

**52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women
39th session of the Statistical Commission**

Joint dialogue on indicators to measure violence against women

Thursday, 28 February 2008, 1:15 – 2:45 p.m.

ISSUES PAPER

I. Introduction

General Assembly resolution 61/143 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women requested the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, and building on the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, a set of possible indicators on violence against women to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women. General Assembly resolution 62/133 on the same topic further elaborated on this request, asking the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to develop and propose such a set of possible indicators, with a view to allowing its consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session and by the Statistical Commission at the earliest.

The two Commissions have collaborated on previous occasions on the question of gender equality statistics. The dialogue on 28 February is an opportunity for the two commissions to focus on the development of indicators on violence against women, as mandated by the General Assembly. It is hoped that, as a result of the dialogue:

- the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-second session, will recommend a set of indicators on violence against women to enhance Member States' capacity to assess the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women and take enhanced action to prevent and address violence against women, based on such a strengthened knowledge base;
- the Statistical Commission, at its thirty-ninth session, will establish an inter-sessional working group to consider the proposed set of indicators with a view to making recommendations for action at the fortieth session.

II. Background

The Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 identified violence against women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern that require urgent action to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action called attention to the lack of data on violence against women and urged Governments to build national statistical capacity to collect such data and disseminate findings, and to encourage research into the causes and consequences of

different forms of violence against women. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 called on Governments to support new work to develop statistics and indicators, especially in areas where information is particularly lacking.

The Commission on the Status of Women has repeatedly highlighted the importance of developing statistics and indicators in follow up to the Beijing Platform for Action. For example, at its 43rd session in 1999, it called for the continuous improvement of the collection and disaggregation of data and the development of statistics and indicators in all critical areas of the Platform for Action for use in analysis, policy development and planning.

In 2004, the Commission on the Status of Women, in collaboration with the Statistical Commission, held a high-level round table on gaps and challenges in measuring progress in implementation, in the context of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Participants stressed that statistical information was an important element in States' reporting on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in areas, such as violence against women. It was noted, however, that in certain areas, such as violence against women, methodological shortcomings and lack of reporting, or under-reporting, led to inaccurate data collection, and such unreliable or misleading information could lead to poor policies.

In 2007, the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women organized a joint panel discussion on the development of gender equality indicators. Participants noted that efforts had been made to collect data on various forms of violence against women at the national level through comprehensive surveys. However, attention was drawn to the challenges in collecting data on violence against women, including the lack of a conceptual framework and harmonized concepts, as well as challenges relating to the reporting on such a sensitive topic.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women is working toward the development of indicators on violence against women, which are expected to focus on measuring State responses to combat violence against women, rather than on indicators to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

III. A proposed set of international indicators

In order to support the work of the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women in developing indicators to measure the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, convened a meeting of experts in Geneva, from 8 to 10 October 2007. The expert group meeting proposed a set of five international indicators for measuring violence against women. These cover:

- physical violence;
- sexual violence;
- intimate partner violence; and
- certain harmful practices:
 - (a) female genital mutilation;
 - (b) early marriage.

The Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission are invited to consider these proposals, set out in the annex to the present note.

IV. Format of the dialogue

The event will take the form of an interactive dialogue, co-chaired by the Chairpersons of the two Commissions. Following introductory comments by the Chairpersons, a participant from the expert group meeting will present the proposed international indicators, as well as the meeting's related recommendations.

Three speakers (5 minutes each) will comment on the proposed indicators, including from the perspective of their respective experiences. The speakers will include: representative(s) of Member States from national statistical offices (NSOs) which have used indicators in the collection of data on violence against women; and a representative from a UN Regional Commission - ECLAC - which has developed and proposed indicators on violence against women.

Following these presentations, an interactive dialogue will be held with a focus on the proposed indicators. Speakers intervening from the floor will be invited to comment on the proposed indicators on the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women in the light of their experiences and expectations.

V. Issues for consideration

The twenty-third special session urged Governments to develop collaboratively an international consensus on indicators and ways to measure violence against women.

The following list of issues may guide participants in their interaction in the dialogue:

- Which indicators are critical for enhancing knowledge on violence against women and tracking its scope, and should therefore be used by all States?
- What are some of the challenges in data collection and use of indicators on scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, especially those proposed in the annex to this note, and how could those be addressed? Which indicators could be produced with reasonable quality at modest cost, for example by linking to existing programmes and activities?

- How could the role of national statistical systems be enhanced in strengthening data collection on violence against women, including for the indicators proposed in the annex to this note?
- What are some of the good practices and experiences in collecting data on violence against women and how have such data enhanced States' capacity to develop and implement effective responses?
- What steps could be taken to further enhance the collaboration at national level between the producers of statistics, in particular the national statistical offices, and the users of statistics, including national machineries for the advancement of women and line ministries, to strengthen the knowledge base for effective action on violence against women?
- How could the Commission on the Status of Women and the Statistical Commission support further work to strengthen methodology for data collection and indicator development in relation to different forms of violence against women?

ANNEX

The indicators proposed by the Expert Group meeting are set out below.

Physical violence

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women) who have experienced physical violence during the last year.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by severity (moderate/severe); perpetrator (intimate/other relative/other known person/stranger/state authority); and frequency (one/few/many time(s)).

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women) who have experienced physical violence during life-time.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by severity (moderate/severe); perpetrator (intimate/other relative/other known person/stranger/state authority); and frequency (one/few/many time(s)).

Sexual violence

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women) who have experienced rape/sexual assault during the last year.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by perpetrator (intimate/other relative/other known person/stranger/state authority); and frequency (one/few/many time(s)).

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women) who have experienced rape/sexual assault during life-time.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by perpetrator (intimate/other relative/other known person/stranger/state authority); and frequency (one/few/many time(s)).

Intimate partner violence

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women who have ever had an intimate partner) who have experienced physical or sexual violence by current or former partner during the last year.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by frequency (one/few/many time(s)).

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women who have ever had an intimate partner) who have experienced physical or sexual violence by current or former partner during lifetime.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by frequency (one/few/many time(s)).

Harmful practices¹

Female genital mutilation/cutting

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women) subjected to female genital mutilation/cutting.

This indicator should be disaggregated further by age.

Early marriage

- ✓ The percentage of women (over the total number of women) whose age at marriage is below 18 years

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¹ The proportion of women who are subjected to FGM can be measured through population-based surveys only in countries where the number of women subjected to FGM is not too small. If the numbers are too small, sample surveys are not the proper tools and other methods should be used. Data from national censuses could also be used for the indicators on early marriage.