



"Violence against women: a statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them"

Expert Group Meeting

Organized by: UN Division for the Advancement of Women
in collaboration with:
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Aide-Mémoire

I. Background

On 22 December 2003, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted by consensus a resolution entitled "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" (A/RES/58/185). The resolution requests the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on all forms and manifestations of violence against women (the full text of the resolution is attached in the annex).

The resolution spells out five areas to be addressed in the study:

- (i) A statistical overview on all forms of violence against women, in order to evaluate better the scale of such violence, while identifying gaps in data collection and formulating proposals for assessing the extent of the problem;
- (ii) The causes of violence against women, including its root causes and other contributing factors;
- (iii) The medium and long-term consequences of violence against women;
- (iv) The health, social and economic costs of violence against women;
- (v) The identification of best practice examples in areas including legislation, policies, programmes and effective remedies, and the efficiency of such mechanisms to the end of combating and eliminating violence against women.

The in-depth study will build on work that has been undertaken so far, synthesize and evaluate findings, and identify good practices and effective strategies, along with gaps and challenges. The study is intended to give a global picture of all forms of violence against women, the scale and prevalence of different forms of violence against women, its causes and consequences, as well as the costs of such violence. The study will identify gaps in knowledge and data collection, and give particular attention to good practice examples to highlight successful strategies to combat violence against women. Importantly, the study will include action-oriented recommendations that encompass effective remedies and prevention and rehabilitation measures. It will also aim to make recommendations for strengthening collaboration between producers and users of data and statistics on violence against women. The study will be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session in September 2005.

General Recommendation 19 (1992) on violence against women of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that gender-based violence is discrimination within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (1993) identified three main areas where violence against women occurs, namely in the family, the general community, and perpetrated or condoned by the State, clarifying that such violence can take physical, sexual and psychological forms. Policy documents such as the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly of June 2000, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, and various other United Nations resolutions and outcomes elaborated further the forms of violence against women and the sites where it takes place, and actions to combat and prevent its occurrence. These documents also highlighted the ways in which violence against women intersects with, and impacts on, other aspects of women’s well-being and their enjoyment of their human rights.

Data collection on violence against women

As increased attention has been paid to the issue of gender based violence, substantial work has been done by Governments, United Nations entities and other international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and researchers to strengthen survey methodologies, develop common indicators and address the challenges of comparing data over time, and between different countries and regions. However, the lack of data on the nature, prevalence and incidence of the various types of violence against women is regularly highlighted as a major concern and barrier to effective policy making. In March 2004, participants at a high-level round table of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) noted 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. Outdated data sometimes limit the usefulness of the information as a basis for policy-making. At times, there is a discrepancy between the types of statistics produced and the needs of policy makers.”

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regularly addresses the issue of data collection, urging reporting States in its concluding comments to strengthen and systematize efforts to gather statistics on the various forms of violence against women, including for example on domestic violence, on trafficked, migrant and refugee women, on sexual exploitation, forced marriages and harmful traditional practices. Governments likewise recognize the need for adequate data on violence against women. For example, in their responses to the Secretary-General’s request for information on implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/179 and 57/181 related to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and crimes committed against women in the name of honour, Member States underlined the importance of data collection and compilation of statistics for policy making.

Given the concerns expressed with the lack of reliable, comprehensive and comparable data on various forms of violence against women, and the importance of the availability of such data to policy makers and professionals working to combat such violence and/or support its victims, the study will endeavour to assess the current situation in the field of data collection regarding violence against women. This will include provision of an overview and evaluation of the quality of available data, an overview of the status of data collection on the different types of violence against women, an analysis of the methodology(ies) currently used, as well as an assessment of the remaining gaps and challenges in improving the availability, reliability, comprehensiveness and comparability, in all parts of the world, of such data collection.

II. Objectives of the expert group meeting

The development and implementation of an effective, comprehensive and multidisciplinary strategy to combat violence against women requires complete, accurate, and up-to-date information on the incidence of such violence and its various manifestations. With this in mind, the expert group will assess the data and statistics currently available regarding the extent and prevalence of all forms of violence against women, evaluate the quality of the data, and identify remaining gaps in data collection. Participants will review initiatives currently being spearheaded by international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other entities, and tested in various countries, including national level surveys and the development of common indicators.

The meeting will put forward recommendations on enhancing ways for assessing the extent of the problem, especially through improved and more systematic data gathering. The meeting will be an opportunity for producers and users of data to discuss the constraints in collecting data, as well as the needs of practitioners for better information to serve as a solid basis for effective policy making. Issues expected to be raised include but are not limited to:

- a) Assessment of the types of data currently available and collected, including issues such as:
 - The types of violence against women on which data are collected
 - The scope of data collection (at national/local level, regional or sub-regional coverage) and its extent (systematic, ad hoc)
 - The entity(ies) responsible for, or contributing to data collection (independent entities, government entities, NGOs)
 - The methodology(ies) used to collect and analyze the data (surveys, analysis of secondary data, analysis of collated crime or health statistics, etc.)

- b) Assessment of the gaps and challenges, including issues such as:
 - The challenge of under- and non reporting of violence against women
 - Lack of data collection on certain types of violence against women, and by geographical region
 - Methodological problems

- c) Assessment of needs of policy makers and professionals working to prevent violence against women:
 - Constraints faced by data producers
 - Needs of users
- d) Recommendations for improved data collection and proposals for better assessing the extent of the problem.

III. Expected outcome

The expert group meeting will prepare a report and recommendations that will give an overview of the scale of violence against women, based on available data and knowledge, identify gaps and challenges in assessing the scale of the various forms of violence against women, including methodological challenges, and gaps and challenges in data collection, and make proposals on how better to assess the extent of the problem. Experts will prepare papers and case studies on the topics of the meeting, with a thematic or geographical focus, that will also include recommendations for further action. The meeting's report will form the basis for the chapter, in the Secretary-General's study, on statistics and data collection (sub-paragraph I (a) of resolution 58/185). Particular attention will be paid to reflect the perspectives of both producers and users of data.

Experts will prepare and finalize their report by the end of the four-day meeting. It will consist of an analytical summary of the discussions as well as recommendations for further action.

IV. Method of work

Experts will present their papers and case studies which will form the basis for discussion in plenary. The themes presented will then be further developed in working groups which will also develop recommendations in regard to each of the topics of the meeting.

V. Profile of participants

The expert group meeting will be attended by approximately fifteen (15) experts in the fields of data collection and violence against women, including statisticians, practitioners, researchers and academics with extensive experience in assessing the scale of violence against women, data collection and analysis of such data. A small number of observers from United Nations entities will also attend. Staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women will support the meeting.

In selecting experts, attention will be paid to geographic and gender balance, as well as a range of expertise in data collection and analysis covering all forms of violence against women. The Division for the Advancement of Women will provide travel, accommodation and daily subsistence allowance for invited experts.

VI. Documentation

The documentation for the meeting will include the papers and case studies prepared by the experts. The expert group meeting will be conducted in English only.