceful elections

**13 eminent women** were assembled to advise observers and to respond to incidents

More than **50 observers** and **15 journalists** were trained and deployed

**13 (out of 14) regions** of Senegal were covered by trained observers

**598 polling stations** were covered by monitors

**17 incidents** were reported during the 1<sup>st</sup> round

**51 incidents** were reported by observers during the runoff

**12 reports of electoral violence** were reported by journalists during the runoff

*Operational challenges*

Despite its success, the WSR in Senegal was not without its challenges. First, the fact that it largely relied on voluntary work from monitors created challenges in terms of finding people that were readily available to dedicate their time to participate in trainings and in field monitoring activities. According to Marieme Dieye: “The main difficulty was to find people that were available all the time. It was difficult to be available all the time. We also needed to talk to everybody, from different backgrounds and levels. Fortunately, the WSR was bilingual because we received visits not only from Senegalese personalities, but also from people that came from different parts of the world (...). So, we needed to be available from very early in the morning until night to meet all requests because everybody wanted to know about the work of the WSR. (...). This engagement requires remuneration, but not everybody was being paid (...). Those of us who were working in the women's situation room, making analysis, we could be available, but observers couldn't (...). The observers were not available all the time and we need to motivate them a lot and to provide them with means for deployment [money, transportation] (...). This was the main difficulty.” On the other hand, in the interviews, those who worked on the ground as observers did not necessarily perceive voluntary work as a problem and affirmed that such engagement should be regarded as a civic work and a social contribution to their country (Rose Diop, interview; Khadija Guèye, interview). Most importantly, interviewees shared the perception that partaking in the activities developed by the WSR was above all an opportunity for empowering women through trainings and capacity building (Safietou Diop, interview; Rose Diop, interview; Marieme Dieye, interview and Khadija Guèye, interview).

As mentioned above, the Platform was responding to a situation of crisis and the members did not have too much time or resources to implement the WSR. This limited their capacity to reach all areas of the country and to conduct trainings and capacity building in different areas or with more time in advance (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 6; Khady Fall Tall, interview; Safietou Diop, interview). Another identified limitation was the fact that the WSR

did not have its own institutional framework (Dalla Sidibé, interview). According to Dalla Sibibé: “Initially this caused some dysfunctions, which we could overcome because we benefited from FAS’ expertise.” Nonetheless, the informal structure of the WSR still limits its actions after elections (Cole Sow Ardo, interview; Marieme Dieye, interview). In this sense, some interviewees highlighted the importance of transforming the initiative into a more permanent structure (Colle Sow Ardo, interview; Marieme Dieye, interview). As Marieme Dieye states, “the WSR should not be in place only before and during elections, we should also keep taking advantage of this structure after the elections. (...) Nowadays, in Senegal there is a certain lethargy at the WSR level. We should meet more often, use more the WSR. (...) And then when the moment comes it will be more efficient.” These challenges should be addressed and improved in case the WSR is replicated in other contexts.

### **Key indicators of success of the Senegalese experience**

Despite the pre-electoral turbulence in the 2012 Senegalese elections, the voting process was conducted properly and unfolded smoothly. Election results were accepted as valid and legitimate, leading to a democratic transition of power to the newly elected President, Macky Sall. Although some minor incidents and unrest were reported,<sup>15</sup> they were isolated and therefore not able to compromise the fairness of elections or the stability of the country (Éttu Jamm 2012; Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Safietou Diop, interview; Dalla Sidibé, interview).

Clearly, the WSR played a part in achieving this result. However, it might be too ambitious (or even naïve) to suggest that electoral monitoring and/or women’s participation alone achieved the peaceful elections in Senegal. Multiple actors, national and international environments, institutional process all would need to be examined in order to establish the causes for a successful election. This raises the fundamental question of how to measure the success and impact of the Women’s Situation Room and what this initiative has been able to accomplish.

