

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NATIONAL STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN GEORGIA 2017



The European Union  
for Georgia



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus group discussions
<b>FRA</b>	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
<b>GEOSTAT</b>	National Statistics Office of Georgia
<b>IEC materials</b>	Information, education and communication materials
<b>Istanbul Convention</b>	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence
<b>KIIs</b>	Key informant interviews
<b>LBT</b>	Lesbian, bisexual and transgender
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>VAW</b>	Violence against women
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against women and girls
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of this document

In order to inform policymakers and assist the design and implementation of effective policies to combat violence against women and domestic violence, it is first necessary to understand the nature and prevalence of the phenomenon. Collecting reliable, comparable and comprehensive data measuring the prevalence, nature of and other factors associated with violence against women (VAW) is essential to ending it. To this end, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention) requires States parties to collect disaggregated relevant statistical data and support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope of the convention.

The present paper was developed by UN Women Georgia and the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT) with the financial support of the UN Women and WHO joint Programme “Strengthening Methodologies and Measurement and Building National Capacities for Violence against Women Data”, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of The United Kingdom. The publication documents the lessons learned from conducting the National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia implemented jointly by UN Women and GEOSTAT in 2017 within the framework of the “Unite to Fight Violence against Women” project generously funded by the European Union. The paper aims at analysing and documenting this experience – the process and results as well as the lessons learned. More specifically, the publication records the key steps and lessons learned from every stage of the process – from its inception to fieldwork and to dissemination of the results. The publication

captures the unique methodology developed and used exclusively for the National VAW Study in Georgia and analyses its added value compared to other similar methodologies traditionally used when conducting VAW prevalence studies. The publication also focuses extensively on challenges and lessons learned during the implementation of the study, providing practical insights, learnings and recommendations from practitioners in the field. The publication offers useful guidance for researchers, government and development partners and other interested parties in Georgia and around the world on the implementation of national prevalence studies on VAW.

This publication was developed through critical reflection by the study implementation team – UN Women, GEOSTAT and other research partners involved in the study. The insights captured in the document draw from a series of interviews and discussions between the study management team of UN Women and GEOSTAT as well as interviewers, field supervisors and other parties involved in the preparation, management and implementation of the research.

The study report is available online and can be downloaded from the UN Women Georgia country office website.

## Context

Situated in the Eastern Europe, Georgia is a former republic of the Soviet Union with a population of almost 4 million as of 2017.<sup>1</sup> The country’s population comprises largely of ethnic Georgians (87 per cent) alongside Armenians, Azeris, Russians and other groups. The majority of people in Georgia belong to

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1. GEOSTAT, Women and Men in Georgia (Tbilisi, National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2017).

the Orthodox Church (84 per cent of women and 83 per cent of men in 2014), with Muslims as the next largest religious group (10 per cent of women and 11 per cent of men in 2014).<sup>2</sup> Georgia, alongside the other former Soviet countries, initiated a transition to democracy after the break-up of the Soviet Union in the beginning of 1990s. This transition was hindered by armed conflicts over Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, economic collapse, inflation and high rates of unemployment.<sup>3</sup>

Key indicators of gender equality show a mixed picture of women's rights in Georgia since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 2017, Georgia ranked 94 out of 144 in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.<sup>4</sup> Adult literacy for women and men is 100 per cent, and women and men attain education at similar rates. However, labour participation for women is lower (58 per cent of the female population aged 15-64) than for men (75 per cent comparatively). Data from the political domain in 2018 found that women hold 16 per cent of seats in national parliaments, and 32 per cent of firms have female top managers. The maternal mortality rate in 2015 was 36 female deaths per 100,000 live births in Georgia, compared to an average of 18 across the regions of Europe and Central Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Up until 2017, the only national prevalence study on violence against women in Georgia was conducted by UNFPA in 2009. The UNFPA National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia was implemented in line with the World Health Organization's Multi-Country Study on Women's

Health and Domestic violence against Women<sup>6</sup> combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The sample of the study included 3,872 women aged 15-49. The findings of the 2009 national study pointed to widespread experiences of violence against women across the country as well as the prevalence of attitudes and perceptions reinforcing gender inequality and normalizing violence against women.<sup>7</sup> According to the study, 6.9 per cent of women reported having experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. The study further found that 78.3 per cent of women believed that domestic violence should only be discussed within the family, and these beliefs were more prevalent in rural contexts than in urban. Across Georgia, women's roles are tightly intertwined with expectations around motherhood and domestic responsibilities. Women are largely expected to obey their husbands, and 51 per cent of women believe that a good wife obeys her husband even if she personally disagrees.<sup>8</sup> Women and men are socialized into gendered work and behaviours during adolescence, with women taking primary responsibility for feminine-coded household tasks, and men taking responsibility for masculine-coded tasks and public roles. The post-Soviet democratic transition period saw a series of shifts in women's place in society. As unemployment rates among men rose, women shifted into wage work to support their families, often migrating to seek work. At the same time, the growing influence of the Orthodox Church in the post-Soviet era espoused conservative family traditions and values, which sat at odds with women's new roles in the economic realm and their contribution to the free market economy.<sup>9</sup>

2. Ibid.

3. Chitashvili, M., Javakhishvili, N., Arutiunov, L., Tsuladze, L. and Chachanidze, S., National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia: Final Report (Tbilisi, UNFPA, ACT Research, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Center for Social Sciences, 2010).

