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Methodological proposal as an approach to measuring violence against women in Argentina

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Abstract

One of the indicators to measure the prevalence of different forms of violence against women (physical, sexual and psychological violence)¹ is the proportion of cases of violence against women of a certain age, by form of violence and by age.

We know that the sources to obtain an estimation of violence prevalence are national surveys dedicated to measuring violence against women and another type of surveys that include a module of questions about the experiences of violence against women.

The administrative data from health, police, courts, justice and social services, among other services used by "victims" of violence, can provide some information on violence against women and girls too.

¹

Physical violence consists of acts aimed at physically hurting the victim and include, but are not limited to, pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling the hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with the fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose, or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife.

Sexual violence is defined as any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behavior that is imposed on someone. It includes acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts without consent, incest, sexual harassment, etc. In intimate partner relationships, experiencing sexual violence is commonly defined as being forced to have sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse out of fear for what the partner might do, and/or being forced to do something sexual that the woman considers humiliating or degrading.

Psychological violence includes a range of behaviors that encompass acts of emotional abuse and controlling behavior. These often coexist with acts of physical and sexual violence by intimate partners and are acts of violence in themselves (<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/metadata-compilation/>).

Argentina is developing a national register of cases of violence against women from the information provided by several national, provincial and local agencies.

The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), that is the leading agency of the National Statistical System - Sistema Estadístico Nacional (SEN, in Spanish), and the National Women's Council (Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres (CNM, in Spanish) signed an agreement to design the National Register of Cases of Violence against Women-Registro Único de Casos de Violencia contra las Mujeres (RUCVM, in Spanish) in the framework of the National Law Number 26485/2009 "Comprehensive Protection Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in the areas where they are developing their interpersonal relations".

Each agency or institution, like the different police departments or judiciary institutions, for example, are committed to the issue on violence against women has been developing a particular procedure of registration and a methodology of data collection, in order to optimize their management. Usually, each institution uses its own form or questionnaire to identify certain socio-demographic attributes of every woman that has suffered certain type of violence.

The National Register of Cases of Violence against Women centralizes and systematizes information available in administrative records in order to design indicators which must be conceptually and methodologically harmonized. This last information contributes as an input for public policy design with the purpose of modifying the scenario of violence based on gender within the framework of the National Law Number 26485/2009.

Violence against women based on gender reflects remnants of patriarchal concepts that define hierarchical structures between men and women, and manifests in asymmetrical power relations that subordinate women, placing them in an inferior position. Enshrining inequality Patriarchy, this tending to naturalize inferiority of a gender over the other, this ending up in legitimizing abuse suffered by women (National Council of Women, 2016).

Our contribution is to introduce the operational characteristics of the registration procedure; the conceptual and methodological challenges about whom we are working to provide statistical information having national coverage.

1. Introduction

The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), is the leading agency of the National Statistical System (SEN), and the National Women's Council (CNM) have signed an agreement to design the National Register of Cases of Violence against Women (RUCVM) within the framework of the

National Law 26485 of 2009 " Integral Protection Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in areas where they develop their interpersonal relationships." ²

Each institution committed to the issue of violence against women has been developing a particular form of registration and methodology for data collection, in order to optimize their management.

As well as each institution using their own spreadsheet or form to record cases of violence and some socio-demographic attributes of the target population and sometimes records information of the offender.

They are administrative registers that can provide valuable information to the RUCVM, and we are trying to do this. We know that each kind of register yields different quality of information. If it's an emergency call where the woman's life is in danger, there are few possibilities of obtaining complete information. The best situation perhaps, is when the woman is in an office that treats women affected by gender violence offering her the time and ambiance that she may need to express herself freely. We need to bear in mind this reality when we are making the analysis on this topic.

On the other hand, it's necessary to remember that each institution has registries of different kinds: advice, answering inquiries, police reports, lawsuits, care assistance, medical care, emergency care, etc.

In order to highlight the difference we decided to transform the RUCVM in several registries with different kinds of information because we believe that in this way the record gains in identity and quality.

RUCVM still has not obtained national representation because many data receiving agencies are not contributing to our register.