Rather than seeing the WSR only as a means to a narrow end (i.e. peaceful elections), it should be assessed in addition against its ability to contribute to promoting sustainable

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<sup>15</sup> According to the Éttu Jamm report: “notably in suburban Dakar around the Ndiawar Sarr precinct in Pikine, [...] observers cited the presence of non-authorized persons who allegedly turned out in order to secure support for their choice of candidate. At the precinct where the incumbent President cast his vote, Platform observers pointed out a gathering of people claiming to belong to the *thiantakoune mouvement* whose alleged presence led to the intervention of security forces who dispersed tear gas to clear the crowds. In the Casamance region, violence was reported at some voting precincts, notably in Sédhiou, where armed individuals allegedly were allowed into voting centers, paralyzing the voting process for a time. In the towns of Tambory, Mahmouda, and Diola, violence was also reported in the form of burnt voting booths and threats made towards voters, leading to the closure of voting precincts” (Éttu Jamm [n.d.]: 23).

democracy and to making political representation fair and wide. Instead of adopting a liberal perspective that conceptualizes democracy as a configuration of institutions (parties, constitution, division of power, etc.), here I employ an understanding of democracy as being largely about processes (Prügl 2015) to assess the key drivers of success of the WSR. This approach draws on theories of deliberative democracy that propose that democracy should be thought of as a set of practices that enable the ideal of public and rational deliberation across difference through coordinated actions and cooperation (ibid). According to Prügl (2015):

“Deliberative democracy is about reaching understanding or arriving at decisions in a way that relies on rational discourse and argumentation. Democratic decision-making is thus imagined not as an aggregation of individual interests (the liberal view) but as a rational exchange between individuals who have in view larger principles or the public good. In the process of deliberation it is expected that all are open to changing their point of view as a result of the quality of arguments put forward.”

Considering the WSR as an institutional space where authentic and non-coerced deliberation is enabled, I argue that an assessment of its success and achievements should be measured both against outcomes and against indicators showing an inclusive, transparent, equitable process. Such an assessment requires the specification of both outcome and process measures that treat the WSR itself as an instance of enacting deliberative democratic procedures. In this sense outcome indicators measure the success of the WSR against an intended goal, i.e. peaceful and inclusive elections; process indicators measure success against ideals of deliberative democracy, i.e. they gauge whether the project itself met standards of deliberation across difference, non-coercion, equality, inclusiveness and participation (Prügl 2015). While these indicators can be distinguished conceptually, this is difficult in practice: the most important outcomes of the WSR may be the way in which processes it initiates become an engrained habit of political and civil society.

Among the primary indicators of success identified in the Senegalese experience, it is possible to highlight the following, as identified by interviewees and the review of evidence:

#### *Outcomes*

- *Increasing women's political participation:* In 2010, Senegal adopted a gender parity law that set a 50 percent quota for party lists in local and national elections. As a result, the number of women in the national assembly increased to about 45 percent (ONU Femmes, 2012; Safietou Diop, interview), which represented a major step towards advancing women's participation in the political arena (Rose Diop, interview; Marieme Dieye, interview). The WSR contributed to this outcome, but it also built on the momentum generated from the new

law to mobilize women in other political roles. It helped increase women's participation as voters and "in the management of polling stations, as presidents, assessors or candidates' representatives" (Ëttu Jamm [n.d.]: 19). Importantly, women's mobilization during the elections continued afterwards. According to one of the observers in Louga, northwestern Senegal: "After the elections, women have left their kitchens (...) women are also more present at decision making levels (...)" (Khadija Guèye, interview). And an electoral analyst suggested that the skills generated from the WSR carried forward into other activism: "The Situation Room allowed us to acquire an experience that nowadays (...) we use to advance women's rights in Senegal in general" (Marieme Dieye, interview).

- *Sensitizing governments to issues of gender equality:* The WSR helped sensitize politicians on gender issues. The fact that the first official visit of President Macky Sall was to the Women's Situation Room flags the recognition of its role in maintaining a secure environment for free, inclusive and fair elections. During his visit, President Sall reaffirmed the commitment of his government to promoting gender equality in Senegal and to advancing the parity law (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Marieme Dieye, interview; Safietou Diop, interview). At this opportunity, the newly elected president declared: "I will listen to women. I will respect them and promote their rights. You can count on me"<sup>16</sup>.

- *Making elections credible:* Interviewees also stressed that the initiative contributed to making the election process more credible and transparent since one of its tasks was to oversee the work of electoral authorities and their respect for the electoral code at all stages of the polls (Safietou Diop, interview; Lamine Barro, interview; Mariama Ly, interview, March 24 2015). Guaranteeing electoral integrity not only is a crucial step to help advance good governance practices but also to prevent contestation, political unrest or even violent disputes over the legitimacy of the process and its results in the post-election period.

### *Processes*

- *Bottom-up consultations with different groups of women and youth:* Instead of assuming that Senegalese women were a homogeneous group, the Platform included, mobilized and consulted with different groups of women, both in urban and in rural areas, developing a contextual gender analysis of their priorities and concerns. The fact that the Platform was composed of more than 50 women's organizations and maintained a close dialogue with youth organizations also signals the representativeness of its agenda and its

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<sup>16</sup>[www.unwomenwestandcentralafrica.com/uploads/2/0/3/3/20331433/final\\_unwomen\\_war\\_o\\_n2\\_bd1.pdf](http://www.unwomenwestandcentralafrica.com/uploads/2/0/3/3/20331433/final_unwomen_war_o_n2_bd1.pdf)

strategic reach for awareness raising and mobilization. The use of women's organizations' context-sensitive knowledge helped the Platform to identify the risk for youth engagement in electoral violence and, as a result, to approach and mobilize them through peer-to-peer peace advocacy (Marieme Dieye, interview; Khadija Guèye, interview; Bineta Diop, interviews; Colle Sow Ardo, interview; Khady Fall Tall, interview)

- *Creation of authentic mechanisms for deliberation and coordination through an impartial and credible Platform:* The WSR was one element of a broader strategy for advancing sustainable democracy while preventing electoral violence. As such, it was sturdily connected with other activities developed by the Èttu Jamm Platform, which offered institutional backing to the WSR (Èttu Jamm, 2012). The Platform also provided a non-partisan stage where women and youth could freely participate, deliberate and coordinate their efforts towards an inclusive and peaceful electoral environment while advancing a gender-sensitive agenda. A cohesive, inclusive and credible platform that promotes a reliable space for dialogue and deliberation is thus an important indicator of the quality of the democratic procedures facilitated by the WSR.

- *Local ownership of the process:* The WSR was not imposed as a top-down policy and the solution came from Senegal (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Dalla Sidibé, interview). "I have seen that in other conflicts like this (...) people don't talk to each other and solutions do not come from inside, they look for an external facilitator and for outside intervention from international organizations (...). Here, it was women that led this initiative and the solution came from inside. And this is why we succeeded in solving the problem because the solution came from us" (Dalla Sidibé, interview). Although the WSR *stricto sensu* was populated by women from higher social strata (diplomats, political analysts, lawyers, etc.), grassroots women were mobilized at the national and at the local levels and participated in consultations and activities at all stages (Marieme Dieye, interview; Khadija Guèye, interview; Bineta Diop, interviews; Colle Sow Ardo, interview).

- *Authentic engagement with different socio-political forces and stakeholders:* The promotion of spaces for engagement with multiple actors and stakeholders is also an important feature of deliberative contexts (Prügl 2015). The Platform liaised with different religious leaders and engaged with elders who enjoyed the respect of their communities. In addition, the Situation Room also built cooperation links with key national institutions, such as the police, the Ministry of Interior and the Electoral Commission, which provided the Platform with contacts for rapid reaction and response (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Marieme Dieye, interview; Khady Fall Tall, interview; Dalla Sidibé, interview). Through these engagements, the WSR facilitated transformative dialogues towards political inclusion and conflict management.