4. World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report 2017. Available at [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf).

5. World Bank, Gender Brief – Georgia (2015).

6. WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women. Available at: [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/Annex3-Annex4.pdf](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/Annex3-Annex4.pdf).

7. Chitashvili, M., Javakhishvili, N., Arutiunov, L., Tsuladze, L. and Chachanidze, S., National research on domestic violence against women in Georgia (Tbilisi, UNFPA Georgia, 2010).

8. Chitashvili et al., National Research (2010).

9. Chitashvili et al., National Research (2010).

Despite its scale and socioeconomic impact, violence against women remains largely underreported and under researched in key areas. The 2017 National VAW Study was thus a timely initiative that filled the gap of the nationally representative data on violence against women and domestic violence and generated evidence to inform the development of evidence-based policy and action for the Government of Georgia, development partners, civil society and other actors on the ground.

## Background to the study

In 2017, UN Women in partnership with GEOSTAT and with the generous support of the European Union conducted the National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia. The study constituted the first nationwide research initiative on violence against women to be conducted in Georgia since 2009 and explored the prevalence of domestic violence, non-partner physical and sexual violence, and perceptions and awareness of women and men on gender and violence in Georgia. For the first time in Georgia, the study also generated data on the prevalence of sexual harassment and stalking at the national level. In addition to filling the gap in the nationally representative data on violence against women in Georgia, the findings of the National VAW Study generated baseline data for the indicators of the nationalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strengthened the capacity of national partners on conducting prevalence surveys on VAW. The objectives of the 2017 National Survey on Violence against Women in Georgia were as follows:

- To obtain reliable estimates of the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and

girls, including stalking and sexual harassment, committed by intimate partners as well as other perpetrators in the private and public spheres, during their lifetime as well as in the preceding 12 months

- To assess the extent to which violence against women is associated with a range of health and other outcomes
- To identify factors that may either protect or put women at risk of violence
- To assess the extent to which women are aware of and use services for survivors of violence
- To examine men's and women's awareness of and attitudes towards issues of violence against women

To achieve the above objectives, the study included the following three main research components:

1. Quantitative survey with women aged 15-64 on prevalence, risk factors, protective factors, attitudes and perceptions and awareness of violence against women
2. Quantitative survey with men aged 15-64 on attitudes and perceptions of violence against women
3. Qualitative analysis including desk research, key informant interviews and focus group discussions

The study preparations launched in the beginning of 2017, with fieldwork conducted in August and September of the same year. The preliminary findings of the study captured in the summary report were released to the wider public in the spring of 2018. The final report of the study was issued in the fall of 2018.



# CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY – A HYBRID MODEL

## Key steps undertaken to develop the study methodology:

1. Determined the key objectives of the research and the national priorities in terms of data needed to report on the national SDG indicators for Georgia
2. Reviewed multiple international survey instruments and methodologies to see which ones would best meet the needs of Georgia
3. Developed a hybrid methodology to meet the specific needs of Georgia

## Decision-making around scope and focus of the study

UN Women and GEOSTAT first set the key objectives of the 2017 National Survey on Violence against Women. The priority aims were as follows:

- To obtain reliable estimates of the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls committed by intimate partners as well as other perpetrators in the private and public spheres, during their lifetime as well as in the preceding 12 months
- To assess the extent to which violence against women is associated with a range of health and other outcomes
- To identify factors that may either protect or put women at risk of violence
- To assess the extent to which women are aware of and use services for survivors of violence
- To examine men's and women's awareness of and attitudes towards issues of violence against women

The study methodology was developed to be able to meet these objectives as well as to fit the context and

meet the specific needs of measuring violence against women in Georgia. For Georgia, it was important for the study to be nationally representative. Additionally, because regions of Georgia have rather different subcultures, an objective was also set to generate representative data of violence on the regional level.

With these objectives in mind, the study was designed to produce reliable indicators of violence, representative at the national, urban-rural and regional levels. The survey covered the area of the country controlled by the central government, excluding breakaway regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali / South Ossetia.

The target population of the study included women and men between 15 and 64 years of age living in private households. While some prevalence studies focus on women aged 15-49 years, UN Women and the Government of Georgia felt it was important to expand the upper age limit to understand the experiences of older women. However, leaving the upper age range unrestricted would have required a significant increase in the overall sample size; therefore, an upper age limit of 64 was set. Another reason for setting an upper age limit was to ensure that the overlap between gender-based violence and violence towards the elderly did not skew the objective of the study – to generate data related to gender-based violence.

