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Expert Group Meeting on indicators to measure violence against women

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Co-organized by UNDAW, UNECE and UNSD

in collaboration with ECA/ECLAC/ESCAP/ESCWA

INDICATORS TO MEASURE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Invited Paper¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is prepared for the UN Expert Group Meeting on indicators to measure violence against women (VAW). The Meeting aims to support the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women's work to develop 'a set of possible indicators on VAW to help countries to assess the scope, prevalence and incidence of VAW.'

The paper includes the following:

- a) Definition of indicators
- b) What constitutes Violence Against Women (VAW)
- c) Government of Ghana specific initiatives taken in the direction of VAW
- d) Area of focus by the Government
- e) Program target group
- f) Assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the initiatives
- g) Main collaborators
- h) Prioritization of indicators
- i) Related data requirements and constraints
- j) Opportunities for overcoming constraints

II. WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

These are complex data summarized into a form meaningful for policy makers. They serve as a link between evidence based information and policy making. Aside summarizing complex data into a simple clear form, indicators when well constructed, can also be easily interpreted, be available at regular intervals and be comparable overtime and between population groups and countries. Further, policy makers as well as the wider user public should see indicators relevant and meaningful.

Specifically for VAW indicators, there is the need to consider the scope, severity in relation to impact and also the extent of violence. And as well as for any indicator, those to measure VAW, time consideration is an important element.

III. WHAT CONSTITUTES VAW?

VAW is an act that constitutes a threat or harm to a woman resulting in:

1. Physical abuse such as
 - a) Physical assault or use of physical force against a woman
 - b) Forcible confinement or detention or deprivation of access to adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, rest
 - c) Subjection to torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

2. Sexual abuse such as

Forceful engagement of a woman in a sexual contact which includes sexual conduct that humiliates or degrades or violates a woman's sexual integrity or sexual contact by a person aware of being infected with HIV or any STI without prior information of the infection.

3. Economic abuse such as

- a) The deprivation of or threatened deprivation of economic or financial resources which a woman is entitled to by law
- b) The disposition or threatened disposition of moveable or immoveable property in which a woman has a material interest
- c) Hiding or hindering the use of the property or damaging the property of which a woman has interest

4. Emotional abuse (verbal or psychological abuse) such as

- a) Any conduct that makes a woman feels constantly unhappy, miserable, humiliated, ridiculed, afraid, jittery, or depressed or to feel inadequate or worthless.

IV. GOVERNMENT OF GHANA SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

1. A decade and a half after the ratification of the Convention on the rights of the Child, Ghana has established a number of institutions to provide psycho-socio counseling, social welfare and legal support services to victims of social violence; specifically women and children. These include the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), Shelter for Victims of Sexual Abuse and Shelter for Trafficked Children.
2. The DOVVSU formally Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police Service was established in October 1998 in Accra. Currently, it has offices in all the ten administrative regions of the country. It is a unique Police unit and the first of its kind in West Africa.

Apart from protecting, investigating, and prosecuting crimes against women and children, DOVVSU units serve as information centres and also provide support and coordination as well as basic counter services. There are a team of civilian support staff composed of clinical psychologists, social workers, counselors and legal advisers.

Below is a table indicating the number and kind of cases that came to the attention of DOVVSU in the past four years (2002-2006). The data is however not disaggregated by sex and is mostly on children.

Table 1 Reported Abuse 2002-2006

| Case | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Rape | 181 | 150 | 259 | 267 | 345 |
| Indecent Assault | 106 | 90 | 75 | 116 | 138 |
| Assault | 1855 | 2157 | 2064 | 2563 | 3573 |
| Incest | 20 | 17 | 13 | 29 | 11 |
| Attempted Rape | 23 | 33 | 17 | 23 | 52 |

Source: DOVSSU RECORDS, 2007

3. A Domestic Violence Law has been put in place in 2007 to deal with violence in the domestic setting to provide victims of Domestic violence with protection and occupational orders.
4. In an effort to empower women and minimize women economic dependence on their male counterparts, loan schemes especially micro-credit are now set up to support women in small scale businesses
5. The Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire survey (CWIQ) conducted in 2003 included general questions on violence, crime and safety but not specifically on women.
6. Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) 2003 and Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) 2006 also included questions on attitudes towards domestic violence by women and men; and also on fear of eviction.
7. Below is the table of results captured by MICS 2006. Women and men's belief that husband is justified in beating wife in various circumstances.

Perception of Women and Men on VAW Urban/Rural, 2006.

| Perception | Residence/Circumstance | When a woman goes out without telling partner | When a woman refuses partner sex | When a woman insults partner | When husband has another partner |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Believe by women that husband is justified in beating the wife in various circumstances | Urban women | 19.8 | 12.5 | 38.1 | 43.6 |
| | Rural women | 35.6 | 24.6 | 58.9 | 65.1 |
| Believe by men that husband is justified in beating the wife in various circumstances | Urban men | 13.8 | 9.2 | 31.2 | 32.3 |
| | Rural men | 26.1 | 19.2 | 47.3 | 50.5 |

Source: MICS 2006, Ghana Statistical Service, (unpublished data)

V. FOCUS AREA OF GOVERNMENT

1. The focus of Government is on domestic violence (DV) or violence in the domestic setting. This seeks to provide victims of domestic violence with the necessary protection and support.
2. Programme target groups are:
 - a) Victims of DV for support and protection
 - b) Perpetrators of DV for punishment
 - c) The general public for awareness creation

VI. UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

1. The scope looks at the physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuses reporting them in terms of numbers. An institution like DOVVSU has this information on reported cases by victims of abuse.
2. Primary data from nation-wide surveys usually report prevalence and incidence in proportions/percentages. However, there is nothing currently specific on violence against women

VII. ADVANTAGES OF THE INDICATORS

1. Provide awareness about abuse in the country
2. Provide awareness on the number/level of abuse cases by type.
3. The institutional records provide follow-up for counseling, protection and support
4. Prepare the ground for policy makers and interventions by the Government, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and NGOs. Hence the recent passing of the Domestic Violence Act 732, 2007 into a Law

VIII. DISADVANTAGES OF THE INDICATORS ON VAW

1. The surveys as at now do not capture scope of violence; neither are they specific on VAW.
2. The survey results do not report impact/severity of violence on women.
3. Survey objectives do not consider identification of the victim of violence for a follow-up
4. For fear of further abuse women hardly report abuse to concerned/relevant institutions
5. Time period of abuse, frequencies are not captured

IX. PROPOSED INDICATORS

1. Time bound prevalence of violence by type (frequently, consistently, occasionally, once a year) expressed as number of cases/percentage of the total female population
2. Number of incidents of any form of violence by level of severity and expressed annually
3. Level of impact/severity (minor injury, major injury, no injury, death) to be expressed as a rate per 1,000 of total women population by age group 12-49

X. PRIORITIZED INDICATORS

1. Survey results on VAW. However expression in numbers should be highly considered alongside proportions and percentages so that the real situation regarding the actual size of women population at risk of abuse/violence can be known and more appreciated.