▪ *Mobilization of cultural repertoires of femininity for conflict-resolution:* Women attracted support from different groups and were able to act beyond identitarian divides for being regarded as impartial actors who are strictly concerned with peace (and not specific political electoral outcomes) (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Marieme Dieye, interview; Dalla Sidibé, interview; Cole Sow Ardo, interview). According to Marieme Dieye, electoral analyst: “In Senegal, society traditionally relies a lot on women when it comes to peace matters (...), when there is a situation of conflict, people look for women (...) and this gives a lot of power to women, and in general when women talk for peace, they are listened to” (Marieme Dieye, interview). In Senegalese society, older women are highly honored and respected and their mobilization was key to raise awareness. “When we started to march, (...) people started paying attention to us because they knew we were serious” (Cole Sow Ardo, interview). By mobilizing and engaging with older women, the Platform's message for peaceful elections was heard and considered as a priority (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5). “Women elders (...) were seen as non-politicians in the current situation and people respect them, and when they see them talking on the TV they are able to say (...) ‘we have never seen this woman in any rally, so if she is speaking it must be serious’ (...), it's an early warning that all of us should be together in this moment” (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5).

▪ *Implementation of a capacity building component combined with ICT-based interventions:* Training, capacity building and mentorship are also important components of WSR. This feature helps to strengthen competencies and to empower local actors in the long-term. In Senegal, the WSR combined the huge potential of ICTs to broadcast information with training and capacity-building initiatives through the use of bounded crowdsourcing monitoring. New communication and information technologies greatly contributed to facilitate communication, speed up data transmission, and disseminate messages of peace and political inclusion. Bounded crowdsourcing thus increased the quality of civic engagement by combining real-time information sharing with the required expertise to monitor and report incidents accurately. The knowledge and expertise disseminated by such trainings also fostered social change by advancing local capacities beyond the electoral process, as mentioned above.

▪ *Ensuring geographical representativeness and extensive outreach of the interventions:* By facilitating communication and transportation of its observers and forging dialogue with different parties and stakeholders, the WSR covered most of the Senegalese territory (13 of Senegal's 14 regions), thus ensuring social and geographic representativeness beyond Dakar (Bineta Diop, interview, Feb. 5; Marieme Dieye, interview). The Platform also created cooperation links with local, national and international media and developed an extensive media outreach plan and a sound communication strategy. As a result, it was able to broadcast clear messages on the importance of peaceful elections and women's inclusion in

the electoral process (Bineta Diop, interview; Safietou Diop, interview). Journalists were also deployed to different areas of the country to observe the electoral process and promptly transmit information to the WSR and the public (Lamine Barro, interview; Mariama Ly, interview). The communication team was responsible to review and validate articles received from trained journalists and to update social media with trustworthy information (Ëttu Jamm 2012).

### **Moving forward: Replicating the WSR in diverse contexts**

This section seeks to flesh out some preliminary considerations aiming to feed into a road-testing strategy for the replication of the WSR across a range of diverse contexts. In this review, focus was on the Senegalese case, which is considered a very successful experience. The analysis of existing documentation and interviews identified how the initiative works, its mains components and accomplishments, and the strategies it mobilized seeking to turn the threat of electoral violence into an opportunity for promoting sustainable democracy. More importantly, it concluded that the WSR should be regarded as an instance of enacting deliberative democratic principles. As such, the WSR proved to be far broader than an initiative on election monitoring and violence prevention and much more about fostering deliberative democracy and good governance. This points out to the potential value of this model beyond conflict-prone electoral contexts.

The above-identified indicators of success suggest that the WSR is a bottom-up initiative and as such it must be initiated, led and owned by local and national NGOs, social movements, and other civil society actors. From this, I suggest that local ownership and engagement is one of the conditions of success of the WSR as it enhances the compliance of both horizontal and vertical social networks (Gizelis 2011). At the same time, available evidence suggests the relevance of having a renowned and experienced organization, such as FAS, involved in the training and mentoring of local organizations, especially in the beginning of the process.