## Reasons for having chosen a hybrid model

The study drew on internationally established research methodologies that complemented one another to provide a holistic picture of violence against women: the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women; the European Union Agency for Fundamental

Rights (FRA) survey; and the United Nations Study on Men and Violence. This approach was taken for the following reasons:

- The WHO questionnaire is predominantly designed to suit the needs of low and middle-income settings. In order to gather more relevant data for the Georgian context that would also allow for greater comparability within its region, the survey integrated questions from the FRA study “Violence against women: an EU-wide survey”.
- At the time of developing the survey, the Government of Georgia had developed its SDG National Plan and targets. The survey was required to provide data and set a baseline to inform a set of VAW-related SDG indicators. Thus, some questions needed to be added or adapted to align with the nationalized SDG indicators.
- It was deemed important to measure sexual harassment and stalking. These types of violence against women are not covered in the WHO questionnaire; therefore, questions from the FRA study were added to address this objective.
- While not the primary focus of the research, it was considered important to understand the VAW-related attitudes and beliefs of men, alongside with those of women, in order to inform violence-prevention activities. The study therefore included a small survey with a subsample of men. In order to develop comparable questions on awareness, attitudes and knowledge, the team drew upon the research tools specifically designed for men in the questionnaire of the UN Study on Men and Violence.
- Stakeholders expressed an interest in exploring the specific needs of vulnerable groups in line with the SDG agenda of “leave no one behind”. However, doing so through the quantitative survey would have been challenging because it would have required oversampling those populations, which would have been resource intensive. Therefore, it was decided that qualitative research was the best way to capture the experience of these groups. The qualitative element provided space to understand the experiences of particularly vulnerable groups, including migrants, ethnic minorities, LBT people and women with disabilities. Within the context of the “leave no one behind” agenda and the increasing recognition of better capturing data and addressing intersectional drivers of violence, this approach of including a targeted qualitative piece was a useful way to gather valuable information on these issues in a manner that was not overly resource intensive.

This hybrid methodology may also be a potentially beneficial approach for other countries in the region, as it meets the particular needs of Central Europe in terms of being from middle and high-income settings and having characteristics that are comparable to other parts of Europe. Others may choose to use a hybrid model if they have particular data requirements for national-level SDG indicators, if they are particularly interested in sexual harassment, if they are interested in using qualitative research to understand vulnerable population groups or if they are interested in collecting data from both men and women.

**Key lessons learned:**

- Set the research objective and priorities first, and develop the methodology to meet those needs and objectives of the specific context.
- It can be useful to draw from multiple surveys. However, it is recommended to use one best-practice questionnaire as the core basis for the survey. This ensures best practices in terms of length, question sequencing and the design of the survey. To choose a core questionnaire, it is important to consider how to make the data comparable to other countries or regions.
- Taking a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative research is considered best practice in VAW research. Including a qualitative component to the research requires separate skills, but qualitative research can provide more nuanced data on complex social issues or can help researchers understand the experiences of particular subpopulations.
- If working with vulnerable groups, work in collaboration with local organizations already working with those communities to ensure questions and approaches are sensitive to their specific needs.
- Qualitative research is useful to put into practice the principle of “leave no one behind” by capturing the experiences of vulnerable groups that would otherwise be missing from the picture.

# CHAPTER 3: ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STUDY

## **Key steps undertaken to organize and manage the study:**

1. Selected the partners responsible for implementation of the study, recognizing the skills and expertise needed for each component
2. Recruited an international expert to provide technical support throughout the life of the study
3. Established the National Study Reference Group to secure buy-in from national partners and ensure ownership over the study findings

## **Selecting partners**

At the initial stage of planning the survey, it was important to identify all parties responsible for implementation of the study. GEOSTAT was identified as the primary partner to conduct the study. The role included managing all survey preparation, logistics, data collection, data entry, data cleaning and initial data analysis. It was an important decision to invest in national capacity development so that GEOSTAT is able to replicate similar surveys in future in line with the obligations undertaken by the Istanbul Convention, ratified by Georgia in 2017.

The initial plan was that GEOSTAT would conduct both the qualitative and quantitative research initiatives. However, early on in the planning process, it became clear that GEOSTAT did not have experience conducting qualitative research and did not have the capacity to deliver this objective in the most effective way. Therefore, a separate team was recruited and managed by UN Women to implement the qualitative research component.

There are pros and cons of having separate teams conduct the qualitative and quantitative research components. Ideally, one research organization should conduct all elements of the study in order to ensure that the pieces are aligned and complementary. However, the first priority is to have organizations or individuals leading the respective components of the study who have specific expertise in that research methodology.

If, as in the case of this study, that means two different teams are involved, then it is important to ensure close coordination between them. For example, at the stages of defining the main topics for the quantitative survey and conducting actual interviews, it is recommended that the survey team has periodic meetings with the quantitative survey team to better define or, if necessary, add the relevant dimensions to the qualitative component. Periodic meetings should be held for the sharing of experiences between both teams; this is particularly relevant for the field personnel. In Georgia, for example, after a period of time conducting quantitative fieldwork, the sexual harassment prevalence appeared higher than expected. While it was not a part of the qualitative research's original design, it was decided to add additional focus group discussions to further explore the issue.

## **Securing external technical support**

Conducting large population household surveys and, in particular, surveys on VAW requires very specialized technical capacity. While national statistics offices often have extensive experience conducting national surveys, they may not have prior experience and knowledge of the globally agreed-

upon methodological and ethical standards<sup>11</sup> on VAW surveys and thus may require external support.

