

**Meeting of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations  
Statistical Commission on Statistical Indicators on  
Violence against Women  
9 - 11 December 2009  
Aguascalientes, Mexico**

**Proposed draft outline for the Guidelines for Producing Statistics on  
Violence against Women, Part I: Statistical Survey<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Issued without formal editing.

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## **Introduction**

1. The introduction elaborates on current initiatives within the United Nations in relation to the phenomenon of violence against women. The series of General Assembly resolutions condemning violence against women and urging member states to undertake urgent and comprehensive actions to eradicate these practices will provide the major background. The United Nations Secretary-General campaign – UNITE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – will also be specifically outlined as one of the substantive rationale for focusing on the quantification of this phenomenon.
2. Essentially, the introduction revolves around the fact that there is a clear and unambiguous need to develop international statistical standards for measuring violence against women as the current situation warrants such an effort. This necessity is outlined by the reports of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations Statistical Commission for Statistical Indicators on Violence against Women, especially from the meeting held in Aguascalientes, Mexico, from 9 – 11 December 2009, hosted by Mexico and the chair of the Friends of the Chair group and United Nations Statistics Division as the secretariat of the Friends of the Chair group (here the findings and conclusions and recommendations from the Mexico meeting relevant to the development of this guidelines will be incorporated).
3. The introduction will also elaborate on different sources of statistics on violence against women – population surveys, administrative records, records of “safe houses” and other arrangements protecting women victims of violence. Within this framework this first volume will focus on statistical population surveys as one of the most suitable vehicle for quantifying this phenomenon. Subsequent volumes will be dedicated to other sources of statistics on violence against women.
4. Finally, the introduction will call on all national statistical authorities to apply these guidelines in collecting, processing, disseminating and analyzing data on violence against women.

### **1. Chapter I: Essential role of the statistical surveys of violence against women**

5. The first chapter elaborates on the role that the statistical surveys on violence against women have within the framework of national statistical systems in terms of collecting and processing statistics on a very peculiar social phenomenon, thus having direct positive impact on national statistical capacities in general, and on gender statistics development in particular.

6. It is of crucial importance to provide an accurate and reliable scope of violence against women in contemporary societies. This is a sine qua non for any effective policy that needs to be developed for eradicating these practices. Without the full understanding of the scope and characteristics of violence perpetrated against women it would not be possible to design appropriate instruments at any level of the government to properly address and eradicate such behavior. Public administration needs statistics as a critical reference to develop educational campaigns, identify target population and undertake other activities as outlined in international recommendations for combating violence against women.
7. Statistics generated by statistical surveys on violence against women are critical benchmarks for research and analysis of social phenomena. Assessing the prevalence and the incidence of violence against women is certain to initiate a number of calls for stopping it at all levels of society; having a solid and robust statistics to document these unacceptable practices represents a crucial element for such activities.

## **2. Chapter II: Definition and essential features of statistical surveys on violence against women**

8. Statistical sample surveys are, together with population and housing censuses, major source of demographic and social statistics. A sample survey is defined as statistical data collection on a certain topic from a representative sample of population/households within well defined boundaries. Topics of these surveys range from education, demography, health, employment, time-use, consumption, income, poverty, to name a few.
9. Compared to the two other sources of statistics – censuses and administrative records – statistical sample surveys have the advantage of being less costly; more flexible in terms of the depth of investigation of certain topic – survey instruments can accommodate larger number of more detailed questions; producing statistics of better quality as a consequence of the fact that interviewers can be better trained and prepared compared to census enumerators. The major disadvantage is the lack of the capacity of a sample survey to generate small area statistics.
10. General features of any statistical sample surveys refer to the fact that the sample has to be selected in stages, the design must be stratified to ensure proper representation in terms of geographical areas and population groups and the sample plan has to use clusters – geographically defined – to reduce costs. In addition, the sample frame must be as complete as possible and the design has to allow for computation of sampling errors indicating the level of reliability of results.

11. In addition to these general features, statistical surveys on violence against women have to put a special emphasis on several particular components. The first is the confidentiality of individual replies. While the confidentiality in statistical terms is major requirement for all statistical data collection exercises as per the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, it resonates particularly strongly in the case of violence against women, taking into account the sensitivity of the issue.
12. Another peculiar feature of statistical surveys on violence against women refers to safety of the respondents and ethical behavior of interviewers and statisticians involved with data gathering and processing of individual records. A broader elaboration of these issues is provided in the chapter on execution of statistical surveys on violence against women.