As a consequence of this, we have decided to change the working mode, so as to manage with the Provincial Directions of Statistics (Direcciones Provinciales de Estadística, in Spanish), with whom we have signed agreements, and may be the receptors of information from their own jurisdiction in order to send it to the INDEC.

Having timely data and information on cases of violence against women is vital to characterize the problem and contribute to the design and implementation of public policies aimed at its eradication.

² <http://www.infoleg.gov.ar>

2. Legal Framework

As we have outlined the different problems regarding this topic, the National State has ratified international conventions and treaties adopted during the past decades. Among them are:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and ratified by Argentina in 1985. It was incorporated into the Constitution in 1994.
- The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, adopted in 1994 in Belem do Para by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) and incorporated into national law through Law 24.632 which was passed in 1996.
- The Rome Statute adopted in 1998 by the International Criminal Court of the United Nations Organization (UN), and approved as a national law through Law 25390 in the year 2001.

At the national level, Law 24,417 "Protection against domestic violence", which establishes precautionary measures to protect people in situations of domestic violence, was approved in 1994. This law was incorporated into all provincial laws during the decade of 1990.

National Law 26,485 " Integral Protection Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women" provides guiding principles, including: the adoption of measures to raise society's awareness by promoting values of equality and not to legitimize of violence against women, comprehensive and timely assistance to women suffering any violence assuring free, fast, transparent and efficient access to services created for this purpose, as well as the promotion of punishment and rehabilitation of those who exercise violence.

This law, in Article 4, "[...] meant by violence against women any behavior, action or omission that directly or indirectly, both in public and/or in private spheres, based on unequal power in the relationship, affecting life, liberty, dignity, physicality, psychology, sexuality, economic or patrimonial integrity, as well as their personal safety [...]].

In turn, it is necessary to implement records of situations of violence against women in an inter-jurisdictional way and contemplate the definition and calculation of basic indicators to be approved by all ministries and secretariats. It also necessary to develop a criterion for the selection of data, recording mode and dissemination of information.

In July 2016, the National Council of Women, an organization responsible for the design of public policies necessary to comply with the provisions of Law 26,485, presented the first National Plan of Action for the Prevention, Assistance and Eradication Violence against women (2017-2019).³

For the first time, our country has a strategic planning tool that gathers and systematizes policies, programs and initiatives for the whole territory. With a federal, transversal and interdisciplinary outlook, the Plan marks a common path to follow with protection standards, which aims to guarantee all women of Argentina access to quality public services.

The Register has twofold action aimed at prevention and comprehensive care for women in situations of domestic violence. It has three transverse axes aimed to train itself in gender perspective at all levels, a strong joint work and institutional coordination and permanent monitoring and evaluation of public policies.

3. Register of Cases of Violence against Women (RUCVM)

3.1 Objective

The Register of Cases of Violence against Women centralizes and systematizes information available in administrative records in order to design indicators, conceptual and methodologically harmonized as an input for the design of public policies to modify the scenario based on gender violence issues within the framework of the National Law 26485 / 2009.

Violence against women based on gender, encompasses women suffering—that by the mere fact of being women this reflecting the remnants of patriarchal concepts that define hierarchical structures between men and women, which manifest themselves in asymmetrical power relations.

3.2. Studied population

The RUCVM includes women who are 14 years old or older, victims of violence based on gender, which had made the reporting of the incident and / or have requested some assistance (from the judiciary, legal, health systems etc.) by themselves or by a third party (being a family member or not), to the national agencies.

³ While in 2015 the National Women's Council issued the document "Action Plan 2014-2016, "it did not meet the technical specifications that allow the development and evaluation of policies Public and its timing was out of date (National Council of Women, 2016).

3.3. Bodies involved RUCVM

National agencies that generate records on violence against women of the three branches (being these: executive, legislative and judicial branches) of the three jurisdictions (national, provincial and local) in the Argentine territory are those in condition to provide data to the RUCVM.

4. Administrative records as input to RUCVM

Administrative records make up a system for collecting data generated continuously or with an established frequency through the use of certain instruments to capture data such as spreadsheets, booklets, forms, cards, book of records, etc. which allow to know the characteristics of a given population.