In order to ensure that the study was conducted in line with the globally established methodological and ethical standards and guidelines on collecting VAW data, UN Women recruited an international consultant to work closely with GEOSTAT and lead the implementation of the study. The role of the international consultant included development of the study methodology, provision of technical guidance in the implementation of the study, analytical guidance in the data analysis process and leading the report preparation and writing process. Another important role of the international consultant was to strengthen the capacity of GEOSTAT staff, including through training on specific ethical and safety issues related to conducting research on violence against women.

In order to plan the research, the key partners came together, including UN Women, GEOSTAT, the qualitative research team and the international consultant. This was important in order to build a strong relationship between the partners and establish trust and clear roles and responsibilities. This investment of time at the beginning helped to ensure a smooth working relationship and more efficient implementation of the study. It was important for the consultant to come to Georgia a number of times to maintain a strong working relationship with GEOSTAT and promote genuine collaboration. The consultant was also available throughout the research process to answer questions and address any issues or challenges. This open and collaborative relationship between all of the partners was key to the success of the study.

## Establishing stakeholder engagement

Establishing ownership and buy-in from stakeholders early in the process is essential to successfully implement a study. To ensure coordination, communication and information-sharing with key national partners and stakeholders, at the initial stage of the research planning it is recommended to create a technical advisory group – a stakeholders' platform that includes all relevant partners working on ending VAW in the country, such as development partners, international organizations, CSOs and academia. In Georgia, UN Women set up the National Study Reference Group, which included partners from government, UN and other international organizations, CSOs and academia. The specific objectives of the group were as follows:

- To ensure coordination, communication and information-sharing with key national partners and stakeholders on the National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia
- To provide inputs and strategic perspectives on the survey's design, including methodology and indicators and the survey's implementation
- To review and validate the study findings
- To contribute to the development of recommendations based on the findings of the study to be used in the formulation of evidence-based strategies, policies and plans on ending VAWG

The National Study Reference Group was engaged in the design of the study including in setting the study indicators and developing the questionnaire. The group was also convened to discuss and validate the preliminary findings of the study and develop recommendations, which were included in the final chapter of the study report.

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11 *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women – Statistical Surveys* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.7). Available at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/Guidelines\\_Statistics\\_VAW.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/Guidelines_Statistics_VAW.pdf).

**Key lessons learned:**

- When conducting a national study, it is preferable to select an organization within the national machinery, rather than a commercial research organization, in order to strengthen national capacity on conducting VAW prevalence studies and ensure national ownership.
- If national agencies do not have previous research experience on violence against women, technical support is important. Adequate time and resources should be allocated to work in collaborative and iterative ways with national statistics bodies.
- It may be necessary to hire separate agencies to conduct the quantitative and qualitative research components as they require different skills. However, if different organizations or individuals are conducting different pieces of research, it is important to ensure effective coordination and collaboration between them.
- The use of external technical support can be valuable and is often necessary, especially when the responsible agency has never carried out surveys on VAW before.
- It is important to develop timelines that allow adequate time to build trust and foster good working relationships between UN organizations, government agencies and international consultants.
- It is vital to secure buy-in from national partners – for example, through a national working group – to ensure ownership over the study findings.

# CHAPTER 4: PREPARING FOR RESEARCH

## Key steps undertaken to prepare for research:

1. Determined the study population, age range and other important parameters of the research
2. Designed and drew the sample accordingly
3. Adapted and translated the research tools
4. Conducted Training of Trainers for GEOSTAT staff
5. Conducted training for supervisors and enumerators

## Study population and sample design

Preparing to conduct a study of this nature requires making key decisions on the objectives and aims of the research, as well as sample sizes and approaches. Decisions need to be made in regard to:

- Whether the study needs to be nationally representative
- The age range of the target population
- The geographic areas to be covered
- Whether the study will include a different sample with men
- Whether the study will try to look at vulnerable subpopulations

There is also a series of trade-off decisions to be made in this regard. For example, a sample of a broader age range requires a larger sample size, which adds to the cost of the study. Similarly, deciding to include research specifically with men has great benefits in terms of providing specific information on men's and perpetrator's attitudes, which can be useful for developing prevention programming. Conducting this research, however, requires additional resources and expertise.

When determining sample size and sampling design, specificities of the survey and data disaggregation variables (e.g. geographic location, age groups, etc.) necessary for the robust data collection and future analysis should be considered. Specificity includes the sensitive nature of such studies' topic, which increases the risk of obtaining a lower response rate compared with other studies (non-sampling error). It should be underscored that despite specific data needs, survey data should not be analysed for the small population subgroups. It is strongly recommended to design a sample and define disaggregation for sufficiently large groups of the population. For example, it is counterproductive to design a sample with small age groups (e.g. comprising ranges of only three years) because it complicates sampling design and makes the response rate unpredictable for this population.

Considering the relatively low prevalence of some forms of violence, it is hard to cover a sufficient number of observations needed to obtain reliable data, not to mention the necessity of analysing disaggregated data for specific population subgroups (e.g. age, sex, employment status, etc.). According to the relevant SDGs, some VAW indicators and variables should be analysed accounting for the preceding 12 months, which needs further and careful analysis in determining the sample size necessary to acquire reliable results.

