



Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/ECW/2019/WG.3/Report
31 January 2019
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

Expert group meeting: Step by step towards costing violence against women in the Arab region Beirut, 20-21 September 2018

Summary

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Centre for Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Arab States Regional Office (ASRO) organized an expert group meeting entitled “Step by step towards costing violence against women in the Arab region” on 20-21 September 2018 at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon.

This meeting follows up on the rigorous work organized by UNFPA Egypt and ESCWA at the regional and national levels to support the efforts of countries in the region to estimate the cost of violence against women.

The meeting brought together a group of experts from the region and beyond for an in-depth discussion on the initial draft of the “Step-by-Step Guide” developed by ESCWA and UNFPA on how to organize and carry out an estimation of the cost of violence exercise. Participants capitalized on regional and international experience present to contribute to the final copy of the guide. Experts shared their insights and provided examples on the impact and cost implications of violence against women, especially domestic violence against women.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Centre for Women, and the United Nations Population Fund Arab States Regional Office (ASRO), held an expert group meeting (EGM) entitled “Step by step towards costing violence against women in the Arab region” at the United Nations House in Beirut on 20 and 21 September 2018.
2. The meeting aimed to bring together a group of experts on costing violence against women (VAW), from the region and beyond, to:
 - (a) share their experiences in conducting/preparing to undertake costing violence against women studies and exercises;
 - (b) discuss and provide inputs and suggestions on how to enhance the draft guidelines developed on costing violence against women.

I. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. SESSION 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF COSTING VAW FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3. Ms. Caroline Forde, facilitator for session 1, began by presenting the importance of costing violence against women. She gave participants a brief overview on the prevalence of VAW, the significant costs and consequences to women, communities, society and the national economy. She talked about the importance of gathering evidence for policy and advocacy, presenting examples from Viet Nam and Timor-Leste where costing studies and data were successfully used to advocate for a minimum service package and increased budgetary allocations, respectively. In her conclusion, she stressed the importance of establishing the economic costs of VAW to underscore the urgency for action and the effectiveness of prevention and interventions. She highlighted the need to advocate for budget allocations in specific areas of investment for services.
4. Director of the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) Ms. Mehrnaz El Awady also spoke on the relevance to the Arab region of costing violence against women, referring to the multifaceted impact of this phenomenon on women as well as the entire society. She then presented the current outline of the guidelines, soliciting input from the experts present on its logical flow and sequence. She also presented a draft of the second half of the guide, which draws on the experiences of countries in costing violence against women and would be informed by the discussions and results of this expert group meeting.
5. The presentations were followed by a discussion of the process of and rationale behind the exercise of costing violence against women at the national levels and how they were initiated in the respective countries of participants.
6. Participants also debated the type of violence to be covered in the guide, for example, whether guidelines that cost marital violence were also applicable for domestic violence. Some of the participants noted that focusing on marital violence would not capture the violence perpetrated by extended family members (such as in-laws, brothers, fathers, etc.). Others argued that gender-based violence (GBV) was too broad a category because it included types of violence such as trafficking and violence perpetrated in public places. In the case of Egypt, the exercise addressed both the cost of domestic violence given that power of the family is quite strong and violence in the public sphere, including sexual harassment and violence in the workplace. The broad definition of violence proved to be problematic and undermined the results of some of the forms of violence costed. It was thus agreed that the guidelines would focus on domestic violence and would provide clear, recognized and internationally agreed upon definitions on the different types and forms. Ultimately, deciding on which type of violence to cost would be left to the discretion of the State conducting the costing exercise, depending on its context.

