

**Ethiopian Women Lawyers
Association (EWLA)
Preliminary Statement of VAW-
E Monitoring**

**Pre-Election
Observation and
Election Day
Monitoring**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To contribute to inclusive electoral process in 2021 Ethiopia’s election, in particular women’s full and equal participation, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers’ Association (EWLA) monitored violence against women in elections (VAW-E) in the pre-election period and on election day. Monitoring assessed how women voters, observers, poll workers, candidates and party poll watchers were affected by VAW-E. Monitoring findings and recommendations will be used to raise awareness around VAW-E among the general public, and electoral stakeholders and contribute to creating a more enabling environment for women in future elections.

EWLA trained and deployed up to 150 long term observers (LTOs) for the pre-election monitoring and 130 monitors for the election day observation. The long-term monitoring was limited due to the delays of accreditation badges from NEBE and security situation in certain constituencies which did not enable observers to move around freely and conduct the monitoring as originally planned. Violence against women remains to be normalized in many countries and societies. Accordingly, the incidents of violence against women, including in the electoral context, are not easy to capture and report. The findings below are only a fraction of those VAW-E cases that may have taken place in Ethiopia during the 2021 election and represent only those incidents that EWLA observers were able to witness or hear about and report to the EWLA headquarters in the limited timeframe of the monitoring.

LTOs submitted 341 completed checklists and filled out 100 critical incident forms from the polling stations they visited as they witnessed or heard about the violations that would have had an impact on women’s full and effective participation in the pre-election environment. Threatening or intimidating women was the most widespread violation reported by EWLA observers during the pre-election period (41). EWLA observers also noted 7 cases of sexual harassment, 2 cases of physical assault/physical attacks, and 2 cases of security forces interrupting campaigning of women candidates. In addition, women voters were discouraged to participate in voter education or campaign events (8 cases). Women were also excluded from campaign events (8 cases). EWLA observers reported 10 cases of political party members, and local government representatives attempting to buy votes of women voters or potential women voters. EWLA observers also assessed the overall inclusion of the pre-election environment and women’s political participation.

On 39 occasions, EWLA observers witnessed or heard complaints from persons with disabilities about access to the election and/or mistreatment by election officials.

On election day, EWLA deployed 130 observers who visited 369 polling stations to monitor the voting and closing processes and VAW-E. All deployed observers completed election day checklists and filled out 100 critical incident forms. Observation findings include that 80 percent of polling stations visited had queues, and at 58 percent of all polling stations visited there were no separate queues for men and women voters, which increases the risk of potential sexual harassment for women. Some of the observation data reported by EWLA observers included cases of sexual harassment of women voters in lines. Women were underrepresented among election poll workers visited by EWLA - 83 percent of polling stations had men chairpersons, while only 18 percent had women chairs.

EWLA observers also reported 13 cases of violence against women on election day, including physical violence (2), sexual harassment (11), and psychological violence (2). Polling stations running out of ballots was the most widespread critical incident reported by EWLA observers during the election day (17). EWLA observers also reported women voters being assisted by election officials to vote when they did not appear in need of assistance (4), ineligible men (3) and ineligible women (2) being allowed to vote, unauthorized persons present at polling stations (5), cancelled elections at certain polling stations (3), and disruptions to observers' rights to conduct election observation (4). In one case, the EWLA observer was held overnight against their will until counting was completed the following afternoon, without access to food or water. EWLA will release the comprehensive analysis of the pre-election and election day VAW-E monitoring findings and respective recommendations in the final election report.

Recommendations

On the basis of the VAW-E monitoring findings, EWLA makes the following preliminary recommendations targeting key stakeholders:

To the NEBE

- Strengthen internal codes of conduct to include prohibition of any forms of violence against women, both within and outside of NEBE, clarify penalties for violations, establish confidential reporting channels and enforce respective regulations.
- Ensure the implementation of regulations prohibiting the use of sexist, derogatory language against women candidates, voters, observers, poll workers and elected women.
- Reinforce NEBE's commitment for political parties to establish a mandatory gender quota and mandate a minimum number of elected women members.
- Ensure NEBE's Gender Unit has the resources and authority needed to carry out its roles and responsibilities.
- Train the electoral officials and polling station security officials on gender equality, Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E) and protection of women electoral stakeholders in elections, and put in place a response mechanism mitigating VAW-E.
- Include VAW-E concept into voter education, including awareness raising about the importance of ballot secrecy.
- Raise awareness on specific steps to be taken by NEBE's commitment to enhance gender equality and women's participation in election.
- Implement gender sensitivity training for NEBE's staff and stakeholders focusing on the unique ways that VAW-E impacts women's political participation and undermines the democratic process of elections.
- Ahead of elections, deploy mobile registration teams that include women to facilitate the voter registration of women, particularly in rural areas.
- Ensure the timely provision of accreditation badges to citizen observers, and inform the public about the changes to the electoral calendar in a timely manner.

