

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics and the Use of Violence against Women Indicators in Support of the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action

Background

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in December 1979, was the first comprehensive international treaty addressing women's rights. Article 6 of CEDAW guarantees women's right to protection from violence whereby all State Parties are enjoined to "take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women". The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in September 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, emphasised that "violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms". One of its strategic objectives and actions was to get commitments from Governments to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

The first review on the status of the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2000 (Beijing +5) led to Draft Resolution II, (D) which reiterated that inadequate data on violence impedes informed policy making and analysis. The Beijing +10 Review Resolution 49/4 (g) on "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all national policies and programmes" called upon countries to improve and promote the collection, compilation, dissemination and use of gender statistics that are disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic and other relevant indicators, as to enable the construction of appropriate tools for planning, programming and monitoring.

The 2006 Report of the Secretary-General "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" outlined the sources and challenges in collection of data on violence against women. The same year, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted resolution 61/143 entitled "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women", which emphasised the increasing demand for indicators on violence against women to contribute towards strengthening a knowledge base on the subject. The resolution requested the UN Statistical Commission to work closely with the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, to propose a set of indicators that would help States assess the extent, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

During the launch of a campaign to end violence against women in 2007, the Secretary-General recognised that after decades of efforts by the women's movement,

especially since the adopting of the Beijing Platform for Action, violence against women and girls still remains high and reducing it is now a priority on the international agenda. In an effort to eliminate violence against women, the Secretary-General's report urges all countries to place data collection and analysis systems that support policies and programmes to end violence against women and girls.

Ongoing work

Building on previous work on the subject, a group of experts including representatives from UN regional commissions, national statistical offices (NSOs), inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations convened in October 2007 in Geneva to take stock of existing initiatives in the development of indicators on violence against women. During this meeting, international experts worked together to develop a criteria for the identification of a set of indicators; make recommendations on the improvement of current indicators, and to outline related data collection requirements and constraints. At this meeting a set of indicators covering physical violence; sexual violence; intimate partner violence, and harmful practices including female genital mutilation and early marriage, were outlined as the first step towards the development of a common set of international indicators.

Deliberation by the UN Statistical Commission of this set of indicators is currently being facilitated by the Friends of the Chair Group (FoC) established during the 39th session of this Commission in February 2008. The FoC Group will aim at conducting a rigorous evaluation of the set of indicators and suggest ways to improve their compilation. A final report on the FoC Group recommendations will be submitted to this effect at the 40th session of the UN Statistical Commission to be held in February 2009.

Simultaneously, all UN regional commissions are working in support of the above mentioned resolution of the General Assembly through the implementation of a Development Account project entitled "Enhancing Capacities to Eradicate Violence against Women" which will be coordinated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and executed in collaboration with ECA, ECE, ESCAP, ESCWA and DAW-DESA. The main objective of this project is to develop and invigorate a knowledge community on violence against women at the regional and interregional levels.

This Development Account project aims at enhancing capacities of different stakeholders such as national machineries for the advancement of women, police, judiciary and NSOs to integrate collection, analysis and use of violence against women data in their national plans and programs on gender-based violence. The project will seek to improve the measurement of violence against women referring to the FoC Group recommendations on the use of common methodologies and indicators. Additionally, the EGM will assist in the development of the DA project activities, in providing a forum to share information on the current state of national statistics and data on violence against women and their use in implementation or the development of effective policies to address violence against women.

Objectives

In light of the ongoing initiatives to implement CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for action and the need to intensify efforts to address the subject of violence against women, the objectives of this strategic and timely Expert Group Meeting are:

- To support and build the capacity of national women's machineries (NWMs) on advocating for the collection of statistics on gender and violence against women (VAW) in particular, and to increase their use of statistics and analysis for national monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of key gender equality mandates outlined in the CEDAW, BPFA and the Millennium Development Goals.
- To take stock of the current work being done in countries on indicators to measure violence against women and to develop a framework for assessing the national context and preparedness for institutionalising the use of VAW indicators with NWMs and NSOs.
- To inform and gather comments on the work being done by the FoC Group towards consolidating a proposed set of indicators on VAW, and to assess the effectiveness of on-going national initiatives within the framework of this work.
- To discuss the objectives and activities of the UN Development Account Project "Enhancing Capacities to Eradicate Violence against Women" 2008-09 and outline the Terms of Reference for the country studies as well as a regional workshop on VAW.
- To build and enhance ongoing partnership between NSOs and NWMs on the use of indicators on violence against women towards promoting gender equality through national policy and programme interventions, as well as to identify specific country needs in terms of data collection, dissemination and its use, including future areas of work.

Timing and venue

The proposed meeting is scheduled for 1-3 October 2008 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. This meeting will be co-organised by the ESCAP Social Development Division and Statistics Division, working in liaison with other UN agencies.

Format

To encourage learning and maximise impact, the workshop will adopt an interactive, participatory approach, going beyond formal presentations and panel discussions to rely extensively on targeted group discussions between NSOs and NWMs and other stakeholders on the development and use of gender statistics and indicators, including on VAW.

Evaluation

To help design and evaluate the workshop, a pre- and a post-workshop questionnaire will be administered among participants to:

- assess improvement in knowledge and understanding of the purpose and importance of gender statistics and VAW indicators in national policy, the need for further advocacy and in the overall role of promoting gender equality;
- understanding the various country experiences and plans on the subject;
- identify specific country needs for further support.