7. Another question raised was who decides to conduct the costing exercise, and whether there were any country experiences in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had successfully led the process and it resulted in change. Ms. Olga Kalashnyk, President of the Ukrainian NGO La Strada, and Ms. Mathilde Sengoelge, Chief Executive Officer of More Safety Consulting, raised some positive examples of NGO-led costing exercises. For example, in Ukraine in 2008, research was done in partnership between La Strada, the Institute for Social Studies and the Ministry of Interior, with the NGO taking the lead. In France, the NGO Psytel led a costing exercise with the involvement of the French Government. The study noted that accurate figures and data could not be obtained without participation of the government. In the case of the Arab region, it was agreed that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to work without the government's involvement. It was important to have a government body with the power and authority to convene all the ministries. While the role of civil society remained very important, the government usually led the process. Based on her experience in Egypt, Ms. Naglaa El-Adly, from the National Council on Women, confirmed that civil society needed to be part of the process as much as possible, but the public institutions (National Council for Women in Egypt's case) have to lead the process and ensure the necessary capacity-development is provided to all partners to ensure sustainability. It was also agreed that national consultations were a key phase of the process and that by putting together this guide, ESCWA and UNFPA were already demonstrating the intergovernmental nature of the costing process.

8. Participants then moved on to debate the different issues that must be considered when costing violence against women, such as: the need for context analysis; agreement on succinct definition of VAW; ensuring a representative sample for the research; the need to report on indicators; to try to harmonize available data (and not to oversample); including capacity-development as part of the project; documenting unmet needs in the preparatory phase (for example, lack of shelters or women being turned away from shelters); taking into consideration the intangible costs (such as healing time, reproductive roles, reduction in human capital at the household level); mapping out the best methodology in the preparatory phase; including gender-budgeting throughout all phases of the process.

B. SESSION II: METHODOLOGIES FOR COSTING VAW

9. This session started with a presentation by Ms. Aslihan Kes, Senior Economist with the International Centre for Research on Women, on the different methods and methodologies, aside from gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), for costing violence against women at the household, community and national levels.

10. Ms. Elizabeth Villagomez, an independent researcher, then gave a presentation on GRB as a method for costing violence against women, what it involved, the basic steps to undertake it, the information needed, the main findings across countries where it has been applied as well as its pros and cons. She noted that the GRB approach can be used in contexts with a public budget and resources dedicated for prevention or response, adding that a GRB approach could be used to "follow the money" allocated and then spent (or not), which was particularly relevant for developing country contexts. She added that the most important negative in employing a GRB approach in a costing exercise was that it did not necessarily produce a final figure. This was due to the reliance on available information on public budgets and the level of detail in which these were elaborated and monitored. However, there were many positives in carrying out a GRB approach costing exercise, particularly in terms of engaging directly with the main public finance decision makers (at any level) in various government departments that have a part in addressing or preventing VAW. This in itself raised the political level at which VAW was discussed.

11. Ms. Villagomez also stated that in her opinion, GRB was a very effective approach with many elements of an in-depth evaluation of the existing policies and services around VAW. The approach identified the magnitude of budget allocated (by government and other actors) to implement services to victims and survivors; identified gaps in resources to properly implement services; and informed future rounds of consultation for national plans and/or strategies (mainly through an approximation of the time used by public employees on GBV-related cases). However, a participatory options exercise should be carried out before attempting any type of costing exercise including a GRB approach. In this case, the determining factors were

existence and type of legislation on VAW in the country; existence and type of policy and the corresponding services that either respond or prevent VAW in the country; existence and type of data and other information in the country. In terms of type of data needed, this approach required full knowledge of which services were planned and available, as reflected in current legislation or national action plans; full knowledge of the national budgeting process, including processes of decentralization; and engaging NGOs with expertise in VAW that may or may not receive funding either from the national government or other donors.

12. Based on discussions following the presentation, some useful tips were drawn out, including: capacity-building for governments on GRB should be an ongoing component throughout the costing exercise; studies need to capitalize on information that was already available from national statistics bureaux; national institutions should be linked with international experts to analyse the data gathered; and useful lessons could be learned from other costing exercises that have been finalized. Other issues discussed were the need to establish high-level task forces to implement the exercise (for example, a technical task force and a steering committee for higher level decisions); the possibility of doing parallel comparisons with other costing exercises (such as environmental costing); the need to showcase that the cost of the problem was very high whereas the cost of the solution was low; and lastly, that the cost of the solution would be higher in those countries that provided good services.

C. SESSION III: METHODOLOGIES FOR COSTING VAW (continued)

13. During the session, four additional presentations were delivered by international experts on the various approaches that capture cost implications of VAW.

