

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Second UNECE Expert Group Meeting on Measuring Violence against Women
(Geneva, 18-19 November 2010)

Report of the Meeting

I. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANISATION

1. The Second UNECE Expert Group Meeting on Measuring Violence against Women was held in Geneva on 18-19 November 2010. It was attended by participants from Armenia, Georgia, Italy, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova and South Africa, as well as from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Small Arms Survey and the World Health Organization, and three independent experts. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), all five United Nations Regional Commissions, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) were also represented.
2. The meeting was organized in the framework of the interregional United Nations Development Account project “Enhancing capacities to eradicate violence against women through networking of local knowledge communities”. It aimed at reviewing the results of the testing of a survey module on violence against women (VAW) and its implications on further international work on this topic.
3. Mr Andres Vikat, Chief of the Social and Demographic Statistics Section of the UNECE Statistical Division, chaired the meeting.
4. The full set of meeting documents is available from the UNECE website¹.

II. UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES ON MEASURING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A. Interregional project on enhancing capacities to eradicate violence against women

5. Coordinator of the interregional project, the **Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**, gave an overview of the interregional project on the eradication of violence against women. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen national and regional capacity to act on the prevention, sanction and eradication of violence against women using enhanced statistical data and indicators of violence against women and increased knowledge-sharing at the regional and interregional levels. The main activities are:
 - a) Sub-regional and regional workshops on the collection of data and measurement of VAW
 - b) Developing and testing a short module on VAW and core set of indicators
 - c) Technical workshops and seminars on the measurement of physical and sexual violence

¹ <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.11.vaw.htm>

- d) National, regional and interregional studies to assess the quality and reliability of existing VAW data collection systems
- e) Bilingual kit for collection and use of information on VAW, in line with the “*Guidelines for producing statistics on VAW*” of the United Nations Statistical Commission
- f) Building and maintaining an interregional web portal

6. This interregional project has succeeded in generating a close collaboration toward the production of common tools between the FoC, UNSD and the five Regional Commissions. The creation of this first community of knowledge and practices has played a major role in producing three other positive impacts:

- a) The dissemination and testing of the basic set of indicators approved by the UN Statistical Commission have been initiated in the five regions of the world.
- b) A growing number of countries are adopting the methodology provided through the project.
- c) Networks of collaboration are being established at national level between users, such as national authorities on gender issues, and producers of information, such as national statistical offices and institutions that maintain administrative registries.

7. It was considered important to adopt a user-producer approach, as the interaction between policymaking and data production is necessary to reduce VAW. The need to disseminate the documents adopted by of the UN Statistical Commission at regional and national levels was also highlighted.

8. The main role of **UNECE** in the interregional project is the development and testing of the VAW survey module. The questionnaire and support materials were developed by Ms Henriette Jansen (consultant) and discussed at the first Expert Group Meeting on Measuring Violence against Women (Geneva, 28-30 September 2009)² and at a meeting of the FoC (Aguascalientes, Mexico, 9-11 December 2009)³. The questionnaire has so far been translated into Spanish, Arabic, Romanian, Russian, Armenian and Georgian. Pilot surveys were conducted in 2010 in Armenia, Georgia, Mexico and the Republic of Moldova, and a few more pilot surveys are planned for the first half of 2011. A sub-regional capacity-building workshop was organized by UNECE in Geneva on 29-30 April 2010.

9. In the first half of 2011, UNECE will further analyze the experience of the pilot studies, develop a method for computing the agreed-upon VAW indicators from the survey micro-data, and adjust the questionnaire and related methodological guides based on the results of the pilot studies. It will organize a workshop on 27-29 April 2011 to train national statistical offices in applying the developed survey tools.

10. Five national studies have been undertaken on how VAW is measured in countries of the **Economic Commission for Africa**: two studies (in Cameroon and Tunisia) are at the final edition stage and three studies (in Botswana, Senegal and Uganda) are in preparation. One regional study will be conducted in 2011. South Africa and Uganda are preparing to carry out the VAW pilot survey in the beginning of 2011. Senegal may also be able to test the survey module. A technical workshop on the measurement of physical and sexual violence is planned for the first half of 2011.