To the Government of Ethiopia

- Provide gender-sensitivity training to the police, law enforcement and judiciary involved in investigation and adjudication of VAW-E cases.
- Increase the number of women security agents working in elections to provide greater protection of women electoral stakeholders.
- Adopt legislative changes explicitly prohibiting sexual harassment.
- Encourage legal authorities to collaborate more closely with NEBE to prosecute VAW-E crimes.

To Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- Continue to conduct gender-specific and gender-responsive election observation in line with best practices.
- Support awareness raising campaigns highlighting the importance of women's political participation and VAW-E.
- Train election administrators, police, law enforcement bodies and judiciary on mitigating and addressing VAW-E.
- Create platforms that promote solidarity networks among women leaders to combat VAW-E.
- Continue advocacy aimed at improving the laws and policies for women's full and equal participation in elections.

To Political Parties

- Develop and adopt codes of conduct and action plans that promote women's rights and provide zero tolerance policies toward sexual harassment, and gender-based violence.
- Introduce mandatory gender sensitivity training courses for members of political parties, and party poll watchers.
- Monitor and enforce party by-laws and practices on gender equality and VAW-E.
- Adopt mandatory gender quotas mandating a minimum number of women elected officials.

To the Media

- Address gender inequality and gender stereotypes towards women through their content.
- Provide capacity building of media personnel on gender equality issues and VAW-E.
- Organize platforms to talk about VAW-E to raise awareness about different aspects of VAW-E.
- Develop and distribute gender-sensitive voter and civic education information in user-friendly formats to enhance women's awareness and understanding of electoral processes.

To Donors/Development Partners

- Support different initiatives by the government, NEBE and CSOs to build awareness around VAW-E.
- Help build the capacity of various stakeholders on VAW-E and gender equality
- Continue supporting gender specific and gender responsive observation efforts by local civil society organizations.

INTRODUCTION

In 2021 6th round Ethiopia's national election National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that the total number of registered voters was 38,234,910.¹ To contribute to inclusive electoral process in 2021 Ethiopia's election, in particular women's full and equal participation, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association (EWLA) monitored violence against women in elections (VAW-E) in the pre-election period and on election day.

VAW-E during elections creates vulnerabilities to women's political participation, which in many cases disadvantages women as compared to men. The acts of VAW-E are not only devastating for survivors of violence and their families, but also entails significant social, political and economic costs on women.

The purpose of VAW-E monitoring is to contribute to an election process that provides an environment for safe and equal participation of women voters, female candidates, female election officials, media institutions and journalists, and citizens in general. The information collected from this observation will inform the future awareness raising efforts around VAW-E and contribute to advocacy for facilitating women's greater participation in electoral and political life in Ethiopia.

The 2021 Ethiopian general elections, originally scheduled for May 2020, were held on 21 June 2021 after being delayed a number of times primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as issues of insecurity and election management preparations. The June 2021 ballots designated both federal government and regional councils/government. NEBE's electoral timetable for the June 2021 elections excluded Harari, Tigray, Somali, and some parts of Oromia, Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, SNNPR, and Amhara.

¹ The NEBE Official < [Facebook page](#) > accessed 23 June 2021.

Long Term Observation of VAW-E

Methodology

EWLA trained and deployed up to 150 long term observers (LTOs) in the pre-election period to conduct the violence against women in elections (VAW-E) monitoring of the campaign period. Due to delays in the delivery of accreditation badges from NEBE, EWLA was not able to start monitoring in all regions simultaneously. Instead, EWLA launched its long-term observation of VAW-E as per the following timeline:

- Addis Ababa City Administration - 28 April, 2021
- Gambella Region - 3 May, 2021
- Benishangul-Gumuz Region - May 4, 2021.
- Sidama Region - 12 May, 2021
- SNNPR Region - 12 May, 2021
- Dire Dawa City Administration - 15 May, 2021
- Amhara - 22 May, 2021
- Oromia - 25 May, 2021

EWLA's LTOs submitted 341 completed checklists on VAW-E monitoring. They filled out 100 critical incident forms as they witnessed or heard about the violations that would have had an impact on women's full and effective participation in the pre-election environment. The information about the type of perpetrators and survivors was not always available to EWLA observers to report to the EWLA Head Office. EWLA LTOs also assessed basic aspects of inclusion of women and other disadvantaged communities into the electoral process.