In Georgia, it was decided that the data needed to be representative at the national, urban-rural and, to the extent possible, regional level. The survey therefore covered the area of the country controlled by the central government. The target population of the survey included women and men aged 15-64 living in private households.

The 2014 general population census database was



used as the sampling frame for the survey. Two-stage cluster sampling was applied, where the primary sampling unit is the enumeration area, and the secondary sampling unit is the address of a household. Stratification was made using two variables: region and settlement type (urban or rural).

In total, 6,006 women aged 15-64 and 1,601 men aged 15-64 completed the questionnaire. The data was weighted at the household and individual level.

For the qualitative research, to cover subgroups of the entire population and increase the data representativeness and generalizability, the team identified that it was important to sample particular minority ethnic groups not only from one area where this specific minority group is heavily populated but from various geographic areas. Representatives of the same ethnic groups in different geographic areas could have different experiences based on circumstances specific to their communities (e.g. cultural, ethical, etc.).

## Adaptation and translation of research tools

Adapting a questionnaire is a delicate balance. Making as few changes as possible to the proven methodology preserves the quality of the survey and comparability of the data, but if something is important in a certain context, it should not be excluded. Adaptations should be made with careful consideration and in consultation with the relevant parties. During adaptation of a study questionnaire, attention should be given to the precise use of terminology to avoid changes in meaning.

The process of combining and adapting questionnaires is important to ensure the final survey meets the overall objectives of a study, as well as ensures that the data collected will meet the political or advocacy needs of the context. The process for adapting and translating the research tools for the National VAW Study in Georgia was closely linked to aligning the tools and data with the national SDG plan. The adaptation process involved working with GEOSTAT to set goals and objectives for the research.

The international consultant was then able to take these goals and objectives to analyse and source survey questionnaires to meet those objectives. The technical expert then worked closely with the research implementation team and UN Women to develop a draft survey by reviewing and adapting the wording of questions to make them relevant to the context. Country modifications generally involved either adding or replacing a limited number of questions to explore country-specific issues or modifying the response categories used to make them appropriate to the particular setting. The questionnaire was then translated in Georgian, tested and piloted.

The process of questionnaire adaptation involves taking time to consider:

- Whether the wording of questions is relevant to the setting or whether they will need to be refined
- How to negotiate the length of the survey to ensure it is not so long that it is prohibitive for respondents but still provides useful data
- How to localize the response options so that the language and weighting of responses suits the context and how respondents are likely to answer

The process of collaboration and iteration on the wording of the questionnaire will involve negotiation and discussion, sometimes around very sensitive issues in particular. It takes time to get the wording of questions on violence against women right, so that they are nuanced but also accessible to the respondents who will be taking the survey. All of this requires discussion and time to ensure the survey is clear and accurate. It is common through this process to encounter topics or areas that may feel challenging or confrontational for audiences. For example, it may seem challenging to include questions on suicide or interfamily violence. Including these sensitive questions, however, will provide rich and useful data to help build a full understanding of why violence is occurring and how to stop it. Negotiating and making decisions around these difficult questions points to the need of building deep understanding around the issue of VAW broadly and facilitating good relationships between research implementation



agencies and technical experts. Technical experts will be able to provide international context on how a question provides valuable advocacy data.

In Georgia, there was extensive negotiation around the decision to amend questions on sexual violence perpetrated by family members. International research shows that the most common perpetrators of sexual violence are family members. In Georgia, for questions on experiences of sexual violence, the preceded options of family members were considered too sensitive for inclusion. After extensive negotiation between the researchers, it was decided not to include those response options explicitly, but this decision may have resulted in less clear data on the perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls.

Translating the questionnaire from the original language to the native language of the country is important to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretation of the questionnaire by the interviewers. Translation of the questionnaire needs to be done carefully, by someone who understands the purpose of the survey, to ensure that the nuances of the questions are not lost in translation.

## Interviewer and supervisor training

The international consultant conducted a Training of Trainers with GEOSTAT staff on the specific ethical

and safety issues and interviewing techniques that needed to be included in their training with enumerators and supervisors. GEOSTAT then led the recruitment and training of the field staff.

The requirements for interviewers on this survey were different from most surveys. Given that the survey covered sensitive questions for female respondents, all selected interviewers had to be females and have experience working with sample surveys. According to these principles, 159 interviewers were selected from 10 regions across Georgia. The total number of field personnel selected across Georgia amounted to 181 persons, including 22 regional supervisors and 159 interviewers.

While the international consultant recommended that at least two weeks be allocated to the training of field staff given the sensitive nature of the research, GEOSTAT felt that because they were working with very experienced staff who had conducted many surveys with them in the past, this was not necessary. The field staff training was therefore more limited than is usually the case under the WHO methodology. Interviewers received training on ethical standards, interviewing skills and other broad topics but not much training on VAW issues. In hindsight, the disclosure rates of violence in some regions were relatively low; this may have been improved if field staff had received more comprehensive training.