In terms of the implementation process, one of the first steps towards the replication of the WSR in other scenarios is a preliminary mapping of existing women's organizations to identify local actors with credibility and expertise on the ground.<sup>17</sup> A strong women's civil society movement can thus be considered a pre-requisite for the implementation of the initiative. This mapping should also include a power analysis of other key actors, such as political parties, youth, state institutions and traditional leaders (Bineta Diop, interview March 6).

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<sup>17</sup> This point was also emphasized by some of the interviewees (Safietou Diop, interview; Bineta Diop, interview March 6).



The review of evidence also indicates the importance of having an independent and neutral platform created and led by local women's organizations. This structure provides a crucial space for equal and non-coerced deliberation towards the creation of sustainable partnerships, a common agenda and strategies for action. Following the principles of deliberative democracy, participation and deliberation should be equal, inclusive and diverse, reaching out to all groups and stakeholders. According to Bineta Diop: "First you form a pressure group and through this you create an agenda and a force for change." (Bineta Diop, interview March 6). The organization of women's groups in a cohesive, impartial and inclusive platform has a profound impact for increasing the legitimacy, reach and effectiveness of the initiative.

The WSR gendered component adds another crucial dimension to the effectiveness of the initiative. The strategic mobilization of cultural repertoires of femininity facilitates women's access to multiple social groups and strengthens its mobilization, mediation and monitoring processes. Not being identified as combatants or political opponents, women are able to enter critical areas in a way that men are not. Their non-threatening image can grant them access to stakeholders, rival political parties and thus increase their bargaining leverage in certain situations.

Civil society participation and engagement seem to be necessary but not sufficient conditions for the success of the WSR. Partnership with the state and other stakeholders provides the WSR not only with capacity to respond to reported episodes but also to guarantee effective dialogue across divides. Dialogue with political parties and other key actors (e.g., traditional leaders and youth) ensures compliance with their peace mandate and forges social cohesion through the creation of enduring partnerships with different socio-political forces.

Training and capacity building are also relevant features from the perspective of making democracy sustainable. Advancing local capacities from monitors and journalists is key to forge transformation and durable solutions beyond a single intervention. As indicated above, trainings should be conducted in different areas of the country and with more time in advance. The replication of the model should also consider the potential of combining ICT-based interventions with trainings for journalists and observers. In Senegal, ICTs have significantly contributed to speed up data gathering and information sharing and to broadcast messages of peace to a wider public. Furthermore, bounded crowdsourcing allowed for the accurate identification of incidents, enhancing the quality of monitoring activities. Cooperation with the media is also crucial to spread messages of nonviolence and to increase public awareness on the importance of making political participation fair and wide. The fact that the WSR depends on close partnerships and cooperation links with the state, political parties, the media seems to indicate that the initiative should be mainly implemented in

contexts in which democratic institutions and electoral rules are relatively well-established or are being put in place.

Last, if the activities of the Platform - and, consequently, of the WSR- only reaches part of the national territory, its effectiveness for responding to incidents might be reduced. Thus, the broader the coverage of the territory, the more potential the initiative has to be an inclusive mechanism for deliberation, to maintain peace during the electoral process and, consequently, to advance the principles of deliberative democracy in the long-term. Annex III provides an estimation of costs for replication of the WSR in other contexts. It specifies the costs of activities planned up to about six months before elections take place.

The generalizability of these findings awaits further analysis. A follow-up comparative study of the Senegalese experience with at least two cases could be a valuable resource in this regard. Options for comparison include Nigeria, Kenya<sup>18</sup>, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Mali and Guinea Bissau. Considering the dearth of documentation on the above-mentioned cases, there is a strong need to approach organizations and agencies involved in these replications for research cooperation. The UNDP and UN Women have been closely involved in most experiences of replication of the WSR and are potential partners in this future research endeavor.