The long-term monitoring was limited due to the delays of accreditation badges from NEBE and security situation in certain constituencies which did not enable observers to move around freely and conduct the monitoring as originally planned. Violence against women remains to be normalized in many countries and societies. Accordingly, the incidents of violence against women, including in the electoral context, are not easy to capture and report. The findings below are only a fraction of those VAW-E cases that may have taken place in Ethiopia during the 2021 election and represent only those incidents that EWLA observers were able to witness or hear about and report to the EWLA headquarters in the limited timeframe of the monitoring.

At the same time, the decision of NEBE to extend the voter registration period in Ethiopia enabled EWLA to observe the voter registration process in Addis Ababa and a number of constituencies in SNNPR, Gambella, and Benishangul-Gumuz. EWLA issued a statement² on findings of the voter registration in Addis Ababa on June 17.

² EWLA Website <<https://ewla-et.org/preliminary-observations-findings-on-voter-registration-process/>> accessed 23 June 2021.

VAW-E Long Term Observation of VAW-E

During the long-term monitoring, EWLA LTOs observed the campaign environment and violence against women in pre-election period. Specifically, they assessed how women voters, observers, poll workers, candidates and party poll watchers were affected by VAW-E. Monitoring findings will be used to raise awareness around VAW-E among the general public, and electoral stakeholders and contribute to creating a more enabling environment for women in future elections.

EWLA observers reported 41 cases of threats or intimidation of women, including of women voters (28), potential women voters (2) and party members (3). Perpetrators included mostly party members or supporters (15), persons registering to vote (3), spouses (6), other family members (4), and security officers or police (2). Local government officials also were responsible for intimidating women voters by pressuring them to vote in a certain way and threatening to remove them from the Productive Safety Net program. EWLA observers reported these incidents of VAW-E mostly from Amhara, Oromia and Dire Dawa regions. Few instances were reported from Benishangul-Gumuz and Addis Ababa observers as well.

EWLA observers reported 7 cases of sexual harassment against women voters or potential women voters (3), women registering to vote (2), party members or supporters (1), and other (1). On five instances, the sexual harassment was verbal and two cases involved physical, unwanted touching. Most of sexual harassment cases took place in Benishangul-Gumuz and one instance was reported from Gambella and Amhara regions each.

EWLA observers reported 2 cases of physical assault/physical attacks targeting women election administration officials. Perpetrators were political party members, both men and women, attacking women election officials (slapping, beating up). Incidents were reported in Benishangul-Gumuz and Dire Dawa regions.

EWLA observers reported 2 cases of security forces interrupting campaigning – on one occasion, a woman candidate was temporarily disrupted while campaigning. On the second occasion, security forces interrupted campaigning of both men and women members of political parties. EWLA observers reported these instances from Amhara and Dire Dawa.

EWLA observers reported 8 cases of women being discouraged to participate in voter education or campaign events. Survivors included women voters or potential women voters (6) and party members or supporters (2). Perpetrators included spouses (2), party members or supporters (2), and a person registering to vote (1). These incidents were mostly reported from the Amhara region, and few were observed in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia.

EWLA observers reported 2 cases of sexist language, hate speech against women candidates (2). Perpetrators included political party representatives and members of the community. Both instances were reported in Dire Dawa.

EWLA observers reported 8 cases of women being excluded from campaign events: women voters (3), party members or supporters (2), and women registering to vote (3). Perpetrators included spouse (1), political party members or supporters (1), and election administration members (1). These incidents were mostly reported from Amhara and Oromia, and a couple of cases were observed in Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Dire Dawa regions.

EWLA observers reported 10 cases of political party members, and local government representatives attempting to buy votes of women voters or potential women voters (10). EWLA observers reported vote buying from Amhara and Addis Ababa.