### **3. Chapter III: Planning, organization and execution of statistical surveys on violence against women**

13. Despite the idiosyncratic content of statistical surveys on violence against women in terms of planning, organization and execution they should follow the general principles and rules guiding all the other statistical surveys in the national statistical system. Therefore, this chapter will briefly elaborate on components that are common to all other surveys and will focus much more on issues unique to the success of violence against women surveys.
14. Preparatory process for all the surveys consists of the following components:
  - a. Legal basis – ensuring that the survey is part of the national statistical framework and that it is specifically mentioned in the statistical legislation. The legality of the survey represents a powerful argument for both respondents and interviewers as it provides assurance in terms of the confidentiality of data and the protection of respondents.
  - b. Funding – in the preparatory phase it is of crucial importance to ensure proper funding that will allow for an adequate sample size. The calculation should be based on previous surveys and should include processes for budget and cost control.
  - c. User consultations are particularly important for the success of the surveys on violence against women. The pool of stakeholders should be as broad as possible, covering a range of interested users coming from the government, media, advocacy coordinators, academia and so forth. The consultation process needs to start well in advance of the survey itself and needs to include the overarching publicity in all media to set the stage for the data collection exercise itself and to ensure the objectives of the survey are

disseminated to the population at large. In that respect an appropriate allocation of funds for the media campaign should be incorporated in the funding plan from the very beginning.

15. Development of survey design is of particular importance for the success of surveys on violence against women. National experience with these surveys indicate that the occurrence and severity of violence against women vary significantly depending on the age, education, employment status, marital status and place of residence (urban/rural) of women exposed to different types of violence. This is equally true for the minority groups and indigenous women as well. Consequently, the initial design planning, that is the survey structure, population coverage, sampling procedures and data-collection methods has to be developed in such a manner to enable for assessing of the type, frequency and perpetrators of violence based on the different characteristics of the victims. A survey design that is not broad and detailed enough in terms of representation of different sub-groups of female population will fall short of the initial goal.
16. Consequently, this part of the chapter will elaborate in more details on different national experience in sample design, outlining the good practices that provided for maximum information on different categories of women exposed to violence. However, in most cases the sampling did not provide for reliable extrapolation to the entire female population by relevant characteristics beyond the age of the victim. Consequently, this part on sampling needs to be elaborated in detailed manner in order to emphasize the importance of extended samples that would provide much more accurate portraits of victims of violence against women.
17. Design of the questionnaire for the statistical survey on violence against women is of particular importance. If inadequately designed, it may result in the unwillingness of the respondent to cooperate. To that extent, the phrasing of the questions needs to be adapted to national circumstances in terms of culturally acceptable and easily recognizable wording.
18. The sequence of the questions in the questionnaire represents another important topic for elaboration. Based on national and international experiences in that respect the guidelines should include description of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. What is the advantage of having questions regarding violence suffered from an intimate partner first and then turn to the violence perpetrated by others? Should questions on physical violence come first? Or should the first questions refer to sexual violence? All of these issues should be illustrated by examples from national and international surveys already undertaken, outlining the best practices.

19. Mode of data collection and its impact on the quality of data as well as on the levels of non-response rates will be elaborated next as they are indeed of particular concern for survey on violence against women. If the mode of choice is the face-to-face interview specific attention is required regarding the most appropriate time of the day for such an interview that would minimize any negative impact on the responding woman for having a conversation with a “stranger”, for example. Also, the setting itself has to be carefully chosen so as not to expose the woman to further questions and possible reprisals. Certainly the advantage of this mode of data collection referring to better opportunity for fostering the woman to divulge what is sometimes very private and painful experience needs to be elaborated. Telephone interview would depend on the availability of telephone lines in the country, although the ready availability of mobile telephones significantly increases the feasibility of this approach; however, again a number of circumstances – time of the day, for example – needs to be further taken into consideration. Self-administered mode of data collection, referring to the respondent filling the questionnaire that is usually delivered by mail, might be somewhat suitable, as experiences in several countries that applied this mode for violence against women survey illustrate – certainly this approach is highly dependent on the level of literacy of the population, whether literacy in conventional terms, in case questionnaires are dispatched by mail, or computer literacy in the case of web-based questionnaires.
20. Pre-testing is a routinely conducted activity in the preparatory phase for statistical surveys. For this specific survey pre-testing has an added significance as this topic would be, in most cases, a first-time attempt to quantify such a phenomenon. Henceforth, the testing of the questionnaire, including the wording of the questions, their sequence and the data collection mode require a scrupulous testing in as broad and diversified environment as possible. It can be expected that the pre-testing will yield results in such a way that their analysis could significantly revise the survey instruments, questionnaires as well as training materials.
21. This is especially true in terms of assessing, during the pre-testing, the time needed to complete the survey. By playing out different scenarios, i.e. whether the respondent reported not to be exposed to any violence whatsoever or was brutalized on a daily basis, the pre-test has to provide clear indication regarding the average time needed to complete the survey (depending on the mode of data collection) as this will have, in real life, a major impact on the success of the survey and the accuracy of responses.
22. In light of this particular topic special care has to be dedicated to the development and the preparation of instructional and training materials for field use. On top of incorporating the results of the pre-testing and the accompanying analysis, these manuals have to provide unambiguous

