Surveys on violence against women
overcoming methodological hurdles

Henrica A. F. M. (Henriette) Jansen
henriette.jansen@gmail.com

Expert Workshop on Violence against Women – Disabling Development
Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development
25-26 March 2010, Geneva
A real example

- National ‘survey on domestic violence’.
- One woman per household
- When available: one child aged 10-14 year
- Many women refused questions on partner violence: refusals 36% on emotional, 30% on physical and 23% on sexual violence
Population-based surveys to collect data on violence against women – Challenges:

- Prevalence rates on violence are highly sensitive to methodological issues
- Research on violence raises major issues of safety and ethics
- Unrealistic to expect reduction in prevalence in short or medium term
Indicators and dimensions of VAW collected in surveys

- Almost all surveys give indicators of prevalence of physical and sexual violence
- Many on perpetrators
- Few on frequency
Methodological hurdles in surveys

- Choice of type of survey
- Comparability of estimates of indicators across settings, over time
- Handling gender bias
- Meeting ethical and safety standards
- Interviewer recruitment and training
* Choice of type of survey

- Golden standard: dedicated survey
- An add-on survey (e.g. UNECE module): greater challenges -- only if ethical and safety standards can be ensured
- Way ahead: a dedicated survey on core and additional indicators bringing together existing knowledge and experience
* Comparability between settings and over time

Operational definitions: behavioural acts

- Different levels of consensus exist for different types of violence
- Measurement of psychological violence and economic violence may never be captured in the same way across cultures
- It will remain a challenge to ensure that all forms of violence are measured
Disclosure is affected by

- How the questions are phrased
- Number of opportunities to disclose
- Context in which questions are asked
- Characteristics and skills of interviewers
- Social stigma attached to issue
* Gender bias

- Prevalence rates from population based surveys bias towards a symmetry in the rates women and men are perpetrators or victims of certain forms of domestic violence
## Domestic Violence: incidents and gender (British Crime Survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>% against women</th>
<th>Ratio: Women: men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>657,000</td>
<td>356,000</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number incidents per victim</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total incidents</td>
<td>12.9 million</td>
<td>2.5 million</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handling gender bias

- Always get an estimate of frequency
- Always get an estimate of severity
- Consider injuries, fear, consequences in well being
- Also look at relative importance of violence against men
Ensuring ethics and safety

- Protecting confidentiality and ensuring safety
- Use of a ‘safe name’
- Importance of minimizing non-response
- Providing support to participants
* Interviewer training

- Include introduction on gender and violence
- Opportunity for team to come to terms with own experiences
- Address emotional needs of team members
- Role of interviewers: Not counselling, not trying to "save" respondents
“We met with an angry man who did not want us to interview his wife. We made a plan with the respondent to hide. We met at the sport complex. We finished the interview because the husband did not find us. This is a difficult way to do the work, but we always managed to finish every interview. “

- Interviewer in Kiribati
Evidence of the value of training

Serbia 2003

- 13 inexperienced, carefully selected interviewers, trained during 3 weeks
- 21 professional interviewers, selected because of their interest in the topic, trained during one day
## Special training vs professional interviewers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inexperienced, 3 week training</th>
<th>Professional, 1 day training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response rate</strong></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disclosure/prevalence rate</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– with violence</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– without violence</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“As government statistician with lots of experience in many surveys I was convinced this would fail. But to my surprise it was very successful. This was due to the way the interviewers were well trained... The training was very different from other training, also very long....”

Government statistician in Kiribati
Different from routine surveys!

- Ethical and safety issues
- Selection and training of interviewers: very important!!
- Psychological support for interviewers and respondents
- It is an intervention in itself
  - Survey as awareness building among respondents
  - Survey as transforming for interviewers and researchers
Many women start thinking about what is happening to them...

“My husband slaps me, has sex with me against my will and I have to conform. Before being interviewed I didn't really think about this. I thought this is only natural. This is the way a husband behaves.”

Woman interviewed in Bangladesh
“Maybe I was mediating by listening to her for half an hour, and it was worth the world when at the end she thanks me and tells me she felt worthy.”

(interviewer in Turkey)
Overcoming hurdles

- UN, donors, intergovernmental bodies to take note of issues around measuring VAW and support data collection in ethical and safe way.
- Linkages and partnership between national statistics offices and women NGOs are crucial.
- We have a responsibility in ensuring ethical and safety of women!
THANK YOU!

(c) photos: Henriette Jansen