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TIMRAN Preliminary Statement on the Observation of Violence against Women in Elections (VAWiE) at the Ethiopian 7th General Election 2026

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Introduction

TIMRAN (ትምራን), a women-led, women-focused non-partisan civil society organization committed to advancing women's meaningful participation in politics and public leadership, deployed its volunteers and members as citizen election observers to observe Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWiE) during Ethiopia's 7th General Election held on 1 June 2026.

Prior to Election Day, TIMRAN implemented a series of interventions to promote inclusive electoral participation and strengthen election observation. These included the development of a harmonized VAWiE observation checklist in collaboration with women's rights organizations, voter education campaigns through radio broadcasts and social media platforms with a focus on women voters, and the facilitation of an inter-party debate on women's rights and gender equality in partnership with key women right organizations. In addition, TIMRAN conducted training for women candidates in two regional clusters: the Eastern Cluster (comprising the Somali Region, Harari Region, and Dire Dawa City Administration) and the Southern Cluster (comprising the Sidama Region and South Ethiopia Region) focusing on political communication, campaigning skills, and the prevention and reporting of VAWiE. TIMRAN has also recruited, trained, and deployed election observers across targeted locations to observe the electoral process.

A total of 53 observers were trained, of whom 50 observers were deployed on Election Day. Of the deployed observers, 24 were women (48%). The observers observed 46 polling stations across four regional states and two city administrations of Ethiopia, including Oromia, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, South-West, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa Cities. Observer deployment to





polling stations commenced at 5:30am enabling observation of polling station setup and opening procedures.

This preliminary statement summarizes observations received from TIMRAN observers from opening to the completion of polling, closing, and counting processes. The findings remain preliminary and may be updated following verification of reports.

TIMRAN deployed a targeted observation methodology to assess VAWiE and women's participation during the electoral process. Observers utilized a harmonized VAWiE observation checklist jointly developed by women's rights organizations, focusing on the accessibility of polling stations for women, including women with disabilities, the safety and security of women voters, the participation of women in various electoral roles, and incidents of intimidation, harassment, threats, coercion, or violence affecting women. The observation also examined election procedures with implications for women's participation and documented critical incidents that could impact women's electoral rights. To facilitate timely reporting and response, observer's transmitted information through phone calls, text messages, and structured reporting forms coordinated through TIMRAN's Election data center. Established at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Addis Ababa, the data center functioned as the central coordination hub throughout Election Day, receiving, verifying, analyzing, and managing observer reports in real time. Staffed by observation coordinators, data encoders, and TIMRAN's leadership and technical team, the data center ensured continuous monitoring of field reports, incident verification, quality assurance, and consolidation of findings to support evidence-based election observation and reporting.

Summary of Key Findings

Positive Developments

- Election preparations were generally completed on time, with 93.3% of observed polling stations equipped with the necessary election materials before opening.





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- Positive efforts to facilitate the participation of women voters, particularly elderly women, pregnant women, mothers accompanied by children, and women requiring assistance were observed in 41 polling stations out of the targeted 46.
- Women actively participated throughout the electoral process as voters, election officials, observers, and polling station personnel.
- Priority voting arrangements were observed for elderly women and other vulnerable voters in 91% of the observed polling stations.
- Women's representation among election officials was notable, with 53.3% of observed polling stations having at least two women officials and 46.7% being chaired by women.
- Closing and counting procedures were observed in 46 polling stations and were generally conducted appropriately and in accordance with established procedures, with observers and political party representatives present.

Major concerns

- Challenges affecting women voters included long queues, accessibility barriers for some women with disabilities (12.8%), difficulties locating names on voter registers (8.9%), and isolated cases of inappropriate voter assistance practices (8.5%) that may have compromised ballot secrecy.
- Procedural issues were observed, including delays in opening, temporary interruptions related to crowd management, and operational delays associated with election material management.
- TIMRAN recorded 13 critical incidents requiring verification and classification under the harmonized VAWiE monitoring framework.
- Reported incidents included cases of sexual harassment, psychological violence, inappropriate voter assistance, intimidation and threats against women voters, temporary suspension of voting activities, accessibility challenges, election process disruptions, and one instance where observers were prevented from observing the counting process.





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Preliminary Recommendation:

- Strengthen measures to ensure that all women, including women with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, can participate in elections safely, independently, and without barriers.
- Enhance the capacity of election officials to consistently implement electoral procedures in a manner that protects voter rights, ballot secrecy, and the integrity of the electoral process.
- Improve operational and logistical arrangements to facilitate smooth polling, counting, and election management processes.
- Take appropriate measures to prevent, monitor, and respond to incidents of violence, intimidation, harassment, and other challenges that may affect women's electoral participation.
- Promote continued collaboration among election stakeholders to strengthen the inclusiveness, transparency, and credibility of future electoral processes.

Conclusion

TIMRAN recognizes that the electoral process remains ongoing and that the election cannot be considered concluded until the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) completes the tabulation process and officially announces the final results. As such, the findings presented in this preliminary statement are subject to further verification and analysis. TIMRAN will continue to observe the post-election phase and undertake additional verification and assessment of the critical incidents reported by its observers.

Following the conclusion of the electoral process, TIMRAN will produce and disseminate a comprehensive VAWiE Observation Report to stakeholders, the media, and the public. TIMRAN extends a sincere appreciation to the dedicated volunteer observers for their commitment and valuable contribution to election observation efforts.

