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**INDICATORS, CRIME AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Supporting Paper**

Submitted by UNODC\*

**INTRODUCTION**

A large amount of literature already exists on the measurement of violence against women through the use of specialised surveys that seek information from women concerning their experience of violence. Such surveys recognise the fact that violence against women has underlying social and cultural complexities and that many women subject to violence are in hard-to-reach populations such as educational or custodial institutions, armed conflict settings or traditional communities. Obtaining accurate reporting of experience of violence from such groups in a survey interview situation can be an extremely sensitive task. Such groups are even less likely to report victimisation to State authorities.

Nonetheless, at the same time, all forms of violence against women are (or should) be a crime in a national law and this should not be forgotten in the process of measuring violence against women and in indicator development. Indeed, the criminal justice response to violence against women is arguably an important aspect of any violence against women indicator set. This paper sets out issues associated with indicator development, with a focus on the links between violence against women and methodologies employed in the measurement of crime statistics and trends. It advocates strengthening the links between any indicator set for violence against women and the developing work in crime trend assessment and monitoring.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CONVENTIONAL CRIME INDICATORS**

For the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the need for better data and improved national data collection capacity is paramount.<sup>1</sup> The existence of indicators can play a key part in this process. While the term itself frequently has different meanings within different contexts, at its core, an indicator simply provides a common way of measuring and presenting information. The recent work of

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<sup>1</sup> Commission on Narcotic Drugs and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, "Strategy for the period 2008-2011 f

UNODC has focussed on the identification of core indicators for conventional crime and the development of indicators for complex crime, including transnational organized crime, corruption and trafficking in persons.<sup>2</sup> Such an endeavour requires the development of appropriate definitions for data collection purposes and the selection of the most important facets of each crime. As at the date of writing, the Policy and Analysis Research Branch of UNODC is in the process of devising such indicators.

The development of indicators for violence against women represents a closely related but distinct challenge to that of crime indicators.

In the case of conventional crime indicators, the population of interest (whether incidents, perpetrators, or victims) is self-defined in the sense that the act is called a crime in law. This law is usually domestic and includes actions such as homicide, assault, rape, robbery, theft, automobile theft, burglary, fraud, bribery and drug-related crimes. The challenge at the international level is to identify actions that are commonly criminalised and to collect data on the number of incidents, usually together with the number of perpetrators, over a certain time period from administrative statistics.<sup>3</sup> The periodic United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (CTS) administered by UNODC is based on this approach.<sup>4</sup> Indicators that could be generated from the CTS derive from the number of police recorded crimes during one year and could include, for example, the yearly number of reported rapes per 100,000 population.

Data on the number of acts and on the number of victims can also be collected through the use of victim surveys, such as surveys based on the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS). Information from crime victim surveys can include both the proportion of persons who have suffered a crime in a defined period (the prevalence) and the number of criminal acts experienced by victims during that same period (the incidence). Crime victim surveys may include questions both on acts that are criminal in domestic law and on acts that are not.

When it comes to violence against women, the object is to measure a phenomenon that is not “self-defined” in the sense of a criminal act, but rather consists of a range of actions that may cause harm or suffering to women. Whilst a significant proportion of such actions are likely to be caught by laws on homicide, assault, sexual assault and rape, it is difficult to be confident that all violent actions<sup>5</sup> will constitute crimes under the national law of any given country. As set out in the *In-depth study of the Secretary General on all forms of violence against women*, forms of gender-based violence include sexual harassment, trafficking in women, and marital rape.<sup>6</sup> Such actions are not criminal offences in a number of countries and hence remain undetected in administrative crime statistics. In addition, other forms of violence may be perpetrated or condoned by the State, as in the case of forced sterilisation or violence perpetrated by police officers or prison guards. As a result, neither administrative crime statistics nor general crime victim surveys are easily able to capture the entire range of violence against women.

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<sup>2</sup> Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, “World crime trends and responses: integration and coordination of efforts by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by Member States in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice”, UN Doc. E/CN.15/2007/2, 22 January 2007, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> A number of notable exceptions exist, such as trafficking in persons, where the crime is well defined at the international level (by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in the case of trafficking in persons) but may not necessarily be criminalized in the same manner, or at all, in national law.