11. As reported by the **Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia** (ESCWA), VAW is a highly controversial issue in Arab countries, but the degree of sensitivity varies from one country to another. A number of countries have already been conducting VAW surveys or included modules on VAW in their household surveys. ESCWA organized Regional Commissions’ Training

² The meeting report is available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.30/2009/zip.2.e.pdf>.

³ The meeting report is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/docs/FinalReport.pdf>.

of Trainers Meeting and Adaptation Workshop for Arab Countries (Beirut, 3-7 May 2010) attended by several countries interested in testing the pilot survey: Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco and Bangladesh. Other pertinent initiatives of ESCWA include setting up a Virtual Library of gender materials, creating a glossary of gender terminology and developing the first VAW database in the Arab region. In cooperation with the Iraqi national statistical office, ESCWA issued the first publication on Women and Men in Iraq that included a chapter on VAW in 2010. An Inter-agency and Experts Meeting on Gender Statistics in the Arab Region will be held in mid-2011 and include a session on VAW. ESCWA is planning to include a chapter on VAW in its 2011 publication on Gender in Figures.

12. At the **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**, the Social Development Division is collaborating with the Statistics Division in the implementation of the VAW interregional project. Their most important initiative was the organization of a Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities to Collect Violence against Women Statistics in the Asia-Pacific Region (Bangkok, 20-21 September 2010). This workshop was followed by a Consultative Meeting to Develop a Regional Program on Gender Statistics in Asia-Pacific (22-23 September 2010), which covered the topic of VAW statistics. Bangladesh and China have indicated that they are planning to carry out the VAW pilot survey in 2011.

B. Friends of the Chair (FoC) of the United Nations Statistical Commission on Statistical Indicators on Violence against Women

13. UNSD presented the work of the FoC that was established in 2008 to examine indicators on violence against women, in response to the UN General Assembly 61/143. The work of the FoC has three main goals:

- a) To have a clear understanding of the different methodologies available for VAW measurement and reach an international standard;
- b) To identify sources of data that are applicable to all countries of the world;
- c) To develop guidelines for producing VAW statistics.

14. The first goal has been reached, while further work is needed on the second goal. A report, including recommendations on methodologies for measuring VAW, will be presented at the UN Statistical Commission in February 2011.⁴

15. The following issues were discussed:

- a) What is the most appropriate way to use the VAW questionnaire? A dedicated (stand-alone) survey is considered the best option given the sensitivity of the topic, but it may not be possible in all countries. It is therefore important to give recommendations on which type of surveys should be used, as only a few surveys provide a good opportunity for inclusion of a VAW module.
- b) The recommended periodicity of a VAW survey is five to seven years, considering the complexity of data collection and analysis.
- c) Flexibility should be offered to countries to adapt the questionnaire to their own needs. A modular approach would enable countries to adapt the VAW survey to their context.

C. VAW data in the UNECE Gender Statistics Database

16. UNECE presented an overview of the crime statistics in the UNECE Gender Statistics Database⁵ that can be used to compute VAW indicators, with a few examples. The data are obtained

⁴ The report is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2011.htm>

from administrative registers and can only provide rough estimates of a few VAW indicators. It is not possible to derive lifetime indicators from administrative records. The presentation highlighted the limitations of the use of police records to measure VAW.

17. The following points were raised in the discussion:

- a) Administrative data should not be used to estimate VAW prevalence rates, as most of the VAW acts are not reported to the police. There is a clear need for better understanding of what administrative records can or cannot tell about VAW. Capacity-building activities should focus on this issue.
- b) It is important to accompany the published data with accurate metadata to ensure correct interpretation.
- c) Good administrative records can give an idea of the level of violence and provide information on the current situation, while survey data can be collected only every few years.
- d) The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is crucial to understand VAW. The definition of “partner”, for example, should not only be based on the legal status.