guidance to the enumerators in terms of handling difficult situations and guiding the respondent to be forthcoming and at ease in providing answers to questions. For example, it should be clearly stated that only one woman per household should be interviewed since if the content of the survey becomes known to other household member it may also reach the perpetrator and only initiate and/or aggravate the violence.

23. As for field operations component of the execution of the survey on violence against women, in general it would not differ significantly from other statistical surveys within the national statistical system. This is true for the training of field supervisors, with the caveat that they need to undergo a much more in-depth substantive training under the assumption that they would coordinate a survey on this topic for the first time.
24. However, for the selection and training of interviewers there need to be a detailed elaboration of pertinent issues in this chapter. Based on the experiences with already conducted surveys it is very likely that the regular interviewers used for other surveys would not necessarily be feasible for the survey on violence against women, especially male interviewers. That raises the need to select a different pool of candidates for interviewers and to undertake a separate selection process – it is unlikely that the respondents would be willing to cooperate if the interviewer is a male and especially if it is a male previously known to the woman called to participate in this survey. Of course, differences due to the mode of data collection have also to be taken into account – if the mode of choice is by telephone, the gender of the interviewer might not be of consequence as there is no physical contact. However, if it is face-to-face interview, then the interviewer's gender would be of paramount concern.
25. Once the selection of interviewers is accomplished they need to be subjected to rigorous training. The violence against women survey carries, in terms of execution, a whole set of ethic issues that need to be clearly and minutely elaborated. For example, should the interviewer report to the authorities (police, local authorities) individual cases of repeated and severe violence that she learned about during the completion of the survey? If official statistics rules forbid disclosing any individual information collected for statistical purposes, as is the case in all national statistical systems, how should the interviewer best cope with the fact the she witnessed abused woman but is helpless in providing any support? Should interviewer provide advice and information about safe houses and other protective mechanisms, included the location of the nearest police station, to the respondent and point her in these directions?
26. Certainly one of the major concerns is to protect the respondent from exposure to violence as a result of conducting the survey. The training of the interviewers has to be meticulous and to

27. Confidentiality is of paramount importance. Interviewers have to be trained to the highest possible level not to jeopardize and compromise the confidentiality of the collected replies. They have to be clearly instructed not to comment on any of the work done regarding the survey and to be acutely aware of the consequences of breach of confidentiality. This also refers to the protection of questionnaires and their safekeeping before being submitted to field supervisors.
28. The data collection phase itself has to include carefully developed quality control mechanisms. This primarily refers to very closely monitoring and supervising interviewers that document far more or far less violent events than other interviewers in similar settings and areas. This may indicate either a very lax or overzealous approach to interviewing. Taking into consideration that just talking about the experience of violence is a tremendous hardship and emotional burden to the respondent an early removal of such interviewer or implementing corrective measure is necessary.
29. Coding of the answers in collected questionnaires is a routine operation. In the case of violence against women surveys, and especially if the coding is done at regional offices, it is necessary to avoid any mention or identification of the respondent in the questionnaire. Instead, all questionnaires should carry only a code and the codebooks identifying the respondent by name, household and residence should be kept separately and with a very limited access by only the supervisor of the survey.
30. Data entry for this survey will follow the routine procedure as for other surveys within the national statistical system. Once the data are stored in electronic format they need to be subjected to quality control by a set of editing routines – again a fairly typical operation within the statistical data exercises.
31. Data processing, including producing tabulations (see Annex I) has to adhere to the usual protocols and quality control check-ups. It is important that the aggregation of statistics in the tabulations is at such a level that it makes identifying individual women impossible.
32. In the analytical phase of the survey it is necessary to incorporate the work on computing sampling and non-sampling errors, thus providing an indication regarding the level of confidence of the results.