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime\\_survey\\_tenth.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_survey_tenth.html)

<sup>5</sup> See for example General Assembly Resolution 48/104: “Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

<sup>6</sup> United Nations General Assembly. “In-depth study on all forms of violence against women, Report of the Secretary General”, UN Doc. A/61/122/Add.1, 6 July 2006.

Moreover, whereas crime indicators in general are concerned mainly with the numbers of crimes committed, indicators for violence against women have been called upon to meet wider demands, in line with the fact that violence against women is a human rights violation in and of itself.<sup>7</sup> Proposals for violence against women indicators include, for example, identification of risk factors associated with violence against women, services for victims, and measurement of public attitudes and perceptions concerning violence.<sup>8</sup>

The most widespread way of collecting such information to date has been through the use of specialised surveys and modules to general surveys that seek information from women concerning their experience of violence. Such surveys, including the *WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*<sup>9</sup> and the *International Violence against Women Study*<sup>10</sup> have generated a wealth of information, much of which is suitable for inclusion in a set of indicators for violence against women. However, administrative crime statistics and general victim surveys also have much to contribute to an indicator set.

Insofar as specialised violence surveys focus on violence experienced by the respondent, they do not capture homicide as a form of violence against women. Whilst this data may be found in the police recorded crime statistics of some countries, the gender of homicide victims is frequently not available. One alternative possible source of such data is public health statistics. The WHO causes of death database, for example, contains data on death by homicide and purposely inflicted injury disaggregated by gender.<sup>11</sup> Administrative statistics may also be used to provide relevant information about the system *response* to crime. Thus, whilst such comparisons must be made with caution, it is, in principle, possible to compare the number of recorded crimes (rape, for example) with the number of persons suspected, prosecuted and convicted for that crime; a comparison often known as the "attrition rate". ctedosn25o2.5a

The remainder of this paper examines the issues associated with indicator development for violence against women. It does so, in particular, with respect to the experience of the United Nations CTS and crime victim surveys.

### **ISSUES FOR INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT**

As discussed above, the complex nature of the phenomenon of violence against women carries with it a number of significant challenges for indicator development that are over and above those encountered with crime indicators in general.

These challenges, both conceptual and methodological in nature, have been well documented in the literature. Key issues include:<sup>12</sup>

1. What basic elements should be measured; (i) whether outcomes for women themselves, (ii) societal attitudes and perceptions, (iii) policy responses or (iv) State justice and welfare system responses;
- 2.



contain classifications of different forms of violence. The tenth CTS, for instance, defines assault as “*physical attack against the body of another person, including battery but excluding indecent assault*”.<sup>15</sup> Respondents are asked to indicate whether data on police recorded assault includes “*slapping and/or punching*” and also to provide separate figures, along with a definition, of aggravated/major assault (as distinguished from simple assault) where such a separate crime exists in national law. The CTS also requests data on police recorded rape (defined as “*sexual intercourse without valid consent*”) and human trafficking (defined as per the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime).<sup>16</sup>

The tenth CTS also introduces, for the first time, an annex requesting further details on police recorded homicide. This includes the request for information disaggregated by homicide related to “*intimate/proximity*”, “*family*” and



- § On the whole, were you satisfied with the way that the police dealt with the matter?
- § For what reason were you dissatisfied? [Police didn't do enough, were not interested, didn't find or apprehend the offender, didn't keep me properly informed, didn't treat me correctly/were impolite, slow to arrive, other reasons]

While satisfaction with the police response to reporting is important, ease of measurement and presentation may require that the reporting indicator be limited only to the fact of reporting or not. That said, two exceptions might be considered as sub-indicators.

Firstly, a sub-indicator on secondary victimisation by State authorities following reporting could be included. This would be expressed as the proportion of women who, having reported an act of violence to any State authority (police, health or social welfare systems) experienced further violence (by type) at the hands of State authorities. Such events may occur for example, where victims are further abused by a police officer or other service provider. Such victimisation is likely to exacerbate existing psychological distress and delay recovery from the initial trauma. Secondary victimisation by service providers is a major preventable form of harm to the victim and its elimination should be a priority for all professionals working with victims of gender-based violence.