### Key lessons learned:

- Adaptation of the questionnaire needs to be done carefully by balancing data needs while keeping a strong focus on the study, including considering potential implications such as the time it takes to complete one questionnaire. Increasing the number of questions in the questionnaire means a longer time to complete one questionnaire. This has implications for respondent fatigue and the time needed to complete data collection.
- Do not combine or adapt questionnaires to a level that data cannot be compared with other national or regional data.
- Never change the wording of violence-related questions that are featured in the WHO methodology.
- Quality translation requires considerable time, which needs to be incorporated into project planning.
- Interviewer and supervisor preparation requires extensive training to ensure a deep understanding of VAW. It is recommended that the training for interviewers and supervisors be a minimum of two weeks long, and it is vital that sufficient training be provided on VAW issues and strategies for ensuring confidentiality.

# CHAPTER 5: FIELDWORK

## Key steps undertaken in fieldwork:

1. Conducted the pilot study
2. Collected quantitative data across Georgia adhering to the WHO ethical and safety standards and quality control mechanisms
3. Collected qualitative data from specific sites
4. Entered data into database and conducted data cleaning

## Pilot

The pilot study is one of the most important steps in survey preparation. It helps the field team to understand the process and also identify any issues with the questionnaire or areas with which they may need further support.

In Georgia, one of the challenges with the pilot study was related to the relatively low rates of VAW at the site. Given the small sample size of the pilot, through the random selection process, the enumerators rarely identified someone who had experienced VAW. This meant that they did not get the opportunity to practice large parts of the questionnaire because those parts are skipped when a respondent has not experienced violence. Therefore, those sections of the survey were not tested as thoroughly as they should have been. In a low prevalence setting, therefore, and in addition to a standard pilot, it might be worth purposively recruiting women who have experienced VAW to enable enumerators to actively practice the VAW sections of the questionnaire. Alternatively, another solution would be to increase the pilot sample size.

## Quantitative data collection

The survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews. Face cards (one smiling and one crying)

were also used to elicit information on women's experiences of childhood sexual abuse, which is particularly sensitive. This method was used to help improve disclosure rates. As a result, reported rates of childhood sexual abuse through face cards method increased with 6 per cent from 3 per cent to 9 per cent.

Regional supervisors were responsible for conducting fieldwork across the regions. It was the responsibility of the field supervisors to make the necessary preparations, organize and direct the fieldwork and conduct initial logic checks of the completed questionnaires. The number of field personnel selected across Georgia amounted to 181 persons, including 22 regional supervisors and 159 interviewers.

The focus of the survey was on women. However, a smaller sample of men was included to find out about their attitudes and knowledge related to VAW. In each cluster, female or male respondents were interviewed separately. This strategy ensured the safety of the participants and increased the quality of the obtained data.

The aim was also to spend a relatively short amount of time in each enumeration area in order to decrease the likelihood of revealing the aims of the study among the population. The above-mentioned factors were considered during the process of selecting the sample size per enumeration area for female and male respondents.

Overall, data collection went smoothly. However, there were some issues related to concerns around confidentiality.

In rural parts of Georgia, households do not have specific addresses. Therefore, the sampling design

used the full names of the heads of households as a substitution for household addresses. As a result, interviewers had to ask members of the community where a certain household was located by utilizing the names of the heads of households. This issue raised suspicion and discomfort among some study participants. The core problem in this situation was the level of trust held by the participants and their fears of a breach of confidentiality. In order to address such concerns, it is important for researchers to be able to clearly explain to participants how confidentiality will be protected.

Fieldwork also revealed issues with the participants' trust when answering the demographics section of the survey. Survey respondents were unsure whether or not the confidentiality of their shared information would be protected. In such situations, the interviewers reassured study participants that only aggregated data of demographic characteristics would be used in the data analysis. Nevertheless, there were instances when interviewers wrote the responses to the demographics section on a separate sheet of paper to demonstrate that detailed demographics were not part of the survey and to increase respondents' trust.

In Georgia, the survey was conducted using pen and paper hardcopies of the questionnaires, from which interviewers read the questions and marked the respondents' answers. In other countries, data is often collected with digital tablets, given the advances in technology in recent years. This allows for preprogrammed skip patterns, bypasses the need for post-interview data entry and helps to ensure anonymity. In some cases, respondents themselves can enter their responses directly into tablets, not having to reveal anything to the interviewer and thus ensuring complete confidentiality. For research on sensitive issues such as VAW, this can help improve disclosure rates.

Completed questionnaires were checked by GEOSTAT, and detected errors were discussed with

the supervisors, who were given further instructions to follow. It is especially helpful to review and revise filled-in questionnaires and discuss errors regarding data collection with the field workers early on during the process.

## Qualitative data collection

Qualitative fieldwork was carried out during August and September 2017. Data was collected in two urban and three rural sites. The regions were selected considering their accessibility and convenience for the study purposes. Furthermore, the diversity of locations was ensured by involving places in both eastern and western Georgia.

Service providers, community members (women, men and youth), survivors of violence and members of vulnerable groups were covered through key informant interviews (KII), in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). In total, 15 KIIs, 12 in-depth interviews and 20 FGDs were conducted as a part of the qualitative research.

