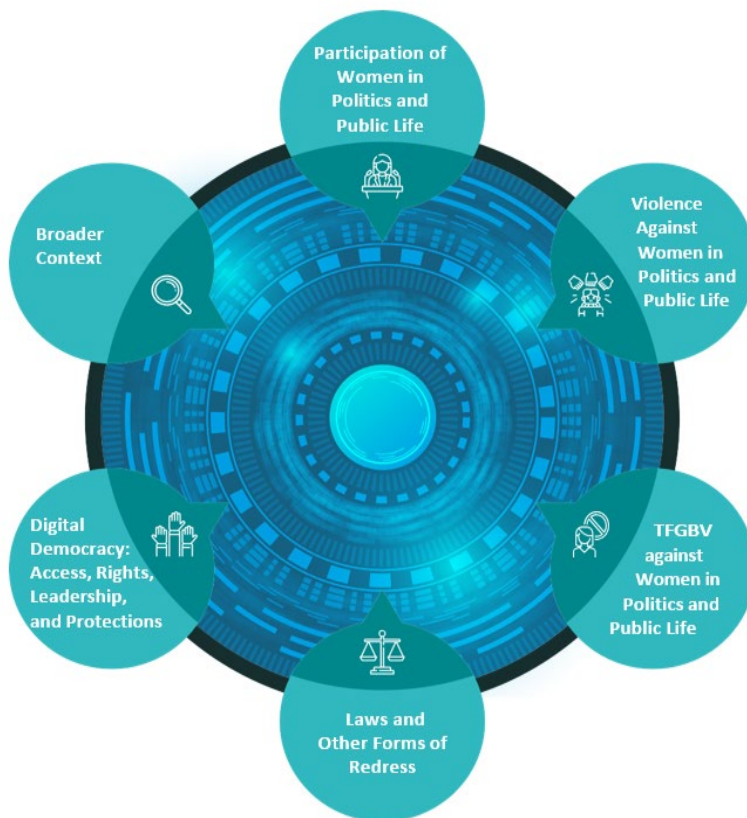# Digital Threats and Public Participation Landscape Assessment Methodology Two-Pager

Transform Digital Spaces (Transform) Activity

Overview: Transform Digital Spaces (Transform) is a three-year global pilot initiative funded by USAID, which supports practical approaches to preventing, mitigating, and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), with a focus on addressing violence experienced by women in politics and public life. TFGBV is an increasingly prevalent form of violence against women, particularly those present in politics and public life, and poses a pervasive threat to democratic values, human rights, peace, security, and the safety of individuals and societies worldwide. But we cannot address what we do not document and understand.

Purpose of methodology: Given the dearth of data and information regarding TFGBV, as well as Violence Against Women in Political and Public Life (VAWPP) more broadly, there is critical need for a common assessment methodology that can inform cross-national comparison, as well as context-specific interventions for TFGBV targeting women in politics and public life. This assessment methodology is thus intended to guide other entities invested in addressing TFGBV to replicate, adapt, and deploy it in diverse contexts, thereby broadening the knowledge base around TFGBV against women in political and public life and illuminating strategies to combat it.

Domains: The following domains structure the assessment and inform opportunities and barriers for activities to counter TFGBV:

- **Violence Against Women in Political and Public Life (VAWPP):** Sheds light on who experiences this violence, who perpetrates it, and how it is understood in a specific context.
- **Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV):** Illuminates common characteristics of TFGBV, trends in perpetration, characteristics of women politicians and civic actors most commonly targeted, and evidence of online violence crossing over to offline violence.
- **Women in politics and public life:** Provides context for the general environment for women's political and civic participation and roles within these domains.
- **Laws & Redress:** Identifies relevant laws and their enforcement, codes of conduct, regulation, and monitoring relating to elections and political parties.
- **Digital Democracy:** Analyzes the digital divide, relevant technology companies and platforms, opportunities to use digital platforms for government transparency, civic technology stakeholders, and women's participation in the technology sector.
- **Broader context**: Captures features that influence VAWPP and TFGBV, such as the general prevalence of gender-based violence, populations that are especially vulnerable, and current or recent conflict.

Possible sources of data include the following:

- Scans of traditional and social media
- Key informant interviews
- Focus groups
- Identification of relevant laws
- Stakeholder mapping
- Statistics and reports produced by civil society organizations (CSOs) and national governments

Overview of methodological approach:
The methodology recommends commencing with desk research, including literature reviews and stakeholder mapping, both of which should then help to identify key informants to interview, relevant media platforms and outlets to scan, regional and national organizations that may have done previous research, and other fruitful avenues during the second phase of research. Possible sources of data include the following:

Existing Data and Desk Research: There is a significant gap in existing knowledge and data related to TFGBV and VAWPP, but some global sources do exist (and can be found in Annex 2 of the full methodology). Information on many relevant factors is rare below the national level.

Relevant Laws and Regulations: While there are few laws that address TFGBV and VAWPP, there are other laws that overlap with TFGBV and VAWPP that may provide opportunities for (or help recognize barriers to) accountability.

Stakeholder Mapping: Important stakeholders relevant to assessing TFGBV commonly include civil society organizations; the media sector; political parties; and the government.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): KIIs and FGDs should include local stakeholders, researchers, and professionals with experience and expertise relating to TFGBV and VAWPP, such as organizations advancing women's public leadership and participation and civic tech organizations working on digital democracy.

Media Scans: Scans or keyword searches across multiple platforms of traditional, digital, and social media serve to build a contextualized evidence-base around TFGBV (such as patterns of incidents, impact, and efforts at redress) and can then also contribute to plans for future monitoring.

Transform is committed to and advocates for conducting research and activities in a survivor-centered and trauma-informed manner. It is imperative that research causes no additional harm to survivors of TFGBV or GBV or the broader community that is indirectly impacted by this violence.

Additionally, methodologies must be adapted to local contexts, particularly as differences relate to the political system, ethnic and linguistic diversity, and cultural or religious considerations. These considerations are essential for the ethical and inclusive implementation of the research and for ensuring reliable and high-quality data.