

15 ESSENTIALS FOR A SURVIVOR-CENTRED DESIGN OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ADMINISTRATIVE DATA SYSTEMS



The **main objectives of collecting and promoting the use of Violence Against Women (VAW) administrative data** are to improve policies

and programmes to prevent VAW, to strengthen support to survivors and to hold perpetrators accountable.



There is a **clear ethical obligation to ensure that collection and use of VAW administrative data benefits survivors and does no harm.** Survivor-centred

approaches place the rights, needs and safety of women at the centre of both service delivery and administrative data collection and use.



These essentials summarize the **critical steps that should always be taken** to ensure that the collection and use of VAW administrative prioritizes the safety, needs and rights of survivors. Full description and details about

how to implement the steps below can be found in the *Global technical guidance for collection and use of administrative data on violence against women*.

Governance and coordination

- 1 Include representatives of specialized VAW Civil Society Organizations in the coordination mechanism.
- 2 Consult with survivor experts where possible to provide inputs into data collection forms and information management systems.

Collection of VAW administrative data

High quality service provision is always the priority—documentation/data collection must never represent a barrier to receiving service, and survivors must be able to decline their information being recorded without fear of losing services.

- 3 Prioritize provision of services and care over data collection and emphasize survivor autonomy to decline to answer.
 - 4 Design data collection forms and information management systems to facilitate survivor non-response.
- Reduce the response burden on survivors*
- 5 Limit the number of questions asked and collect the minimum data set.
 - 6 Avoid framing questions to imply blame or stigmatize survivors.
 - 7 Ask questions with empathy and only if needed, especially the ones that might be perceived as invasive or traumatize survivors.
 - 8 Do not document issues that are unnecessary for service provision or could result in prejudice or discrimination against the survivor. Seek to protect survivors and avoid revictimization associated with data collection during service provision.
 - 9 Only document drug and alcohol use and mental health status as relevant to provide services. Survivors should not be questioned about their sexual history.
 - 10 Collect data in line with the minimum data set (survivor's sex, age and relationship with the perpetrator and where violence occurred).
 - 11 Ensure that it is safe to collect any additional socio-demographic variables (e.g. ethnicity, disability status, citizenship/migration status, gender identity and sexual orientation).

Access to VAW administrative data

- 12 Limit access to individual records of VAW survivors to those who need to know for direct care provision and data management. Ensure confidentiality.
- 13 Ensure that in the service delivery site only individuals providing direct care/services can identify survivors of VAW. Supervisors and decision-makers, should only be able to access aggregate data.
- 14 Follow best practices on data protection and security for data management.¹
- 15 Anonymize any information made publicly available.



Human rights-based approach

A human rights-based approach means that the collection and use of administrative data will prioritize the safety and well-being of women and treat them with dignity, respect and sensitivity. It also calls for the highest attainable standards of health, social, justice and policing services. The achievement of quality, available, accessible and acceptable services for survivors must be at the heart of this approach.



Survivor-centred approaches

Survivor-centred approaches place the rights, needs and desires of women at the centre of both service delivery and VAW administrative data collection and use. Administrative data collection should respect survivors' wishes, and the analysis, sharing and reporting of data should involve survivors as appropriate, and where possible, and always make their safety and well-being the central concern.



Safety

The safety of women and girls is paramount when collecting, analysing and reporting VAW administrative data. Data collection and use must avoid causing further harm. Data on women's experiences of violence must not be solicited by service providers (health, police, justice, social services) unless services are available to support them. Women who disclose violence should immediately receive WHO-recommended first-line support, using the LIVES approach: 'Listen, Inquire about needs and concerns, Validate, Enhance Safety, Support'. Those providers who offer services to survivors should be trained on how to deliver first-line support.ⁱⁱⁱ



Advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment

Service-based data collection and use of VAW administrative data must promote women's agency, where women are entitled to make their own decisions—including their right to refuse data collection or to refuse referrals—without this affecting their ability to receive care or services.



Cultural sensitivity and age appropriateness

Survivors of violence are of diverse ages, identities, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities and ethnicities and speak different languages. Collection of VAW administrative data should take this into account, including to help understand the service use (or lack of use) by groups of women who are most at risk. Administrative data can contribute to understanding the service experiences and needs of women who face multiple forms of discrimination because of their race, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, religion, disability, marital status, occupation or other characteristics, or because they have been subjected to violence.



Perpetrator accountability

VAW administrative data collection can effectively analyse whether perpetrators are being held accountable and whether justice (or other relevant) responses are proportional to the acts committed. The data-related rights of alleged and convicted perpetrators must be respected and Standard Operating Procedures and Information Sharing Protocols must align with national and subnational privacy legislation, as well as international standards. With respect to survivors' participation in perpetrator accountability, the goal is to "support and facilitate the survivor's participation with the justice process, promote her capacity of acting or exerting her agency, while ensuring that the burden or onus of seeking justice is not placed on her but on the State".^{iv} In the collection of administrative data, it is critical that survivors are made aware before they disclose if disclosure may result in them being involved with the police, justice or other institutions so that they can make informed choices about the information that they divulge.

i Assuring statistical confidentiality and data security is a principle for the production of statistics. This requires that appropriate standards, guidelines, practices and procedures are in place to ensure statistical confidentiality, that strict protocols to safeguard data confidentiality apply to users with access to microdata, and that microdata is managed in a secure environment. UN DESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), Statistics Division. 2019. "United Nations National Quality Assurance Frameworks Manual for Official Statistics." Studies in Methods Series M No. 100. United Nations, New York, pp. 23-24, 115.

ii For the full text of the guiding principles see Annex 1 of the Global technical guidance. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and World Health Organization (WHO). 2022. Global technical guidance: Improving the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women. New York: UN Women.

iii WHO (World Health Organization). 2021. *Caring for Women Subjected to Violence: A WHO Curriculum for Training Health-Care Providers*. Revised edition. Geneva: WHO. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and World Health Organization (WHO). 2022. Global technical guidance: Improving the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women. New York: UN Women.

iv UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), WHO (World Health Organization), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). 2015. *Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence*. New York: UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC.