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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

**SPECIFIC INDICATOR INITIATIVES AND ISSUES IN THE ESCAP REGION  
RELATED TO THE MEASUREMENT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Invited Paper**

Submitted by ESCAP<sup>1</sup>

**I. Introduction**

This paper focuses on initiatives in the ESCAP region related to indicators for the measurement of violence against women. It refers to initiatives in ESCAP as a regional commission and initiatives by government and non-government organizations in member states in the ESCAP region. Country examples of specific data collection initiatives by government and non-government sources on violence against women are briefly described, where these initiatives show institutionalized processes of data collection and use of indicators that could be useful in mapping the possible sources for use of indicators on violence against women for global, regional and national data collection.

**II. ESCAP initiatives on indicators to measure violence against women**

ESCAP's development of statistics and indicators on women in the region and interest in developing indicators for monitoring the Beijing Platform for Action is contained in publications such as *Statistical Compendium on Women in Asia and the Pacific* (1994) and *Statistics on Women in Asia and the Pacific* (1999). The development of indicators for monitoring the implementation of the BPA was chosen as one of the key strategies after Beijing+5. The 12 critical areas of concern of the BPA and their strategic objectives were used to provide the central framework for an ESCAP study, *Gender Indicators for Monitoring the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Asia-Pacific Region* (2003). The indicators were regarded as a minimum set to allow monitoring and evaluation of implementation at regional and national

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level, of the Beijing agreements and other regional and international standards to promote gender equality and improve women's status.

In the 2003 study above, the proposed indicators covered all the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, including violence against women.<sup>2</sup>

The proposed indicators on violence against women covered the following areas:

- Integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women (4 indicators)
- Study of the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventative measures (2 indicators)
- Elimination of trafficking in women and assistance for victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking (4 indicators).

In introducing the indicators, challenges noted by ESCAP were:

- The difficulties of making indicators comparable across different cultures;
- The possibilities for different data to be collected even for the same indicator based on different definitions or different conditions within countries;
- The need to clearly define the objective and intended use of the indicator system when proposing indicators.

It also noted the need for the indicators to be feasible – for the information sought to be available or accessible and that the focus of indicators should be on monitoring outcomes rather than just inputs and intermediary outputs. These issues are still valid today.

For the Beijing+10 process, ESCAP's Statistical Division completed a study *Gender Equality and Empowerment: A Statistical Profile of the ESCAP region (2005)* on gender equality in the region, for the global review of the BPfA at the forty-ninth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2005. The selected indicators on gender equality covered education and health, economic opportunities and employment and political participation.

The study noted the lack of reliable statistical data on violence against women because few countries had undertaken even limited surveys to measure physical violence against women. The main sources of data on violence against women were from health and police department reports on domestic violence; the data varied considerably in consistency and contained reported cases only, which is an inaccurate record of incidence and prevalence. Based on these limitations, the ESCAP 2005 statistical profile referred to indicators in UNIFEM's 2003 survey, where the existence of normative (CEDAW ratification) and legal frameworks (specific legislation to prosecute on gender violence), was used as a measure of country responses on violence against women. Most countries in the ESCAP region scored very low in the survey even using the legislative and normative indicators.<sup>3</sup> The conclusion in the ESCAP survey was on the need for indicators on the incidence of violence against women and generally, the need for better use of statistics by gender advocates, to expose gender inequalities in the region.

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex: Summary of Proposed Indicators in *Gender Indicators for monitoring implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action on women in the ESCAP region*, ESCAP 2003, p.52-67.

<sup>3</sup> In the ESCAP region, most countries scored very low (0-2) – 28 countries; medium (2-4) –16 countries; high (4+) – 5 countries. *Gender Equality and Empowerment*, *supra* note 2, p. 20.