Typically, the construction of an administrative record does not account for statistical purposes, but for the individual functions of each agency. Since the administrative records can be used for statistical purposes they must meet the criteria of construction of the indicators and analyze its conceptual and methodological basis.

Administrative records on violence against women consist of the data provided by the people who have made a complaint or request some type of help in different services under the mandate of the different Ministries such as hospitals, courts of law, to be assisted by police women, police forces, assistance centers, telephone services for the victim, among others.

In Argentina, this type of records is the only official source of information on violence against women, therefore it is essential that professionals, assistants, technicians, police forces and administrative work in such services understand the importance of filling the data collection instrument.

4.1 Quality Guidelines for filling administrative records

Given that the RUCVM is formed as a matrix of cases of women victims of violence made from pre-existing administrative records it is critical when filling the instrument of data acquisition that is applied by each agency, in compliance with the following quality guidelines:

- Instructions for completion: the instrument collection must be accompanied by instructions issued by each agency and they must be respected
- Completeness: All data acquisition instruments are important and should be properly completed.

- Internal consistency: the data recorded on the instrument must be logic with respect to one another.
- Accuracy: the recorded data must accurately reflect the features of the event. To this end, responsible for collecting they must register as faithfully as possible the responses reported by the victims or the complainant.
- Clarity: the person responsible for completion must register data clearly avoiding the use of abbreviations.

5. Method of data exchange

Administrative records on violence against women are inputs for the RUCVM to be transferred to INDEC only in a digital way.

In order to facilitate the information's transfer, INDEC has designed a "Digital card" which includes a set of variables (fields) and categories (in drop-down list) that make up the database of the RUCVM. "Digital Sheet" is given to organizations that require it with "Instructions for Use" and a personalized password to protect the confidentiality of the data.

The Digital Sheet is a tool that provides flexibility and efficiency to the process of transmission, reception and processing of data.

If the Digital sheet cannot be implemented, transferring files or databases can be done by sending:

- the original and complete basis
- database containing only the selected set of variables of the RUCVM

In both cases, once transferred is completed the file or database of each agency, then the INDEC analyzes it in order to align formally and conceptually variables and categories to the RUCVM. It is important to note that the different institutions transfer data but not processed information.

In this analysis's process, called homogenization and consistency, the INDEC is committed to:

- Respect the rules of security.

- Ensuring the confidentiality's information (Law 17.622 about statistical confidentiality).
- To keep in touch with the institutions that provides information as well as its technical staff.
- To assure thru time the RUCUVM's final quality output.

The centralized information in a single database allows the treatment of conditions such the identified duplication cases. For this, the INDEC is planning the implementation of an internal identification code that will differentiate cases during the statistical process.

6. Variables that make up the RUCVM's database

6.1. Variables presentation

Below is presented a table with selected variables that make up the RUCVM's database, grouped in three sets as follows:

Set of variables	Variables
a. Identification of the administrative record	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification code 2. Id. Card Type 3. Info Supplier Institution 4. Institutional route 5. Register Type 6. Date of Attention / Complaint 7. Date of aggression occurrence 8. Schedule aggression 9. Presence of minors

b. Victim Information	10. Sex 11. Gender identity 12. Birthdate 13. Age 14. Residence place 15. Educational level 16. Employment situation 17. Another situation 18. Number of offender 19. Relationship with offender 20. Cohabitation with offender 21. Type of violence 22. Violence Mode 23. Frequency of Violence 24. Illtreatment time
c. Offender Information	25. Sex 26. Gender identity 27. Age 28. Residence place 29. Educational level 30. Employment situation 31. Another situation

6.2 Conceptual definition of the variables included in the register

a. Identification of the administrative record

1. **Identification code:** each case is identified with a specific code result of a masking procedure (encrypted) the number of the identity of the victim.
2. **Id. Card Type:** It's the document that certifies the identity of the victim.
3. **Info Supplier Institution:** name of the institutions that provides care to the victim.
4. **Institutional route:** It's the institution or organization's name from which or to which the victim is derived.
5. **Register Type:** It refers to the type of administrative register that provides data on gender violence (emergency call, medical assistance, assistance, police complaint, police report, legal complaint, etc.).