In terms of research design, I suggest that a follow-up research includes a systematic comparison of similarities and differences found across two other cases by looking at the outcome and process indicators identified in the previous section. Building on these indicators, the enquiry should try to identify whether such replications were locally owned (and by whom); whether and how authentic mechanisms for deliberation and consultation were put in place; whether and how the engagement with different socio-political forces took place; and what the achievements of these replications were, from the perspective of advancing the principles of deliberative democracy and good governance.

Based on the reflections above, I suggest the following research questions to guide the proposed systematic comparison: How was the Women's Situation Room replicated in these different contexts? How were the local actors involved? What were the mechanisms and processes in terms of increasing the political participation of marginalized groups and reducing their exposure to insecurity? What have they been able to accomplish, from the perspective of deliberative democracy? What were the main similarities and differences between these experiences? What lessons can be learned from experiences of replication of the WSR in diverse contexts?

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<sup>18</sup> During the UNSDSN TG03 meeting in Paris on June 3, 2015, Kenya and Nigeria were suggested as potential cases for this follow-up research.

Finally, the intricate connection between gender relations and security/development dynamics must be acknowledged in interventions aiming at promoting peace, democracy and good governance. The sustainability of democracy and peace building efforts depends on tackling inequality, which means challenging local power relations. As confirmed by the WSR in Senegal, feminist interventions point at promising avenues in this direction.

**Annex I: List of interviewees**

	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<b>Contact and Pressure Groups</b>	Diop	Bineta	FAS
	Fall Tall	Khady	AFAO
	Sow Ardo	Collé	Collé SowArdo
	Diop	Marieme	AJS
	Diop	Safietou	RSJ
	<b>Observers</b>	Sidibé	Dalla
Guèye		Khadija	CLVF
Diop		Rose	Tostan
Sané		Yadicone	FAFS
<b>Media</b>	Ly	Mariama	Journalist monitor
	Barro	Mouhamadou Lamine	Journalist monitor

## Annex II: Budget of the Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections in Senegal 2012

### BUDGET PLATFORME VEILLE DES FEMMES POUR DES ELECTIONS PAISEES AU SENEGAL

BUDGET ITEM	UNIT	QUANTITY	PRICE/UNIT USD	PRICE/UNIT FCFA	TOTAL FCFA	COMMENTS
<b>Transport &amp; Accommodation</b>						
Airfare <sup>(1)</sup>	Part	2	1500	2250000	1'545'000	
Boarding & Lodging <sup>(2)</sup>	night	6	290	174000	896'100	
Local expenses/transport	day	6	120	72000	370'800	
<b>Sub-Total III</b>					<b>2'811'900</b>	
<b>Workshop Facilities (1 day)</b>						
Meal (2 coffee-break + 1 lunch)	pers	80	70	56000	2'884'000	
Transport for local participants	pers	80	40	32000	1'648'000	
Press	pers	10	10	10000	51'500	
Communication fees	tel/day	80	10	8000	412'000	
Hall	day	1	160	16000	82'400	
Materials for participant <sup>(3)</sup>		80	3	2400	123'600	
Misc <sup>(5%)</sup>					260'075	
<b>Sub-Total IIII</b>					<b>5'461'575</b>	
<b>Documentary film</b>						
Video production in the Platform's activities		1	10'000	100000	5'150'000	
Preparation		1	300	3000	154'500	
<b>Sub-Total IIII</b>					<b>5'304'500</b>	
<b>Global Report of the elections</b>						
Editing	pages	50	30	15000	772'500	
Printing	copies	50	35	17500	901'250	
Preparation		1	300	3000	154'500	
<b>Sub-Total IV</b>					<b>1'828'250</b>	
<b>Best Practices and lessons learnt booklet</b>						
Consultant fee	pers	25	300	7500	3'862'500	
Editing and translation cost	pages	100	30	3000	1'545'000	
Printing	copies	100	35	3500	1'802'500	
Preparation		1	300	3000	360'500	
<b>Sub-Total IV</b>					<b>7'570'500</b>	
<b>Cordinator position for the Platform</b>						
Recruitment		1	700	7000	360'500	Equivalent to 1 month salary
Salary + charges	month	12	820	9840	5'067'600	
Extra costs		1			900'000	Computer, Printer, Office facility
<b>Sub-Total VII</b>					<b>6'328'100</b>	
<b>Preparation Cost (4)</b>						
Indirect Costs					1'465'241	pre-workshop cost (office phone, copies, taxi, etc)
					2'930'483	General administrative support (GVA-Dakar) 10%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>33'700'549 XOF</b>	