D. VAW survey under development by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)

18. FRA is developing a VAW survey that will be conducted in all European Union countries to collect reliable and comparable data on women’s experiences of violence. The results will be used for the development of legislation and policies at European, regional, national and local levels. A pre-test study will be carried out in 2010-2011, including cognitive interviews and focus groups discussions on key concepts of the survey to inform questionnaire development. The full-scale survey data collection is planned for 2011-2012 and the results should be released in 2013.

19. The FRA VAW survey will be conducted as a dedicated survey. The planned sample size is 1500 women in each country, but this may vary from one country to another. FRA will issue a call for tender in order to select a research partner, which will be responsible for carrying out the survey interviews in all 27 EU Member States.

20. This project highlights the importance of coordination of work between the different international organisations to avoid duplication of surveys. The question of which survey (UNECE or FRA) will be the most relevant instrument for European countries was raised. The FRA explained that they are building on the three international surveys to develop their survey — the International Violence against Women Survey, the WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence, and the UNECE survey module — as well as other national surveys. The FRA survey aims at collecting comparable data from all countries of the European Union.

E. VAW survey module developed by UNECE

21. Henriette Jansen (UNECE consultant) presented the VAW survey module⁶ to measure the core set of indicators recommended by the FoC. The draft module builds on the World Health Organization (WHO) study and on experiences from many countries. The questionnaire consists of three sections: (1) demographic characteristics of respondent, (2) partner violence (psychological, economic, physical and sexual) and (3) violence by others since the age of 15 (physical and sexual). For each question, there are two reference periods — last 12 months and lifetime — to allow the

⁵ <http://www.unece.org/stats/data>

⁶ The latest version of the questionnaire and other survey materials are available at <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/VAW>.

computation of the two corresponding sets of indicators. For physical and sexual violence, questions on the nature of the acts are included to measure the severity of violence.

22. Experiences have shown that the challenges of ensuring data quality and respondent safety are often greater when the VAW module is incorporated in surveys on other topics than when it is implemented as a dedicated survey. A number of conditions are required to use the VAW module, including measures to protect the safety of respondents and interviewers, crisis intervention and referral to specialized services for respondents who need them, and special training, emotional support and follow-up for interviewers.

23. A set of support materials for the testing and implementation of the VAW survey module has also been prepared:

- a) A question-by-question description of the VAW survey module
- b) A training program for interviewers including a training facilitators manual and a set of PPT slides
- c) An interviewer manual (including ethical and safety measures)
- d) An outline for feedback reports and a set of questions for debriefing of interviewers
- e) A draft codebook with table shells and recode syntaxes for the computation of the VAW indicators

F. Report on Regional Commissions' Training of Trainers Meeting and Adaptation Workshop for Arab Countries (Beirut, 3-7 May 2010)

24. A five-day workshop was organized by the ESCWA Statistics Division and the Centre for Women, in collaboration with the other UN Regional Commissions. It was aimed at representatives from national statistical organizations who had experience with gender statistics and surveys, and would be involved in the testing of the VAW survey module. The main objective of the workshop was to train survey managers on how to use the VAW module in a dedicated survey or attached to a survey on another topic. A second objective was to adapt the module for Arab countries.

25. The workshop enabled the participating countries to agree on a number of region-specific adjustments to the questionnaire, e.g. only married women aged 15 years and more would be considered for partner violence, while fiancés and boy-friends would be included as perpetrators in the section on non-partner violence. A number of improvements to the VAW questionnaire and other materials were made following this workshop. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic and adapted to the specific context of Arab countries.

26. A major outcome of this workshop was the establishment of a Task Force with the following objectives:

- a) To develop a plan for comparative study
- b) To produce regional guidelines and adaptation of materials to collect and analyse VAW data
- c) To organise capacity-building activities on the compilation and analysis of VAW data
- d) To organise a regional expert group meeting on VAW indicators
- e) To produce a regional report
- f) To provide a link between national statistical organisations and the policy makers

G. Report on the Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities to Collect Violence against Women Statistics in the Asia Pacific Region (Bangkok, 20-21 September 2010)

27. The workshop was organised by the ESCAP Statistics Division together with the Social Development Division. It was attended by nine countries (Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Solomon Islands, Thailand and Timor-Leste), with representatives from national women's machineries, national statistical organisations and the civil society. The objectives of the workshop were:

- a) To present an overview of global initiatives on VAW statistical data and indicators
- b) To introduce the UNECE VAW module
- c) To share experiences and lessons learned by Asia-Pacific countries
- d) To encourage joint strategies and collaboration between national statistical organisations and national women's machineries
- e) To introduce the planned regional web-portal on measuring VAW.