6. Date of Attention / Complaint: day, month and year (dd / mm / yy) of the query

7. Date of aggression occurrence: it's the date in which the aggression took place (dd / mm / yyyy).

8. Schedule aggression: It's the hour or day's time slot in which the women was victim of gender violence.

9. Presence of minors: This variable refers if there were presence of children during the gender aggression.

b. Victim Information

10. Sex: It records the victim's sex.

11. Gender Identity: It records the victim's gender identity (transvestite, transsexual, another).

12. Birthdate: Must register day/month/year of birthday (dd/mm/yyyy)

13. Age: It records the victim's age in completed years

14. Residence Place: It records the residence place of the victim (state, district, city, and town).

15. Educational level: It records the highest educational level attained in a formal system education's establishment, public or private. It also includes whether or not the victim had completed the recorded educational level.

16. Employment Situation: The variable refers to the victim's insertion in the labor market, regardless of the employment conditions or whether they are employed formally or informally.

17. Another situation: It records other activities of the victim: student, retired, housewife, other

18. Number of offender: It records if the attack involved one or more people.

19. Relationship with offender: The variable shows the relationship's type between the victim and the offender. This is to link the relationship with respect to the victim.

20. Cohabitation with offender: It refers to whether the offender and the victim cohabit.

21. Type of violence: The categories correspond to the different types of violence who are established by Law 26,485, Article 5. The categories of this variable are not mutually exclusive, considering cases that may present more than one type of violence simultaneously. The categories are:

- **Physical violence:** It's used against the woman's body causing pain, injury or risk of producing it and any other form of abuse or aggression affecting their physical integrity.
- **Psychological Violence:** this kind of violence causes emotional damage and decreased self-esteem or hurts and disturbs full personal development or having an inner feeling of degradation or lack of control over their actions,, behaviors, beliefs and decisions by threats, harassment, restrictions, humiliation, disgrace, discredit, handling or isolation. Also includes scapegoat, constant vigilance, demand for obedience or submission, verbal coercion, persecution, insult, indifference, neglect, excessive jealousy, blackmail, mocking, exploitation and limitation of freedom of movement or any other means which would be harmful to their psychological health and self-determination.
- **Sexual violence:** It means any action involving the violation in all its forms, with or without genital access, the right of women to decide voluntarily about their sexual and reproductive lives through threats, coercion, use of force or intimidation, including rape within marriage or other attachment relationships or kinship, whether they cohabit or not, and forced prostitution, exploitation, slavery, harassment, sexual abuse and trafficking.
- **Economic and Inheritance violence:** It's directed to cause impairment in economic or heritage resources of women, through:
 - The disturbance of possession, possession or ownership of their property
 - The loss, theft, destruction, retention or undue distraction of objects, tools, personal documents, property, securities and property rights
 - The limited economic resources to meet their needs or deprivation of essential means to live a dignified life

- The limitation or control of their income and the perception of lower wages for equal work, within the same workplace.

22. Violence Mode: It records the ways in which different types of violence against women are manifested in different areas (Article 6 of Law 26.485). The categories are:

- **Domestic violence:** It's a mode of violence against women by a household member, regardless of physical space where it occurs, to harm the dignity, welfare, physical, psychological, sexual, economic or patrimonial integrity, freedom comprising reproductive freedom and the right to full development of women. It is understood by family group originated kin by blood or marriage, civil unions and couples or courtships. Includes current or completed relations, cohabitation is not a requisite.
- **Institutional Violence:** It's a mode of violence against women by the officials, professionals, staff and agents belonging to any organ, authority or public institution that is intended to delay, hinder or prevent women's access to public policies and exercise rights under the law. This includes, in addition, those exercised in political parties, trade unions, business, sports and civil society organizations.
- **Workplace Violence:** It's a mode of violence against women in the areas of public or private work and hindering their access to employment, hiring, promotion, stability or permanence in the same job demanding requirements such as: marital status, maternity, age, physical appearance or making pregnancy tests. Also constitutes violence against women in the workplace violate the right to equal pay for equal work or task. It also includes psychological harassment systematically on a particular worker in order to achieve their labor exclusion.
- **Violence against reproductive freedom:** It's a mode of violence that violates the women's right to decide freely and responsibly the number of pregnancies or spacing, in accordance with Law 25,673 of "Creating the National Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation".
- **Obstetric Violence:** It's a mode of violence exercises by the health staff on the body and reproductive processes of women,

expressed in a dehumanizing treatment, abuse of medicalization and pathologizing of natural processes, in accordance with Law 25929.