For the in-depth interviews, survivors of violence were purposively selected to reflect the experiences of people from diverse sociodemographic profiles in terms of age, education, income and other relevant characteristics. This approach helped the researchers understand the survivors' unique experiences of violence and their access to services. In addition, only individuals who were no longer in an abusive relationship were interviewed.

Four FGDs were conducted with vulnerable groups including ethnic minority women, immigrant women, LBT women and women with disabilities. The participants came from different sociodemographic backgrounds in terms of age, education and income level. Women with a variety of disabilities were invited to the FGD for women with disabilities, which was supported by translation for the deaf. The FGD with the LBT group was facilitated by a researcher who is affiliated with this group. This approach

ensured a higher level of sincerity and frankness. The FGD with ethnic minorities was conducted in the Russian language, and the FGD with immigrants was supported by a translator who provided Arabic-Georgian translation during the discussion. Each discussion was audio recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed at a later stage.

The initial design of the qualitative research did not include the subject of sexual harassment; however, preliminary analysis of the quantitative data showed a high percentage of women reporting that they had experienced sexual harassment. Thus, two FGDs on the topic were added.

Certain difficulties were revealed during the simultaneous interview with persons with disabilities, as persons with mental and physical disabilities require different conditions and time to answer the given questions. When possible, it is desirable to interview people with similar disabilities in separate groups; for example, respondents with vision problems should ideally be interviewed separately from individuals with hearing problems.

While the team did interview immigrants, the interviewed target group was more homogeneous

than would be ideal; capturing responses from a more diverse group of immigrants would have been of added value. During the interviews with immigrants, the majority did not report any facts of violence because they tended to come to Georgia from more challenging environments (e.g. violent conflict and extreme poverty). Apparently, their satisfaction with life was higher in their current environment than in their native homeland.

Recruitment of the population subgroups with specific characteristics for qualitative research was supported by various organizations working with the relevant communities. According to their advice, interviews were conducted by a representative of the same community because it would increase the possibility of respondents sharing their experience and disclosing the facts of violence (which was particularly helpful in the LBT group).

It is recommended that during an interview, the interviewer does not use terms like “minority” or “marginal group” because some respondents find them offensive. Strong attention should be paid to ethical issues, and relevant terminology should be determined before the interview phase starts.

### **Key lessons learned:**

- Respondents had particular concerns related to confidentiality; therefore, significant time and effort should be invested to ensure that various strategies are in place to protect confidentiality and also to ease respondents’ concerns. This could include comprehensive training for enumerators, using digital tablets for data collection and/or finding alternative places to conduct interviews, among other strategies.
- Due to sensitivity issues, it is recommended to collect data through digital tablets, which helps to ensure greater confidentiality of responses and reduces errors due to complex skip patterns and/or errors in data entry.
- For particularly sensitive questions, it can be useful to use face cards. The use of face cards ensures greater anonymity and respondents feel more comfortable to disclose their experiences compared to face-to-face interviews.
- For qualitative research, having an FGD facilitator from the same community or someone who is well established and respected within the community can encourage better disclosure and better discussions.

# CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS, REPORT WRITING AND DISSEMINATION

## **Key steps undertaken in data analysis and dissemination:**

1. Performed computer data entry using MS Access-based data entry software
2. Prepared logical controls to check compliance and logic of the data
3. Verified and corrected incomplete and inconsistent data
4. Carried out data cleaning
5. Weighted data at the individual and household levels
6. Developed summary report first capturing the main findings. This summary report with preliminary data was disseminated to the main stakeholders, and then a final report was developed incorporating feedback from the dissemination workshop
7. Developed and widely disseminated brochures, cards and infographic videos capturing the main findings of the study

## **Data analysis and tabulation**

Computer data entry was performed using Microsoft Access-based data entry software designed specifically for the survey. To check compliance and logical relations of the data recorded in the database, a list of logical controls was prepared, which included a detailed record of possible inconsistencies and violations in the questionnaire structure. Incomplete and inconsistent data were verified with questionnaires and, if necessary, field staff and/or respondents were contacted to correct inconsistencies.

After completion of the logical controls, a working group carried out database cleaning. The primary objective of data cleaning consisted of detecting

relatively complex inconsistencies and errors and then correcting them. SPSS and Microsoft Access were used for all stages of data processing and analysis.

The key lesson learned through this process is that specialized technical skills are required to understand and interpret VAW data. For example, it is important to be able to analyse the data within the context of other global and regional data. The technical expert was able to identify patterns that were consistent with the global literature as well as cases where the data appeared unusual. In the cases where the data appeared unusual, the consultant was able to work closely with the GEOSTAT team to undertake further analysis to be able to interpret the data as accurately as possible. For example, the data showed that women in urban areas reported higher rates of violence than women in rural areas. This pattern is inconsistent with global trends. While it is possible that women in urban Georgia experience more violence, when triangulated with the qualitative data and other quantitative variables, it seemed more likely that women in urban areas had greater awareness of the issues, felt less stigma and were therefore more comfortable in disclosing their experiences.