Current work in ESCAP in 2007 on gender indicators is a study under the Development account project<sup>4</sup> coordinated by the Emerging Social Issues Division, in which the Gender and Development Section has completed a study (draft), *Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Asia-Pacific: Linking the Millennium Development Goals with the CEDAW and Beijing Indicators*.<sup>5</sup> The study notes the limitations of gender equality indicators in the MDGs and shares the reservations expressed by many gender equality advocates, that the existing MDG targets and indicators do not adequately reflect the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration and other international standards on gender equality.<sup>6</sup>

The study reviews MDG progress in the ESCAP region in promoting gender equality. It discusses all the MDGs, targets and indicators and provides the rationale for linking the MDGs, with CEDAW and the BPfA indicators. The suggestions for supplementary targets and indicators (including three VAW indicators) are placed within the scope of expanding MDG 3. The supplementary targets and indicators suggested expand on Target 4 and its existing indicators under MDG 3.<sup>7</sup> Indicators suggested related to violence against women are: legislation preventing sexual harassment at work, incidences of domestic violence and legislation against gender-based violence and reflecting international mandates (all recommended by CEDAW and the BPfA). In this study, which is on linking CEDAW and BPfA indicators to the MDG indicators, it is noticeable just how constraining the exercise can be as it is tied to the existing MDG 3 targets and indicators. The ESCAP gender study will be discussed at a regional expert group meeting in November 2007 on supplementary indicators for the MDGs.

This study on indicators by the Gender and Development Section of ESCAP with overall co-ordination by the Emerging Social Issues Division has comments in its conclusion on the use of indicators and the constraints in data collection for gender advocacy in the region. A main constraint in getting quality data for the MDG indicators was the need for improved co-ordination of data documentation and validation amongst statistical agencies.<sup>8</sup> In relation to gender statistics in the region and the proposal for developing and using supplementary indicators for the MDGs, the study raises the general difficulties in data collection and use of indicators for monitoring the MDGs. These obstacles (below) can be extrapolated as problems that will also exist in the region in any process of introducing and using indicators for measuring violence against women:

- whether indicators should be limited only to those with accessible data
- problems of applying the indicators due to the unavailability of gender statistics
- data inconsistency from one country to another
- data for certain indicators may not be produced at all in some countries

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<sup>4</sup> "Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Asia-Pacific: Linking the Millennium Development Goals with the CEDAW and Beijing Indicators", a project report (draft) by Yanghee Kim, June 2007, for the Development account project on interregional cooperation to strengthen social inclusion, gender equality and health promotion in the MDG process, ESCAP, with ECA, ECE, ECLAC and ESCWA.

<sup>5</sup> Prepared by Dr. Yanghee Kim, June 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Also in *Pursuing Gender Equality through the MDGs: Asia and the Pacific*, ADB, ESCAP and UNDP, June 2006, p.9.

<sup>7</sup> MDG 3 Target 4: "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education, no later than 2015."

<sup>8</sup> Yanghee, Kim, (draft) ESCAP, 2007, p.59, citing ESCAP *Workshop on Statistics for Monitoring the Achievement of the MDGS in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 31 July -2 August 2006*.

- when data is available, the timing(year) or method of data collecting may differ
- data categories defined in different ways in different countries
- differing calculations may be used when compiling certain statistics, making cross-country comparisons difficult
- the diversity and size of the ESCAP region may prevent the formation of common approaches to promoting gender equality and empowering women.

The suggestion is made that future work could be done by incorporating differences in sub-regions.<sup>9</sup> This seems a useful way of working with intra-regional differences while also making advances in the use of indicators on VAW and data collection allowing some comparability by country and advancing the global objective of better data collection on violence against women.

In April 2007, the Gender and Development Section of ESCAP held an expert group meeting on regional strategies for implementing the recommendations of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women.<sup>10</sup> Among the recommendations were that states must improve data collection on all forms of violence against women, particularly to provide for systematic sex-disaggregated data collection, analysis and publication at all levels, in co-operation with NGO and academic communities. National women's machineries were confirmed as having a strong role to play in advocating for and developing the knowledge base on gender-based violence in their countries.

#### *Comments from the Statistics Division in ESCAP on VAW indicators and data collection*

On initiatives in the region on indicators for the measurement of violence against women, the Statistics Division of ESCAP considers the following as constraints:

- difficulties of applying definitions and standards in such a diverse region, with different cultures and traditions;
- the taboo nature of violence against women making data collection extremely sensitive;
- the use of special surveys to reach women may be more effective methods of data collection;
- the need for advocacy on the issue to precede the use of indicators and data collection;
- the need to build on efforts to standardize methods of data collection on the issue;
- training and education in countries would be needed before statistical offices can use the indicators, collect, analyse and standardize the information;
- the use of the indicators and data collection would require the joint work with women's organisations and non-government organisations within countries.

