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**Items for information: gender statistics**

Background document  
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**Annex to the report of the Secretary General on Follow-up to the  
recommendations of the Friends of the Chair of the United Nations  
Statistical Commission on statistical indicators for measuring violence  
against women**

Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division

**Report of the Consultative Meeting to Review the  
Draft Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women  
Beirut, November 8-10, 2011<sup>1</sup>**

**I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 61/143 (2006), reconfirmed by resolution 62/133 (2008) on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, the General Assembly requested the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, and building on the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, a set of possible statistical indicators on violence against women in order to assist Member States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women. To that end, the Friends of the Chair group was established by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-ninth session (2008) (decision 39/116).

2. The Friends of the Chair submitted its first report to the Statistical Commission at its 40th session in 2009. The report, adopted by the Statistical Commission, requested the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to initiate and conduct work on developing a set of Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence Against Women that will provide full methodological guidance regarding the selection of core and additional topics, sources of data, relevant statistical classifications, outputs, wording of the questions and all other pertinent issues.

3. The United Nations Statistics Division prepared the draft of the *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: A Statistical Survey*. The *Guidelines* are based on the work of the Friends of the Chair, more specifically, conclusions and recommendations adopted at the meeting of the Friends of the Chair that took place in Aguascalientes, Mexico, in December 2009<sup>2</sup>.

4. The draft *Guidelines*, before submitted to the Consultative Meeting, was extensively reviewed and edited in terms of technical substance. This publication is designed to provide comprehensive methodological guidance on the selection of topics, sources of data, relevant statistical classifications, outputs, wording of the questions and all other relevant issues related to conducting statistical surveys to measure violence against women. The draft consists of six chapters: (a) role of statistical surveys on violence against women; (b) concepts and definitions of violence against women; (c) planning a statistical survey on violence against women; (d) questionnaire design; (e) survey implementation; and (f) data processing and analysis. In addition, the draft contains several annexes, including one (annex III) that presents recommended tabulations based on the set of statistical indicators developed by the Friends of the Chair and endorsed by the Statistical Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> This report is prepared as a stand-alone document. For more comprehensive and holistic information, it should be read in conjunction with the draft *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: A Statistical Survey*, available at:

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/consultativemeeting\\_Beirut2011/Guidelines%20on%20VAW%20Final%20Draft\\_RB.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/consultativemeeting_Beirut2011/Guidelines%20on%20VAW%20Final%20Draft_RB.pdf). This report is produced without formal editing.

<sup>2</sup> For details, please see: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/vaw/default.htm>.

5. For the purposes of ensuring a comprehensive first review of the draft *Guidelines*, the Statistics Division organized a consultative meeting at the premises of ESCWA in Beirut from 8 to 10 November 2011.

6. The Consultative Meeting was attended by the participants from developing and developed countries and members of the Friend of the Chair: Armenia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ghana, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Oman, and Turkey as well as international organizations: UN Women, UNECE and ESCWA.

7. The format of the meeting was designed to allow for a detailed review of the draft *Guidelines*. Each of the seven sessions — focusing on individual chapters and annex III — was opened by an introductory statement, followed by a presentation by a lead discussant, a general discussion and a section-by-section review of the draft text.

## **II. General comments**

### ***Level of specificity of the Guidelines***

8. The meeting concluded that the draft *Guidelines* constituted a quite extensive document. This is due to the fact that it elaborates on many aspects related to the statistical surveys that are not specifically related to quantifying violence against women but are common to statistical household surveys in general. Consequently, the following three major recommendations were agreed upon:

- 1) All aspects and discussion on general features of statistical survey should be confined only to those critical for the specific survey on violence against women
- 2) The most extensive parts (mostly chapter 4 and 5) should directly refer to existing documents or manuals released by the United Nations in order to ensure methodological consistency with the overall international statistical standards and to provide direct cross-reference
- 3) Specific information on contemporary examples on surveys on violence against women should be highlighted through the *Guidelines* using specific edition devices (boxes, colors, bullet points)

9. Taking into account that the target audience for the *Guidelines* encompasses statisticians in national statistical offices and includes a broader audience of stakeholders not always familiar with statistical techniques and concepts, such as subject-matter specialists, scholars, policy-makers, the meeting concluded that the current comprehensive and holistic approach in discussing all the components of the statistical survey should be maintained, despite the fact that it increases the volume of the *Guidelines* and that it may be repetitive to some readers.

### ***Format***

In order to better guide the readers and for more clarity, it was suggested to include bullet points at the beginning of each chapter on main messages.

### ***Additional comments***

10. Additional comments have been received from Ms. Henriette Jansen, consultant to UNECE on the statistical module for measuring violence against women and to ECLAC on the E-course for implementing the module.