23. Frequency of Violence: It accounts for the repetition of violence suffered by a victim: only once, more than once.

24. Illtreatment time: It refers to the period from which the victim suffers violence.

c. Offender Information

25. Sex: It records the offender's sex.

26. Gender Identity: It records the offender's gender identity.

27. Birthdate: Must register day/month/year of birthday (dd/mm/yyyy)

28. Age: It records the offender's age in completed years.

29. Residence Place: It records the residence place of the offender.

30. Educational level: It records the highest educational level attained in a formal system education's establishment, public or private. It also includes whether or not the offender had completed the recorded educational level.

31. Employment Situation: The variable refers to the offender's: The variable refers to the offender's insertion in the labor market, regardless of the employment conditions or whether they are employed formally or informally.

32. Another situation: It records other activities of the offender.

7. Synthesis

In the framework established by Law 26.485 / 2009 and all our legal background at national and international levels, the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) and the National Council of Women (Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres) carrying out the implementation of the National Register of Cases of Violence against Women (RUCVM).

The Register centralizes and systematizes, for the first time, the data available in administrative records of state bodies of women of 14 years old or older, who are victims of violence.

We emphasize the relevance of develop a national register of cases of violence against women as a whole.

To this end, the participating agencies agreed to respect the joint work guidelines as to the way the institutional interaction and file transfer develops, as well as improving the quality of data collection.

The data will be processed to obtain statistical information from a set of selected variables with the aim of measuring indicators that make it possible to have an overview of the topic, and serve as input for public policies to change the scenario of violence against women.

ANEXO RUCVM's FORM

Register description			
Id. Card Type *	<input type="text"/> Specify <input type="text"/> Number *		
Info Supplier Institution *	Date of Attention / Complaint* <input type="text"/> dd/mm/yyyy Info Type * <input type="text"/>		
Referred by <input type="text"/>	It is referred to <input type="text"/>		
About the event:			
Date * <input type="text"/> dd/mm/yyyy	Hour <input type="text"/> hh:mm	Time of the day <input type="text"/>	Were there underage present? * <input type="text"/>
Information about the victim			
Sex * <input type="text"/>	Gender Identity <input type="text"/>	Age * <input type="text"/>	Birthdate <input type="text"/> dd/mm/yyyy
Residence place:		District/ City <input type="text"/>	Town <input type="text"/>
State * <input type="text"/>			
Educational Level <input type="text"/>	Other Situation <input type="text"/>		
Employment Situation <input type="text"/>	Select <input type="text"/>	Cohabitation with offender <input type="text"/>	
Relationship with offender * <input type="text"/>			
Kind of Violence:			
Physical * <input type="text"/>	Psychological * <input type="text"/>	Economic y Propertv* <input type="text"/>	Sexual * <input type="text"/>
Violence Mode <input type="text"/>	Illtreatment time <input type="text"/>	Frequency of Violence <input type="text"/>	
Information about the Offender			
Number of Offenders * <input type="text"/>			
Sex * <input type="text"/>	Gender Identity <input type="text"/>	Age <input type="text"/>	Birthdate <input type="text"/> dd/mm/yyyy
Residence place:		District/ City <input type="text"/>	Town <input type="text"/>
State * <input type="text"/>			
Educational Level <input type="text"/>	Other Situation <input type="text"/>		
Employment Situation <input type="text"/>			
Additional Information			
<input type="text"/>			
<input type="button" value="Export database"/>	<input type="button" value="Save"/>	<input type="button" value="Search"/>	<input type="button" value="Close"/>