28. A number of priorities for action were identified, such as national coordination on technical issues, the effective use of data for policy development, programme design, and advocacy; and the need for sustainable financing through national budgets was highlighted. There is also a need for regional and sub-regional cooperation and support in capacity development, and for strengthened mechanisms for sharing information and good practices, including through the development of knowledge communities and via the use of information and communication technologies.

III. EXPERIENCES WITH TESTING THE VAW SURVEY MODULE DEVELOPED BY UNECE

29. In the **Republic of Moldova**, a considerable demand for information on domestic violence comes from both from the government and the civil society. As a result, there was great interest in the VAW survey module developed by UNECE, which was both tested and implemented as a stand-alone survey. This was preferred to the option of using an ad-hoc module attached to an ongoing survey, because of the sensitivity of the topic. The target group were women aged 15-65. The UNECE questionnaire was translated into Romanian and a number of adjustments were made, e.g. only two partners (current and most recent) were considered in the section on partner violence. The adjusted questionnaire was tested on a sample of 70 women, while the sample size for the full-scale survey was 1575 women.

30. The National Statistics Office of **Georgia** tested the VAW survey module as a stand-alone survey on a sample of 200 households, 100 in Tbilisi (urban area) and 100 in the region of Kakheti (rural area). The objectives of the pilot survey were to test the methodological and training materials, openness of respondents to talk about the topic as well as the questions. The UNECE questionnaire and other survey materials were translated into Georgian. No change was made to the questionnaire. Households were selected from the sample of households that had participated in the Integrated Household Survey (quarterly survey).

31. The National Statistical Service of **Armenia** tested the VAW survey module as a stand-alone survey on a sample of 200 households, 140 in Yerevan and other urban areas and 60 in rural areas. The UNECE questionnaire and other survey materials were translated into Armenian. No change was made to the questionnaire. The households were sampled randomly from the 2001 Population Census database. At the meeting, the main findings from the initial data analysis were presented together with the first results of the computation of the set of indicators.

32. The National Statistical Office of **Mexico** introduced a number of changes and additions were made to the UNECE questionnaire. The section on partner violence was divided in three parts (instead of two): (1) current partner, (2) last or most recent partner, and (3) previous partner (when more than two). The survey was tested on a sample of 354 households in Oaxaca and 250 in Jalisco. These two areas were selected because of the high prevalence rates of physical violence observed in 2006. The results of this pilot survey show higher prevalence rates of VAW than in other surveys.

33. Reports providing details on the pilot tests in the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Mexico are included among the meeting documents available from the UNECE website⁷.

IV. SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNED

34. UNECE presented a summary of the issues that came up in the pilot studies. The main points of this presentation and the subsequent discussion were the following:

- a) **Interviewer skills.** The selection, training and supervision of interviewers are crucial for the quality of the data collection. The basic skills for conducting a household survey are insufficient. Interviewers should be well informed on the specific subject of VAW and on the ways of interaction with victims. It would be desirable to provide to victims information about the possible help services in case violence has been reported.
- b) **Importance of training.** A two-day training may be sufficient for the pilot survey, but more extensive training is needed for the full-scale survey, covering the sensitivity of the topic, violence issues, and handling of emotional and stressful situations. Role-playing and practice of interviews are very useful. The experience of the statistical office of Moldova even suggested some fieldwork would be useful to bring the training process to a higher level.
- c) **Use of the module.** The module was tested as a stand-alone survey in four countries. The integration of the VAW survey module in a population or household survey was not yet tested. A dedicated survey seems to be the best option, but it may not be possible in all countries. It is therefore important to provide guidelines on how to use the questionnaire as a module and how to deal with the recruitment of interviewers and training in this context. Some evidence from testing would be needed to prepare such guidelines.
- d) **Length of interviews.** The average length of interview in the tests was 30 minutes.
- e) **Use of “safe” name for the survey.** It helps to build trust and safeguard women’s security, but it may create problems of interference from other household members who do not understand why they cannot be present during the interview.
- f) **Disclosure of violence.** It is easier for past than current violence and for economic violence than for sexual violence.
- g) **Definition of partner relationship.** Needs to be adapted to the national/cultural context.
- h) **Problems with questions.** A number of specific problems were identified with the wording or length of questions.
- i) **Structure of the questionnaire.** It was suggested to change the order of the sections on partner violence and on violence from others, that is, to start with the latter. Other suggestions include not numbering the skips as separate questions, allowing to skip the questions on physical and sexual violence, and adding a “no answer” option in the questions on sexual violence. However, it was also suggested not to change the order of the questions within sections or to delete any questions even if they do not seem