#### **4. Chapter IV: Unit of enumeration, definitions and topics of statistical surveys on violence against women**

33. The unit of enumeration for the survey on violence against women is, of course, a woman of certain age. It is critically important to apply the recommendation that all national surveys should include girls and women age 15 and over as potential respondents for the survey. While it is doubtless that girls younger than 15 years of age are often subjected to violence from intimate partners and strangers alike, extending the coverage to lower age can have adverse effects on the quality of survey results. Namely, physical violence can be inflicted upon children by their parents, as a disciplinary measure. Lowering the age limit would blur the violence inflicted upon women that is due to gender stereotypes and abuse by men, on one hand, and the violence inflicted by parents or siblings or playmates, on the other.
34. These guidelines identify two main classes of topics for the survey on violence against women. The first is a set of core topics, that is, the topics that are recommended for inclusion in all national dedicated survey on violence against women. The second is the set of non-core topics, i.e. additional topics that would improve the value of the collected information.
35. Core topics or variables are as follows:
- a. For woman subjected to violence:
    - i. Age
    - ii. Marital status
    - iii. Educational attainment
    - iv. Activity status
    - v. Place of usual residence (urban/rural)
  
  - b. For violence experienced by woman
    - i. Type of violence
    - ii. Severity
    - iii. Frequency
  
  - c. For perpetrator
    - i. Relationship to the victim
36. Definitions of the core topics are displayed below:

37. **Age** is the interval of time between the date of birth and the date of the survey, expressed in completed solar years. Every effort should be made to ascertain the exact age of each respondent.
38. **Marital status** is the personal status of each individual in relation to the marriage laws or customs of the country.
39. **Educational attainment** is defined as the highest grade completed within the most advanced level attended in the educational system of the country where the education was received. Some countries also may find it useful to present data on educational attainment in terms of the highest grade attended. If required, data on educational attainment can take into account education and training received in all types of organized educational institutions and programmes, particularly those measurable in terms of grade and level of education or their equivalent, such as programmes in adult education, even if the education and training were provided outside of the regular school and university system.
40. **Activity status** of a person is determined over a short reference period such as a week or a day in terms of being economically active (employed or unemployed or economically inactive).
41. **Place of usual residence** is a place at which the respondent has lived continuously for most of the last twelve months, or where she intends to live for at least six months.
42. **Type of violence** refers to violent acts experienced by woman. Conducted surveys document that the most effective approach is to avoid general definitions of violence and that the framing of the questions should concentrate on specific acts. Consequently, physical violence is an act that inflicts physical harm.
- a. Moderate physical violence consist of the following categories that did not result in bruises, cuts, broken bones or need for medical treatment or hospitalization:
- i. Hit with something
  - ii. Kicked, bit or hit
  - iii. Slapped
  - iv. Pushed, grabbed, shoved
  - v. Threatened to hit
  - vi. Other

b. Severe physical violence consist of the first four categories listed above that resulted in bruises, cuts, broken bones or need for medical treatment or hospitalization, plus several other categories:

- i. Hit with something with aggravated consequences
- ii. Kicked, bit or hit with aggravated consequences
- iii. Slapped with aggravated consequences
- iv. Pushed, grabbed, shoved with aggravated consequences
- v. Beat
- vi. Chocked
- vii. Threatened with knife, gun, other weapon
- viii. Assaulted with knife, gun, other weapon
- ix. Other

43. A different way of presenting the type and severity of physical violence is shown in the matrix below:

	Without aggravated consequences - no bruises, cuts, broken bones, need for medical assistance or hospitalization	Aggravated consequences – bruises, cuts, broken bones, need for medical assistance or hospitalization
Hit with something	M	S
Kicked, bit or hit	M	S
Slapped	M	S
Pushed, grabbed, shoved	M	S
Threatened to hit	M	NA
Beat	S	S
Chocked	S	S
Threatened with knife, gun, other weapon	S	NA
Assaulted with knife, gun, other weapon	NA	S
Other	M	S
<b>Legend:</b> M – moderate S – severe NA – not applicable		

a. **Sexual violence** refers to a number of acts of abusive sexual contact, of forcing engagement in a sexual act and of attempting or completing sexual acts with a woman against her consent. The modalities are as follows:

- i. Non-consented intimate touching
- ii. Sexual harassment  
*Sexual harassment consist of threats of suffering negative consequences in the workplace/ school; sexual insinuations or proposals in exchange for improvement in the workplace/school; repercussion for rejecting those advancements*
- iii. Sexual acts forced by money
- iv. Threat of using physical violence
- v. Threat to the wellbeing of family member(s)
- vi. Forcing to perform undesired sexual acts or performing any sexual activity that the female partner finds degrading or humiliating
- vii. Forced sexual intercourse (rape)
- viii. Use of physical violence to have sexual intercourse (aggravated rape)

44. **Frequency** of violent acts refers to the number of occurrences (1,2,3,4, ...) of violence in the past twelve months or during woman's lifetime. The definition of lifetime actually should refer to the lifetime after 15 years of age, to be consistent with the concepts of the unit of enumeration (see above, paragraph 32).

45. **Relationship to the perpetrator** refers to the following:

- i. Current intimate partner – a current intimate partner is a person with whom a woman maintains a sexual relationship either in a formal way ( a marriage) or by agreed cohabiting relationship, excluding occasional or sporadic dating
- ii. Immediate former intimate partner – the last former intimate partner is a person with whom a woman maintained a sexual relationship either in a formal way ( a marriage) or by agreed cohabiting relationship, excluding occasional or sporadic dating
- iii. Former intimate partner (other than immediate) – a former intimate partner is a person with whom a woman maintained a sexual relationship either in a formal way ( a marriage) or by agreed cohabiting relationship, excluding occasional or sporadic dating
- iv. Relative – a relative is a person within the immediate or extended family, such as sons, daughters, parents, brothers, sisters or other relatives
- v. Acquaintances, friends from community – refers to persons that belong to a same circle of friends from a community, including occasional or sporadic dating (neighborhood, village)

- vi. Supervisors, co-workers – refer to persons from the workplace
- vii. Teachers, school officials, schoolmates – persons from educational institution
- viii. Civil and military authority – any officer or civil servant in his capacity as representative of civil and/or military authorities
- ix. Stranger – a person unknown before committing violence

46. The non-core topics are those variables that will significantly enrich the overall results of the survey. The list includes:

- a. For women subjected to violence
  - i. Ethnicity
  - ii. Religion
  - iii. Language
  - iv. Citizenship
  - v. Literacy
  - vi. Age at first marriage or co-habitation
  - vii. Income
  - viii. Childhood experience with domestic violence
  - ix. Substance abuse
  
- b. For violence experienced by woman
  - i. Psychological violence
  - ii. Economic violence
  - iii. Stalking
  - iv. Forced marriage
  - v. Discrimination and economic violence at work
  - vi. Financial abuse
  
- c. For perpetrator
  - i. Age
  - ii. Substance abuse
  - iii. Childhood experience with domestic violence
  - iv. Activity status
  - v. Educational attainment

## Annex I. Tabulations

47. This part of the guidelines features a list and outlays of recommended tabulations that should be produced by all national surveys on violence against women, followed by a list and outlays of additional tabulations that producers might consider to generate out of the survey. Below is an example of the recommended tabulation:

Table 1. Women subjected to physical violence in the past 12 months by severity of violence and relationship to perpetrator

	Total	Relationship to the perpetrator							
		Current intimate partner	Immediate former intimate partner	Former intimate partner (other than immediate)	Relative	Acquaintance	Co-worker	Teachers, school officials, schoolmates	Civil/military authorities
Total									
Hit with something									
Moderate									
Severe									
Kick, bit or hit									
Moderate									
Severe									
...									

## Annex II. Topics and framing of the questions

48. This annex will present concrete examples of questions used in different national and international surveys on violence against women in relation to the core and non-core topics. For example:

- a. Core topic: Physical violence
- b. Question used in Mexico's Survey ...
- c. Question used in US Survey ...
- d. ....

## Annex III. Examples of questionnaires

49. This final annex will present a collection of questionnaires used nationally and internationally, thus providing a comprehensive knowledge base for statisticians in national statistical offices in developing their own instruments.

**Literature:**

*Analysis of national surveys carried out by the countries of the CES to measure violence against women*, ECE/CES/GE.30/2006/6, United Nations, 2006

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