EWLA observers reported 8 cases of destruction of campaign posters, including posters of a woman candidate (1), party members or supporters (4), and election administration officials (1). Most of the incidents were observed by EWLA LTOs in Amhara region, and one observer reported it from Oromia.

Inclusion and Women's Political Participation

EWLA observers also assessed the overall inclusion of the pre-election environment and women's political participation. The long-term observers filled out 341 checklists throughout the country, where they observed, and have found the following:

On 143 occasions, EWLA observers witnessed or heard of voter education materials targeting women voters. Such activities were mostly concentrated in Addis Ababa, Amhara, Dire Dawa, and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, and were rarely seen in Gambella, Sidama, and SNNPR.

On 39 occasions, EWLA observers witnessed or heard complaints from persons with disabilities about access to the election and/or mistreatment by election officials. These cases were largely concentrated in Amhara, and Dire Dawa. There were no such complaints witnessed or heard of by EWLA LTOs on 302 occasions.

On 216 occasions, EWLA observers considered that candidates or political party representatives always or sometimes spoke about the issues that were important to women voters at campaign events. However, in 125 cases, EWLA LTOs reported that candidates or political party representatives never discussed such issues.

On 223 occasions, women members of political parties or campaign representatives always or sometimes spoke at campaign events.

Election Day VAW-E Monitoring

Methodology

On Election Day, EWLA deployed 130 observers to 369 polling stations to monitor voting and closing processes and violence against women in elections (VAW-E). In addition to VAW-E indicators, EWLA also measured overall participation of women in elections as elections administration members, observers, and media representatives. It also assessed the level of compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Finally, EWLA also examined the accessibility of polling stations to people with disabilities.

130 EWLA observers completed checklists and submitted them to the data center: 89 in Addis Ababa, 17 in Afar, 69 in Amhara, 19 in Benishangul-Gumuz, 34 in Dire Dawa, 25 in Gambella, 60 in Oromia, 41 in SNNPR, and 15 in Sidama.

Each observer visited 2-4 polling stations, and conducted mobile monitoring. Observers assessed the integrity of the electoral process and monitored VAW-E inside and outside of the polling stations. 86 percent of polling stations visited were urban, and 14 percent were rural. Almost all polling stations were regular units, 1 military and 3 universities.³

Environment Outside Polling Stations

At 80 percent of 369 polling stations visited by EWLA, observers witnessed queues. At 58 percent of all polling stations visited by EWLA, there were no separate queues for men and women voters which increases the risk of potential sexual harassment for women. Some of the observation data reported by EWLA observers included cases of sexual harassment of women voters in lines. Separate queues were organized at 37 percent of polling stations and there were no queues observed at 5 percent of polling stations visited by EWLA.

At 80 percent of 369 polling stations visited by EWLA, pregnant women and nursing mothers were allowed to go ahead of the queue, while at 15 percent they were not given such priority.

Military personnel, security forces and/or armed groups were present outside 69 percent of polling stations visited by EWLA.

³ University polling stations were set up for students to vote at the university rather than being required to return to their home locations.

Accessibility of Polling Stations

EWLA observers assessed that a person with physical disability or mobility challenges (such as elderly, persons carrying small children) would have been able to enter 79 percent of 369 polling stations without assistance.

According to EWLA observers, 84 percent of polling stations observed were equally easy for men and women members of the community to access while 12 percent would have been easier for men.

Gender Balance among Election Stakeholders

Women were underrepresented among the poll workers of those polling stations where EWLA deployed its observers. 83 percent of 369 polling stations visited by EWLA had men chairpersons, and only 18 percent had women chairs. Moreover, 9 percent of 369 polling stations did not have a single woman member.

At 248 polling stations out of 369 visited by EWLA, some observers were women, at 117 polling stations some party agents were women and at 20 polling stations some journalists were women. However, at 59 polling stations none of these electoral stakeholders were women.

Compliance with COVID-19 Regulations

At 77 percent of 369 polling stations visited by EWLA, all election officials always wore masks and at 19 percent some poll workers wore masks.

Potential Disenfranchisement of Women Voters

At 7 percent of polling stations out of 369 visited by EWLA, 1-10 women voters were not allowed to vote because they were not on the voters' list, which indicates the desire among potential women voters to participate in elections even if ineligible. At 7 percent of polling stations 1-10 women voters were not permitted to vote due to other reasons.