⁷ <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.11.vaw.htm>

- applicable in certain countries since this could complicate the final calculations of the indicators.
- j) **Suggestions for additional questions.** The section on violence from others (non-partners) could also cover non-physical violence.
 - k) **Information leaflets.** It is important to provide a list of organisations that provide support, legal advice and counselling services to women. It was suggested to give this information at the start of the interview to help establish trust.
 - l) **Psychologist in the team.** It would be very useful to include a psychologist in the team conducting the survey.
 - m) **Prioritization of indicators.** It was suggested that FoC could consider the prioritization of some indicators since it appears difficult for many countries to measure the whole set of indicators due to time constraints, acknowledging that the exclusion of some indicators would make it difficult to compare results across countries and regions.

35. South Africa informed the meeting that it will test the VAW survey module both as a stand-alone survey and as a module in another survey, so that the two approaches can be compared and assessed. In Chile and Jamaica, the testing of the module is expected to take place in the first half of 2011.

36. ESCWA reported that participating countries expressed their reservation to execute the testing as per the timeline of the project; however, some may consider testing in the first half of 2011. Challenges identified included budgetary constraints, implementation of timely and suitable household surveys, or coinciding with other major events such as national censuses during 2010. The advocacy generated an interest in other countries and an additional country, Jordan, expressed its intention to use the Arabic tools and execute an independent survey on VAW during the first half of 2011.

37. UNECE will further analyze the experience of the pilot studies, develop the computation programme of the agreed-upon indicators from the survey micro-data, and adjust the questionnaire and related methodological guides based on the results of the pilot studies. The workshop on 27-29 April 2011 will aim at training national statistical offices in applying the developed survey tools. It was proposed that UNECE coordinates the dissemination of pilot study results through its wiki platform.

V. DEVELOPMENT OF “GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCING STATISTICS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN”

38. UNSD presented the work on these guidelines. Based on a methodological survey that revealed a serious lack of statistics on violence against women, guidelines for producing statistics on VAW were first outlined at the meeting of the FoC in December 2009. In 2011, UNSD will organize an expert meeting to review an advanced draft of the guidelines.

39. The goal of the guidelines for producing statistics on VAW is to provide methodological advice. It will not provide ready-to-use survey tools. In different contexts, different survey modes and measurement techniques may be required.

40. The following suggestions and comments were made in the discussion:

- a) The guidelines could recommend VAW surveys to be carried out as stand-alone surveys, in view of the sensitivity of the subject.
- b) The guidelines could include some information on how often the survey has to be conducted to help statistical offices to plan their work.

- c) The final version of the manual could include information on how to improve the quality of the data of existing surveys in cases where a country already have a survey on VAW and do not have the resources to conduct a new stand-alone survey.
- d) Actors such as elderly women and female refugees could be included in the population sample when conducting the survey in those countries where they represent a significant part of the total population. Relevant criteria such as family volume and household density should also be taken into consideration.
- e) It could be considered for the manual of guidelines to include an advocacy component in order to highlight the issue of VAW within the whole society.

41. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration between global and regional organizations of the United Nations as an important element in improving measurement of VAW and in achieving the implementation of the guidelines by national statistical offices.