GVA, 03/11/12

USD 65'438

**Footnotes:**

- 1
- 2 Air tickets are calculated as return tickets in economy class.
- 3 Boarding & Lodging average rate of hotel in Dakar, Senegal.
- 4 Workshop expenses: these expenses include printer paper, cartridge printer, padey, pens, markers, notepads etc. Preparation cost to pay for communication in the office, and preparations during and after the meetings/workshop.

**Acronyms Used:**

partp - Participants

Prepared by: FAS Finance Team

Source: FAS finance team (personal communication, 23 April 2015)

### Annex III: Estimation of costs for replication



**INDICATION OF BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 1325: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PROMOTION OF NON-VIOLENT AND GENDER MAINSTREAMED ELECTIONS**  
Draft Budget

Descriptions	Qty	Unit	Frequency	Freq. Unit	Unit Price	Cost in USD*	Total in USD
<b>Coordination of Election Monitoring of Situation Room</b>							
Coordination of situation room	1					30'000	
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>30'000</b>
<b>PHASE: August 2014 to 31st February 2015</b>							
<b>1. Situation Analysis &amp; Mapping of the Geopolitical Zones for the Identification of Networks and Stakeholders</b>							
<b>Activity 1.1 Identify all the networks and stakeholders</b>							
Consultants fees	2	consultants	1	activity	3000	6'000	
Transport fare	2	consultants	1		1000	2'000	
Daily Allowance	2	consultants	1		1'700	3'400	
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>11'400</b>
<b>2. Networking and Partnership Building</b>							
<b>2.1. Workshop institution</b>							
Airfare for consultants	1	consultants	1	Round Trip	1500	1'500	
Daily Allowance	1	pers	5	nights	300	1'500	
Terminals	1	Pers	1	time	152	152	
Consultancy fee	1	pers	5	days	500	500	
<b>Workshop for 30 people</b>							
Airfare for 30 participants	30	pers	1		370	11'100	
Terminals	30	pers	1		152	4'560	
Road transport for 30	30	pers	1		150	4'500	
DSA for participants	60	pers	3	nights	450	13'500	
Conference Hall	1	hall	2	days	1'000	2'000	
Lunch and coffee breaks	75	participants	2	days	50	7'500	
Printing, Copying/ Materials for the conference	75	folders	1	time	10	750	
Press conference	1	time	1	day	1'200	1'200	
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>18'262</b>
<b>2.2. Mobilization and Mediation of African Leaders</b>							
<b>2.2. Women from African countries</b>							
Airfare	15	pers	1	Round Trip	1500	22'500	
Daily Allowance	15	pers	4	nights	1160	17'400	
Car Rental/ Other transportation cost							
Official dinner							
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>21'900</b>
<b>3. Capacity Building</b>							
Consultants fees	1	consultants	10	Days	500	5'000	
<b>3.1. Development of Electoral Observer materials</b>							
Flyers/ Pamphlets/ Reading materials	300	flyers	6	regions	10	3'000	
<b>3.2. Develop tools for elections</b>							
Observatory Guide/ Code of Conduct	400	books	15	pages	0.5	200	
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>6'000</b>
<b>3.3. Training Electoral Observers: 200 Observers including journalists for a country of about 10 to 15 million inhabitants</b>							
Airfare consultants	2	consultants	1	Round Trip	1500	3'000	
Daily Allowance	2	consultants	24	nights	152	296	
Terminals	2	consultants	1		152	304	
Local travels	4	consultants	1				
<b>Conference Hall</b>							
Conference Hall	2	zones	2	days	1'000	2'000	
Participation fees	200	observers	2	days	312	62'400	
Lunch and coffee breaks	200	observers	2	days			
Printing, Copying/ Materials for the conference	200	folders	1	time	5	1'000	
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>40'400</b>
<b>4. Communication and Knowledge Strategy</b>							
<b>4.2. Creation of the Website</b>							
Creation of website	1	website	1	Field	3'000	3'000	
<b>4.3. Press conferences pre, elections and post</b>							
Conference Hall	2	halls	1	day	1'000	2'000	
Participation fees by media persons	30	Pers	2	day	50	1'500	
Printing, Copying/ Materials for the conference	30	folders	2	time	7	210	
Vedeo coverage, banners, photographs							
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>6'420</b>
<b>4.4. Production of communication tool</b>							
Production of communication tool						6'000	
<b>4.6. Production and dissemination of media material</b>							
Printing cost	600	participants	1	time	10	6'000	
						<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1'000</b>