In concluding on the role of ESCAP in the use of violence against women indicators and its role in data collection in the region, informal discussions internally indicate there is possibility of working on the issue but much groundwork would need to precede it if anticipating working on the issue with countries in the ESCAP region. There is the possibility of both the Gender and Development Section and the Statistics Section of ESCAP working together to do a preliminary survey of indicators and data collection on violence against women in the region. It

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<sup>9</sup> Yanghee, 2007, p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Expert group meeting, "Regional strategies for implementing the recommendations from the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women," 26-27 April, 2007, ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand.

was also agreed that training with statisticians would be needed and advocacy statistical offices on the need for data collection and use of indicators would be necessary if collecting and standardizing data on violence against women were to proceed in statistical systems in countries in the region. The diversity in the region was considered a major obstacle.

### **III Brief survey of other initiatives to monitor and measure violence against women in the ESCAP region**

#### Intergovernmental – sub-regional – Pacific

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), an intergovernmental organization in the Pacific sub-region, has an initiative launched by its Human Development Programme (HDP), which includes standardizing indicators on violence against women, CEDAW legislative compliance, youth, health and citizenship, and peace and security in its collection and use of statistical information. The Human Development Programme of SPC is tasked with monitoring progress in empowering women and young people. The Human Development Report will involve partnerships with the Statistics and Demography Programme of SPC and country level partnerships with National Statistics Offices and National Planning Offices. The HDP intends including a gender analysis of existing statistical information. While not specifically outlining its indicators on violence against women, the HDP initiative lists violence against women as one of the emerging areas it intends including in standard statistical outputs. The Programme has also initiated a project for a socio-cultural research into gender-based violence and child abuse in two countries, Solomon Islands and Kiribati.<sup>11</sup>

#### NGO – CEDAW indicators - CENWOR – Sri Lanka

The non-government organization, Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), developed indicators for CEDAW implementation for South Asia.<sup>12</sup> This sub-regional study included several indicators for monitoring legislative compliance, education, health and employment. It is an example of the development of indicators for sub-regional initiatives.

#### GO – National Statistics - Philippines - gender indicators and data collection

The Philippines Core Gender and Development Indicator System(CORE GAD) has been reported on in previous UN meetings on VAW indicators by representatives of the Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board.<sup>13</sup> These initiatives for data collection, provide examples of what can be done at the country level, using existing institutional frameworks for statistical data collection to gain information for gender policy and planning. Although details on the actual progress in the initiative need to be updated, this example nevertheless indicates the scope for national statistical systems to develop and use core indicators for gender and

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<sup>11</sup> *Indicators for Monitoring Human Development*, Regional meeting of heads of planning and heads of statistics (HOPS), Noumea, New Caledonia, September 2007, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2007. SPC/HOPS 2007/ Working Paper 6.1, 5<sup>th</sup>. September 2007.

<sup>12</sup> *CEDAW indicators for South Asia: an initiative*, UNIFEM South Asia Regional Office and CENWOR, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> *Philippine Development Indicators*. Report prepared for the UN Follow-Up Workshop on Development Indicators for the ASEAN Countries, Makati City, Philippines, 30September –4 October 2002, prepared by Teresita Bascos-Deveza [electronic version] accessed 2 October 2007 at <http://nscb.gov.ph/events/ASEAN>.

development work. Both ESCAP and UNIFEM have contributed to this effort<sup>14</sup> and to others in the region to establish gender statistics in standard social statistics work. Progress in the use of gender indicators on violence against women will obviously be easier in countries where statistical systems have institutionalized gender indicators and there is a well-maintained system for gathering gender statistics. However, the key to national statistics systems adopting these indicators and measurements is the long period of lobbying by women's and gender advocates for data to be collected and the role of strong national machineries for women in ensuring progress is made in engendering government data collection systems. Political will and the support of national statistics offices, policy decision makers and planners, is also a key to progress in gender indicators being institutionalized in national statistical systems and data collection.

The national machinery for women in the Philippines and civil society involvement, have played a strong role in the development of these GAD indicator initiatives, as has the work of women's and non-government organizations in their monitoring and advocacy for gender equality in national policies and planning.