Secondly, by way of measurement of the criminal justice response to reported acts of violence against women, a sub-indicator on the proportion of reported acts leading to resolution might also be considered. The tenth CTS, for example, while it does not collect information on the gender of homicide victims, includes a new homicide annex that requests information on the "*percentage of cases solved*".<sup>20</sup> Although few States may be able to provide this information in practice, the question nonetheless increases international focus on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. In the same way, an indicator on percentage of reported cases of violence against women resolved may assist in building momentum for technical assistance to States in the development of relevant criminal justice information systems.

**Impact of violence.** As noted above, any set of indicators should make a distinction between the nature of the event and the particular impact upon a victim. Whilst this paper includes this element within the quantitative indicators section, the impact upon a victim remains a particularly subjective issue. Nonetheless, specialised surveys on violence against women have attempted to probe this area through structured questions. The questionnaire used by the International Violence against Women Survey, for instance, included the questions:

- § Did you feel that your life was in danger (during this incident?)
- § Were you physically injured?
- § What were your injuries? [bruises, cuts/scratches/burns, fractures, head or brain injury, broken bones, broken nose, internal injuries, miscarriage, genital injury, other]
- § Were you injured so badly that you needed medical care?
- § Have you ever used alcohol or medication to help you cope with this experience?
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## METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND A POSSIBLE INDICATOR SET

As discussed in this paper, a set of indicators for violence against women should, in addition to capturing the nature and extent of the phenomenon as accurately and clearly as possible, aim to relate well to the developing work in crime trend assessment and monitoring. As a result, the indicators chosen and the definitions employed should aim, so far as possible, to make use of all currently available information, including that collected by the United Nations CTS, by the use of the standard CVS questionnaire, and through specialised violence against women surveys and modules.

In addition to the elements described above, a set of indicators for violence against women should take account of the differing experience of women by age and geographical location within a country. Where data is derived from crime victim surveys or specialised violence against women surveys, samples should ideally be stratified by age group. Sampling may also be stratified by urban/rural or clustered in geographic locations within a country. In addition, in order to capture less visible groups of women who may be subject to higher levels of violence than captured by a household survey (women in refugee camps for example), sampling should, where possible, also be carried out in these locations. Such locations should be treated as a separate strata from the household survey for the purposes of calculation of the mean overall level of violence (by type of event) and the assignment of confidence intervals.

A particularly vulnerable group often overlooked is women in the criminal justice system, particularly those detained in pre-sentence detention. Such women may be subject to particularly high degrees of violence from prison guards, other prisoners, or police officers. A UNODC study of female prisoners and their social reintegration in Afghanistan found that 14 percent of female prisoners interviewed volunteered information that they had been beaten by the police and/or investigator after their arrest. Others also alleged sexual abuse during transfer to detention.<sup>21</sup> While detection of such violence may prove extremely difficult through survey methodology, it is important that, where possible, violence against women indicators include information collected from such groups.

Where police recorded crime data is available, the rate of victim reporting to police from crime victim surveys can be used to provide an estimate for the true rate, or to cross-check results from specialised violence surveys themselves. In addition, reliable demographic data is important when deriving information from household surveys. Particularly where information about violence is presented “per 100,000 women”, it is crucial that the population figure used in the calculation is accurate. Where data is disaggregated by age or geographic location, the challenge becomes even greater.

With the points discussed in this paper in mind, a possible set of five indicators for violence against women are suggested below. These include two qualitative indicators; “*attitudes and perceptions of violence*” and “*preventative measures*” and two quantitative indicators; “*number of women per 100,000 women experiencing at least one event of [eight categories of violence] during the last year*”, and “*number of women per 100,000 experiencing at least one violent event perpetrated by [five categories of perpetrator] during the last year*”. The set of indicators is not intended to be definitive but rather

**UNODC proposed violence against women indicators**

	<b>Definition of Indicator</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
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