Promoting Democracy in Preventing Electoral Violence:  
The Women's Situation Room

<b>PHASE A: 4th February 2015</b>							
Activity A: Establishment of Situation Room							
1.1 Setting up technical rooms							
1.1.1	Setting up technical rooms	1	rooms	3	Day	1000	000
1.1.2	Setting up secretariat room	1	rooms	3	Days	1000	000
1.1.3	Setting up in operations room	1	rooms	3	Days	1000	000
<b>Sub-total</b>							<b>000</b>
2. Equipment of the Situation Room (to be rented) fees according to each country							
Not budgeted							
Computer							
10	computers	3	rooms				
Television Screens (TVS)							
5	TVS	3	rooms				
Radios							
5	radios	3	rooms				
Production of 100 shirts and caps							
400							
Production of 100 bags							
400							
Cell phones with air-time							
60	mobiles	3	rooms				
<b>Sub-total</b>							<b>000</b>
3. Resource persons from other Women's Platforms to share experience							
3.1. Airfare							
10	pers	1	Round Trip	437.5			375
DSA for participants international and local							
20	pers	3		156			360
3.1. National Consultants fees							
2	consultants	2		500			000
3.1. FAS staff airfare							
3	staff	1	Round Trip	437.5			313
3. Daily Allowance and transportation							
5	pers	6	nights	156			680
3.1. Terminals							
30	pers	1	time	125			750
3.2. National observers and media monitoring							
200	pers	8	Days	156			49'600
3.4. Analysts transportation & Daily Allowance							
5	analyst	3	Days	156			340
3.5. Statistician							
3	statistician	1	election	156			68
3.6. Data Processors							
3	pers	3	Days	156			404
3.7. IT professionals							
1	pers	3	Days	156			68
3.8. Communication Officers							
1	pers	3	Days	156			68
3.9. Support Staff							
3	pers	3	Days	156			404
3.10. Meal depending on local fees							
0	pers	3	Days	156			
<b>Sub-total</b>							<b>281'630</b>
<b>PHASE B: POST-ELECTORAL (February 15 to March 2015)</b>							
1.1 Observers Allowance							
200	pers	1	month	0			
1.1.1. Restitution and capitalization workshop							
3.1. Consultant airfare							
1	consultants	1	Round Trip	1500			500
3.1. Consultant airfare							
1	consultants	1	Round Trip	600			600
3.1. Airfare of women leaders							
2	pers	1	Round Trip	1500			000
3.1. FAS staff airfare							
2	staff	1	Round Trip	1500			000
Daily Allowance							
5	consultants	3	nights	870			3'050
3.1. Terminals							
5	pers	1		152			60
<b>Sub-total</b>							<b>1'910</b>
<b>Total Direct Costs</b>							
							<b>52'122</b>
<b>Support Cost, 7%</b>							
							<b>5'649</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>							
							<b>804'770</b>

Source: FAS finance team (personal communication, 23 April 2015)

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