NGO –Regional – Advocacy, surveys, data collection on violence against women

It would be difficult to cover the extensive, definitive and continuing work of non-government organizations, networks and women's rights advocates, in raising the issue of violence against women in the ESCAP region. Their work over several decades has defined and exposed the issues, re-conceptualized the scope of gender violence and reaffirmed the need for continuing data collection. To cite only one example, the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) has continued to provide a forum for meetings of women's networks and organizations with the UN special rapporteur on violence against women. In addition, APWLD has continued to develop, through its regional consultations with participation of NGO representatives from many countries in the ESCAP region, research, analysis and responses on the many forms of violence against women in Asia Pacific countries. Its recent consultation provided a regional overview on harmful traditional and cultural practices related to violence against women.<sup>15</sup> Such networks and consultations, which involve co-ordination and sharing of information between non-government organizations working on violence against women in the region, are also an opportunity for their participation in the global United Nations initiatives on the use of indicators and data collection on violence against women.

Involving this critical mass of VAW stakeholders on measures, at global, regional and national level, for better data collection on violence against women, will be a key to its success because the monitoring and advocacy of women's and civil society organizations contributes so significantly still to recognition of the prevalence of violence against women in all regions. The role of regional intergovernmental organizations in influencing member states' governments to join initiatives for data collection on violence against women, through technical assistance to

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<sup>14</sup> Lina V. Castro, "Current initiatives in the Philippines statistical system on social statistics", paper presented for expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics, UN Statistical Division, NY, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> "An Asia Pacific Regional Overview on Harmful Traditional and Cultural Practices related to Violence against Women and Successful Strategies to eliminate such Practices", based on reports of APWLD NGO Consultations with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Special Rapporteur on Right to Adequate Housing, presented at ESCAP EGM on regional strategies for implementing the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women, *supra* note 9.

statistical offices and national women's machineries, could support these efforts by non-government by women's rights and gender advocates to end violence against women. Governmental efforts have been slow to follow the many, varied initiatives by non-government women's organisations to respond to this critical issue of concern: violence against women in its many forms.

#### Other Agencies – country studies and data collection on violence against women

The World Health Organization (WHO) maintains a database on intimate partner violence and physical violence against women and issued a groundbreaking report, the *World Report on Violence and Health(2005)*. Its multi-country studies on violence and women's health covered the following countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In a meeting of national machineries for women in the Pacific on government strategies to address violence against women, many country NWM representatives expressed interest in doing similar studies, which were based on partnership between the national machineries and other ministries, including health and education.<sup>16</sup> In countries where few studies on violence against women exist, such initiatives by other agencies can often be the means of a groundbreaking single study that can form the basis of government and community recognition of violence against women – where police and other reports have been ignored.<sup>17</sup>

The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has played a critical role in raising the issue of violence against women globally. It continues to provide great support at the country level, with government and non-government stakeholders, with its global fund, advocacy and reporting on violence against women. Regionally, along with other UN agencies and partner organizations, violence against women is addressed through its varied country and sub-regional programmes and project work.

#### IV Conclusion

ESCAP noted in an overview paper on the Beijing + 10 reports, that while enactment of legislation and commitments to CEDAW existed, systems for collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data were still not in place.<sup>18</sup> The many forms of violence against women in the region are still reported mainly through surveys, research and qualitative studies by non-government organizations. Few statistical systems have incorporated indicators on violence against women for systematic data collection. Reports from health and police departments are sources of information on reported cases, which are widely acknowledged as not reflecting incidence and prevalence.

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<sup>16</sup> Pacific Regional Workshop on Strengthening Partnerships for Eliminating Violence Against Women, 17-19 February 2003, organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Fund for Women, the South Pacific Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

<sup>17</sup> Personal observation and communications on use of the Samoa WHO study.

<sup>18</sup> *Partnerships Moving Beijing Forward. Advancing the status of women in Asia and the Pacific: a profile of the ESCAP region.* ESCAP 2004, p.10.

There is a need to build on previous work in ESCAP on gender statistics and review what preparations would be needed to use indicators on violence for data collection in the region. ESCAP could play a supportive role in having indicators incorporated in statistical systems in the region, so that there is consistent, reliable data available on violence against women in its many forms.

Opportunities for responses within ESCAP include:

- linking previous gender statistics work with present work on MDG indicators
  - joint work by statistics and gender and development sections on advocacy and training on VAW indicators and data collection
  - needs assessment survey on statistical systems in the region and their potential role in data collection on violence against women
-