At 16 percent of polling stations out of 369, 1-10 women voters were assisted to vote when they did not appear to be in need of any assistance.

VAW-E During Voting Process

2 observers witnessed the physical violence against women voters at polling stations – women were physically removed from the polling station premises. The perpetrators were the election administration member and a voter. Both cases were reported in Dire Dawa.

2 cases of sexual harassment (verbal and physical) were reported by the EWLA observers outside polling stations. Male voters were physically grabbing and touching female voters while waiting in queues. Both cases of VAW-E were reported in Benishangul-Gumuz.

9 cases of psychological violence against women were reported by EWLA observers on election day. Perpetrators included party agents (1), voters (2), and election officials (4). These VAW-E cases were reported in Amhara, Dire Dawa, Benishangul-Gumuz and Addis Ababa.

Other

At 97 percent of polling stations, voters did not turn away without voting due to heavy weather or other weather conditions.

Closing and Counting

Due to long queues, NEBE extended the voting process by three hours throughout the country until 9:00pm, instead of 6:00pm. Closing and counting is one of the most important aspects of election observation. The lack of women's representation among poll workers and other electoral stakeholders, and the lack of safety guarantees led to EWLA's women observers leaving polling stations early, before the voting and counting was completed.⁴ Furthermore, the gender-based stereotypes and potential for gender-based violence already made 6:00pm voting end time not safe enough for women electoral stakeholders, especially at polling stations with only men election officials. Family members often do not allow women to stay outside home after dusk.

12 of EWLA's women observers could not stay throughout the end of the voting and counting due to NEBE's decision to extend the voting until 9:00pm. This decision increased the risk of VAW-E for various women electoral stakeholders, including election administration members, observers, party poll watchers, and media representatives.

EWLA's Observers' Rights to Conduct Observation

3 of EWLA's 130 observers had difficulties entering the polling stations in the morning. Their right to conduct monitoring was violated by election administration officials not allowing them to observe the polling station, in full or in part, or forcing them to leave monitoring checklists and phones outside. These incidents were reported from Addis Ababa, Oromia and Dire Dawa.

Moreover, one EWLA observer in Dire Dawa along with other observers and journalists was not allowed to leave the polling station until 1:00pm on June 22. They were held without access to any food or water. Further, the observer was not allowed access to a toilet without a security escort observing.

⁴ In some cases, counting was not completed until the following day.

Election Day VAW-E Critical Incidents

On 4 occasions, EWLA observers witnessed women voters being assisted by election officials to vote when they did not appear in need of assistance. These incidents were reported in Dire Dawa, Benishangul-Gumuz and Amhara.

3 observers reported ineligible men were allowed to vote and 2 observers reported that ineligible women were allowed to vote when they were not on the voters' list. All of these cases were reported in Gambella.

Out of 369 polling stations monitored by EWLA, unauthorized persons were present at 5 polling stations. These instances were reported in Addis Ababa, Gambella, and Oromia.

At 17 polling stations out of 369 visited by EWLA, the polling stations ran out of ballot papers. This caused the interruption of voting with greater effects on women voters' ability to cast their ballot due to domestic duties and gender-based stereotypes. These ballots were missing in Sidama (9), Gambella (3), Benishangul-Gumuz (3) and Addis Ababa (2).

At 3 polling stations visited by EWLA observers, they learned that elections had been cancelled and were not taking place in those constituencies.

3 observers of EWLA were not allowed to observe or their observation was interrupted. 1 observer was not allowed in due to lack of photo ID card, despite the fact that they had their accreditation card. 1 observer was not allowed to leave the polling station and conduct monitoring outside. 1 observer was not allowed inside the polling station with monitoring checklists and a phone. These incidents took place in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Oromia.

At 5 polling stations out of 369 visited by EWLA, women came to vote but were not able to as they were not on the voters' list. These incidents were reported in Dire Dawa and Amhara.

Recommendations

On the basis of the VAW-E monitoring findings, EWLA makes the following preliminary recommendations targeting key stakeholders:

To the NEBE

- Strengthen internal codes of conduct to include prohibition of any forms of violence against women, both within and outside of NEBE, clarify penalties for violations, establish confidential reporting channels and enforce respective regulations.
- Ensure the implementation of regulations prohibiting the use of sexist, derogatory language against women candidates, voters, observers, poll workers and elected women.
- Reinforce NEBE's commitment for political parties to establish a mandatory gender quota and mandate a minimum number of elected women members.