## **Report writing**

The data interpretation and report writing were led by the international consultant in close cooperation with the GEOSTAT team and the qualitative research team. A summary report capturing the main findings of the study was developed and released to stakeholders first in order to validate the study findings with stakeholders engaged in the field and to generate feedback from the National Study Reference Group. This validation and feedback then



informed the formulation of recommendations for further action based on the study findings. The final study report was released a few months later, incorporating stakeholder feedback in the recommendations section.

For this study, it was also decided that the final report would combine the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data into one unified report. Overall, this resulted in a more comprehensive product and a more meaningful understanding of the issue of VAW in Georgia. Direct quotes from the respondents about their life experiences were included in the unified report and have made the quantitative data meaningful and rich. This unified approach is largely recommended; however, it does take additional time and resources to ensure that the data is fully integrated and used to triangulate and reinforce one another.

With three different sub-teams involved in the process, the report writing proved to be a time-consuming process and took more time than initially expected. The lesson learned is to set aside sufficient time for this process. It might also be useful to have a report writing workshop, one where all of the research partners can come together in the same room to discuss data interpretation and undertake substantive report writing in a more efficient manner.

## Dissemination of findings

The summary report capturing the main findings of the study was developed and released to stakeholders first. The presentation of the preliminary findings brought together diverse stakeholders from the Government, development organizations and civil society to validate the study findings with stakeholders engaged in the field and to discuss their implications for further action.

The presentation of the preliminary findings was a success, generating extensive media coverage and inclusive community dialogue around the issue. The final report of the study was produced in English and Georgian languages and distributed to stakeholders.

Additionally, to popularize the survey findings and further raise awareness and dialogue with a more diverse audience, UN Women produced a series of IEC materials, including posters, cards, graphic videos and thematic briefs. These IEC materials broke down the technical language of the study findings into simple numbers and visually stimulating imagery to raise awareness about prevalence as well as attitudes and perceptions on VAW in Georgia. Over 10,000 copies have been printed and distributed to national and local partners who have used it in their awareness-raising work across Georgia. For example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted a public awareness-raising campaign during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence with community police officers giving out cards capturing the main findings of the study. The Ministry of Justice, the Public Defender's Office, dozens of municipalities and CSOs have also used these materials in their awareness-raising campaigns. The infographics and videos were also widely shared using social media platforms.

Moreover, sexual harassment prevalence data from the National VAW Study was used by UN Women, development partners and CSOs as the basis for strategic advocacy and dialogues with parliamentarians and other stakeholders on the need for sexual harassment regulation. As a result, in 2019 the Parliament of Georgia adopted sexual harassment legislation – setting its legal definition and establishing regulatory framework on sexual harassment in the workplace and public spaces.

**Key lessons learned:**

- Analysis and interpretation of VAW data is a highly specific technical skill and requires someone with specific content expertise to ensure that data is interpreted accurately and put within the global context and to produce meaningful recommendations.
- Combining quantitative and qualitative findings into one report is recommended because it results in a more engaging product and a more comprehensive understanding of VAW. However, time and resources are needed to ensure meaningful integration of the findings and triangulation of data.
- To ensure efficient data analysis and report writing when working with an international team, it might be useful to hold a report-writing workshop where everyone can work together in one place for a period of time.
- It was useful to share a summary report and launch the findings with the National Study Reference Group and other stakeholders. Having a public event with media was also useful to catalyse a public dialogue about the issue. This requires planning and resources to get the most impact out of the research. It is highly recommended that beyond the main report, user-friendly IEC materials are produced to popularize the findings and reach a diverse audience through using social media.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

The 2017 study constituted the first nationwide research initiative on violence against women to be conducted in Georgia since 2009 and explored the prevalence of domestic violence, non-partner physical and sexual violence, and perceptions and awareness of women and men on gender and violence in Georgia. For the first time in Georgia, the study also generated data on the prevalence of sexual harassment and stalking at the national level. In addition to filling the gap in the nationally representative data on violence against women in Georgia, the findings of the National VAW Study generated baseline data for the nationalized SDG indicators and strengthened the capacity of national partners on conducting prevalence surveys on VAW.

The study was successful due to the collaborative nature of the project between UN Women, GEOSTAT, the international expert and other stakeholders. Having GEOSTAT lead the implementation of the study was key to building national capacity and ownership.

The hybrid methodology that was adopted for this study was effective to ensure that the study aligned with international best practices while still meeting the unique and specific needs of Georgia.

Overall, data collection was implemented well; however, issues relating to interviewer training and confidentiality could have been prevented. The lesson learned is that significant time and effort should be invested to ensure that various strategies are in place to protect confidentiality and to confirm that enumerators fully understand the nature of VAW and are equipped to establish the ethical and safe implementation of this type of research.

Analysis and interpretation of VAW data is a highly specific technical skill and requires someone with specific content expertise to ensure that data is interpreted accurately and put within the global context, that certain groups are not stigmatized, and that meaningful recommendations are produced. In Georgia, a close working relationship between all of the partners was important in this process and helped to ensure a successful final product.

It must be recognized that publishing the research report is just the first step. Ongoing dissemination and engagement with different stakeholders around the findings are key to ensure that the research is used to inform policies and programmes to end violence against women and girls.







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