### **III. Specific Comments**

11. The remaining part of this report presents comments and suggestions to the specific parts of the draft *Guidelines* (see paragraph 4 above).

#### **Introduction**

12. The meeting discussed in detail the importance and relevance of administrative data for quantifying violence against women and comments were raised as to the need for discussing this potential source of statistics. Although it is commonly accepted that administrative sources of statistics cannot provide accurate estimates of the prevalence of violence against women within a country, they certainly are valuable in capturing the responses of the society and the legal system to the occurrences of violence against women, as well as the overall perception on that phenomenon, such as, for example, the level of self-censorship of women in reporting violence they experienced. Consequently, it was concluded that the *Guidelines* should elaborate (in one of the annexes) on administrative sources of statistics on violence against women, although they should primarily be focusing on dedicated surveys on violence against women.

#### **Chapter 1: Role of statistical surveys on violence against women**

##### ***Restructuring***

13. The order of the material in Chapter 1 should be modified: the need for dedicated survey should come first, then the definition and essential features and last, the comparison between surveys and modules.

14. Regarding the part on “essential features”, paragraph 14 (p14) and p15 are not needed. P17 should be clarified. This section should also include some elaboration on the sensitivity of the topic as well as the role of the national statistical authorities in designing and conducting these surveys.

##### ***References to be added***

15. The experience of Italy regarding the use of the results of the survey on violence against women for designing specific policies and providing guidance to policy makers should be added as an illustration.

16. The reference to UNITE campaign is not fully compelling. It is much more useful to focus on the need for violence against women statistics for national purposes as well as meeting the commitments countries made at the global level, such as by adopting the Beijing Platform for Action, which clearly underscores the necessity of these statistics.

17. The *Guidelines* should mention the first expert group meeting on this topic held in Geneva in 2007 which provided significant background for the work of the Friends of the Chair.

##### ***Dedicated surveys versus modules***

18. Within the work of the Friends of the Chair, a considerable discussion was dedicated to the advantages of conducting a stand-alone, dedicated survey on violence against women as opposed to introducing a module on violence against women into one of the existing statistical surveys. The conclusion, re-iterated at this meeting, was that the vehicle of choice should be a dedicated survey, given the specific features of this survey in terms of sensitivity of the topic that requires particular solutions (female interviewers, safety of the respondents

and the interviewers and so forth). However, stand-alone survey requires significant financial commitment that may not always be available. Consequently, introducing a carefully designed and administered module is a very acceptable alternative. A table should be added to clarify the respective advantages and disadvantages of a dedicated survey on violence against women and a module added to another suitable survey (same format as table 1.2).

## **Chapter 2: Concepts and definition of violence against women**

### ***Topics***

19. Core topics will be only those needed to construct the statistical indicators on violence against women as adopted by the Friends of the Chair. All others will be optional topics. Female genital mutilation will be added as an optional core topic, meaning that the meeting recognized that the violence against women surveys may not be the best vehicle for collecting data on female genital mutilation – yet, these statistics are critical for comprehensive overview of violence experienced by women. Therefore, if these statistics were not collected by other more suitable surveys, such as demographic and health surveys, for example, then this topic should be included in the dedicated survey on violence against women. This conclusion was adopted after careful examination of all the proposed core topics in the draft *Guidelines* and the indicators adopted by the Friends of the Chair and acknowledged by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

### ***Variables***

20. Sex should be added to the core characteristics of the perpetrator. The variable “economic activity” will only describe whether the respondent is employed or not. It should not involve the level of income.

### ***Definitions***

21. In debating the various and many forms that a relationship between a woman and man can take, the meeting concluded that there is a need to distinguish between a “one-time” or “occasional” dating and the steadier, longer-time dating relationship. Consequently, the definition of current intimate partner relationship should include steady but not “occasional” or “one-time” dating partners. “Occasional” or “one-time” dating partners will be included under a different category – as friends or acquaintances.

22. The meeting noted that the definitions of prevalence of violence against women and incidence of violence against women differ from those adopted by the Friends of the Chair and concluded that they should be corrected accordingly in the final version of the *Guidelines*.

## **Chapter 3: Planning a survey on violence against women**

### ***Organization***

23. The section on the modes of data collection should be included in chapter 3 instead of chapter 5 due to its implication to budgeting and planning the survey. The section on “consultation with stakeholders” should follow the one on “Legal basis”. The section on the training of interviewers should be moved to chapter 5 with an internal cross-reference. In the section on Legal basis, a footnote should be included to mention CEDAW.

### ***Sampling***

24. The part on the sampling needs to be streamlined in the following manner:

- 1) Reducing the length of the section by focusing exclusively on sampling issues that are pertinent only to the surveys for measuring violence against women; at this moment, a significant part of this section discusses general sampling issues that may not be necessary for the purpose of the *Guidelines*;
- 2) However, in order to provide users with the overall sampling overview, add cross-references to the existing United Nations training materials or online courses on sampling.

## **Chapter 4: Questionnaire design**

### ***Questionnaire example***

25. The specific examples of survey questions will be taken out of the main body of the text and moved to an annex. The existing questionnaire developed under the Inter-regional project and deliberated by the Friends of the Chair at the meeting in Aguascalientes will be provided as an example of how to formulate a questionnaire to generate statistics as per the adopted United Nations indicators for measuring violence against women. This will also ensure a more succinct and concentrated main body of the text.

26. The meeting discussed at length on the impact of violence against women on mental health and on absences at work and concluded that these two consequences of violence against women should be included together with other already existing consequences.

27. In the contemporary national surveys on violence against women, considerable attention was paid to the sequencing of the questions – whether to start with the questions regarding the experience with intimate partner violence and then move to the non-intimate partner violence or the other way around, or to sequence the questions based on the type of violence irrespective of the perpetrator. This discussion is missing at this moment in the draft *Guidelines* and it needs to be elaborate in a consistent manner, identifying advantages and the drawbacks regarding the order of questions with, possibly, some text boxes emphasizing national experiences and analysis.

### ***Structure***

28. The elaboration regarding focus group discussions, pre-testing and cognitive testing should be placed at the beginning of the chapter in order to allow the elaboration of conceptual definitions and to test the consistency of the questionnaire and survey protocols.

### ***Characteristics of the perpetrator***

29. Considerable discussion at the meeting was devoted to the inclusion of core and additional topics for different perpetrators of violence against women, given the fact that inclusion of each additional topic has impact on the length of the questionnaire and, consequently, the length of the interview. Balancing the need for data and the resource implications, it was decided that the *Guidelines* should recommend that the core topics - age and sex – should apply to all intimate partners a woman had, and that the additional topics will cover only the current and the last previous partner.

## **Chapter 5: Survey implementation**

### ***Content***

30. Although the section on mode of data collection was moved to chapter 3, a summary of this theme should appear at the beginning of this chapter. Similarly, the section on data entry in chapter 6 should be transferred to chapter 5.

31. The meeting elaborated on different issues facing the implementation of the violence against women survey in different national circumstances. In that respect, it was noted that the information regarding community entry strategies – especially in rural settings – is missing from the current version of the *Guidelines*. As this is a very relevant stage in data collection for a number of countries, national experiences in that regard will be emphasized.

## **Chapter 6: Data processing and analysis**

### ***Weighting***

32. One of the critical issues regarding processing of data refers to the extrapolation and weighting. In that context the *Guidelines* should specify which variables are the most crucial for weighting a survey on violence against women. It was concluded that it would also be useful to provide an example of software which enables weighting. This paragraph should be referenced to the existing United Nations manuals on weighting and should mention that the researchers require the assistance of weighting specialists.

### ***Data processing***

33. In terms of structure, the section on sampling error should come before the one on data analysis. Also, the *Guidelines* should draw caution when it comes to use imputation techniques on rare events such as some forms of violence (avoid hot-deck imputations).

### ***Dissemination***

34. The contemporary research relies more and more on the analysis of micro-data and in is expected that similar requested will be made also in the case of the surveys on violence against women. Given the fact that individual data are of extremely sensitive and private nature, there is a need to re-iterate the need to ensure confidentiality and privacy of data and in that context a cross-reference to the section on confidentiality in Chapter V is necessary.

### **Conclusion (new item)**

35. The meeting recommended the inclusion of a conclusion at the end of the main text that will summarize the complexity of the enterprise, key choices and decisions to be made on when designing and administering a survey on violence against women in respect of the mode of interviewing, interviewer training, sampling, and so forth.

### **Annex 3**

36. The recommended set of tabulation will follow the logic and order of the statistical indicators for measuring violence against women as adopted by the Friends of the Chair and the already existing list of tabulation from the Inter-regional project on measuring violence against women.

### **Final provisions**

37. At the end, the meeting adopted the programme of work towards the finalization of the *Guidelines*. In the first phase, all comments and suggestion will be incorporated in the current version. Next, a second round of virtual review by all meeting participants, Friends of the Chair and observers of the Friends of the Chair will allow collecting final comments and suggestions, upon the completion of which the finalization of the text will be undertaken by United Nations Statistics Division.