- Ensure NEBE's Gender Unit has the resources and authority needed to carry out its roles and responsibilities.
- Train the electoral officials and polling station security officials on gender equality, Violence Against Women in Elections (VAW-E) and protection of women electoral stakeholders in elections, and put in place a response mechanism mitigating VAW-E.
- Include VAW-E concept into voter education, including awareness raising about the importance of ballot secrecy.
- Raise awareness on specific steps to be taken by NEBE's commitment to enhance gender equality and women's participation in election.
- Implement gender sensitivity training for NEBE's staff and stakeholders focusing on the unique ways that VAW-E impacts women's political participation and undermines the democratic process of elections.
- Ahead of elections, deploy mobile registration teams that include women to facilitate the voter registration of women, particularly in rural areas.
- Ensure the timely provision of accreditation badges to citizen observers, and inform the public about the changes to the electoral calendar in a timely manner.

To the Government of Ethiopia

- Provide gender-sensitivity training to the police, law enforcement and judiciary involved in investigation and adjudication of VAW-E cases.
- Increase the number of women security agents working in elections to provide greater protection of women electoral stakeholders.
- Adopt legislative changes explicitly prohibiting sexual harassment.
- Encourage legal authorities to collaborate more closely with NEBE to prosecute VAW-E crimes.

To Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- Continue to conduct gender-specific and gender-responsive election observation in line with best practices.
- Support awareness raising campaigns highlighting the importance of women's political participation and VAW-E.
- Train election administrators, police, law enforcement bodies and judiciary on mitigating and addressing VAW-E.
- Create platforms that promote solidarity networks among women leaders to combat VAW-E.
- Continue advocacy aimed at improving the laws and policies for women's full and equal participation in elections.

To Political Parties

- Develop and adopt codes of conduct and action plans that promote women's rights and provide zero tolerance policies toward sexual harassment, and gender based violence.
- Introduce mandatory gender sensitivity training courses for members of political parties, and party poll watchers.
- Monitor and enforce party by-laws and practices on gender equality and VAW-E.
- Adopt mandatory gender quotas mandating a minimum number of women elected officials.

To the Media

- Address gender inequality and gender stereotypes towards women through their content.
- Provide capacity building of media personnel on gender equality issues and VAW-E.
- Organize platforms to talk about VAW-E to raise awareness about different aspects of VAW-E.
- Develop and distribute gender-sensitive voter and civic education information in user-friendly formats to enhance women's awareness and understanding of electoral processes.

To Donors/Development Partners

- Support different initiatives by the government, NEBE and CSOs to build awareness around VAW-E.
- Help build the capacity of various stakeholders on VAW-E and gender equality
- Continue supporting gender specific and gender responsive observation efforts by local civil society organizations.

CONCLUSION

EWLA will release the comprehensive analysis of the pre-election and election day VAW-E monitoring findings and respective recommendations in the final election report. EWLA thanks its observers, regional focal points, and the entire network for participating in this important endeavor.

About EWLA and VAW-E Project

The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) is a non-profit women's advocacy group founded by Ethiopian women lawyers. It began its work in 1996 after being registered in 1995. It has been re-registered as a Local organization by the Charities and Societies Agency in 2019 as per the Civil Society Organization Proclamation 1113/2019. EWLA has a vision to see a country where women are equal to men. EWLA's mission is promoting the economic, political, social and legal rights of women and to that end assist them to secure full protection of their rights under the Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and other international human rights

conventions. The Association, to achieve its mission, works through three core programs: Provision of Free Legal Aid Service to Women and Female Children, Public Education and Capacity Building Research and Law Reform Advocacy. EWLA has its head office in Addis Ababa and eight branches in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Amhara, Diredawa, Gambella, SNNPR, Afar and Somali. The branch/regional offices are supported by 53 trained voluntary committees organized at woreda and zonal levels providing structures to reach women at grass root level in Ethiopia.

EWLA is implementing this VAW-E project under a cooperative agreement with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) who is providing technical assistance and subgrant with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project aims at monitoring the VAW-E in the pre-election period and election day and allow citizen reports of VAW-E incidents through the toll-free hotline 7711. The observation findings and hotline reports will be used for the future advocacy for women increased political participation in Ethiopia.