14. According to Ms. Philippa Olive, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Lancaster, robust administrative and statistical data was of central importance for costing GBV/VAW. Additionally, a clear and recognised definition of 'gender-based violence' was necessary for proposed costing exercises, first, so that it was clear what to include and exclude in the study and, second, to inform the range of data necessary to fulfil cost estimations. If robust, high-quality data was not available then an alternative approach, drawing on robust estimates from other costing studies that could be justifiably employed, was recommended. Such an approach would entail adopting item cost estimates produced in similar contexts. The presenter also pointed out that a review of costing studies had identified seven approaches incorporated into earlier methodologies, which were: expert judgement, victim recall studies, surveys, administrative data, population data sets and studies of similar harms, and specialised research projects. The most important of these were representative surveys detailing the extent of the violence, its impact and its administrative (service utilisation and cost) data. The challenge to costing GBV/VAW across several States within a region, such as the Arab region, was comparability. If source data were not equivalent or comparable then the estimates of costs could not be comparable. Costs also could not be extrapolated from one country to another if the contexts were different.

15. In her presentation on estimating the costs of VAW in Denmark, Senior Researcher in Public Health at the University of Copenhagen, Ms. Karin Helweg-Larsen noted that the Danish national database on VAW was established in 2004 by the National Council of Women in cooperation with the University of Copenhagen. Regularly updated, it presented comprehensive possibilities for exact calculations of the costs of violence. She also discussed the Danish national action plans to eliminate domestic violence, the purpose behind the VAW costing exercises, the costs that could be estimated and the different steps required to undertake an estimation. She concluded by presenting the main results of the costing exercise. Noting that VAW was an economic burden to the State and a heavy personal burden to the survivor of violence, the cost to Danish society was at least €75 million per year in a population of 5 million inhabitants, corresponding to €40 per woman aged 16-64 in Denmark and to about €9,000 per identified victim of violence.

16. Ms. Sengoelge presented on the issues of shelters for abused women. Based on experience from the Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Cost Study conducted in Europe in 2006 and a French cost study conducted in 2012, it was recommended to first use the basic model of costing for VAW in shelters (which consisted of

establishing a list of unit costs associated with provision of shelters; data collection of the unit costs; establishing a meta-table of data collected; documenting the calculation for each unit cost; determining the upper and lower estimate; creating a software template adding up all of the unit costs; using an 'estimate of an estimate' and including a discussion of the limitations of the data and recommendations for improving the methodology). Once this method had been shown to be a valid, reliable and efficient methodology, then a social cost benefit analysis could be considered in the future. The major weakness in this methodology, however, was capturing the cost to the children of victims, both in general as well as in shelters. She concluded by sharing some recommendations on how to apply this methodology in the Arab States.

17. In her presentation on costing missed days of work, Assistant Professor in the Statistics Department at the University of Cairo Ms. May Gadallah explained four different types of work that women might be involved in: waged worker; employer/self-employed; unpaid worker (for the family or not); and domestic and care work. She also noted the many issues to consider in the Arab region such as the low female labour market participation (which was around 22 per cent in 2012 in Egypt), the domination of the governmental work among the female waged workers and low wages for women workers. While higher levels of education were usually accompanied by an increase in female labour market participation, they were also accompanied by a decrease in reporting of domestic violence. Another issue was that female labour market participation (FLP) increases if subsistence work, such as agricultural activities, poultry raising, etc., was considered. Unpaid domestic work was the most significant employment that would be missed due to VAW at the national level, and as such, it would be highly recommended to add several investigating questions to the questionnaire for computing the missing working days and imputing the potential loss due to VAW. The speaker concluded noting that another important element to be considered in the context of the Arab region was the fact that the victim of VAW usually left her own house to stay with her parents or friends rather than resorting to public or private shelters. This phenomenon also needed to be considered both in the questionnaire and in imputing costs.

18. The last presentation on costing methodologies was given by Mr. David Walker, Senior Consultant with ITAD. In his presentation, he spoke about the different methodologies used to calculate the economic cost of VAW to businesses. He identified the accounting method as the best methodology for cost estimates given its focus on relatively straightforward accounting data, cost-effectiveness, context sensitivity and ability to compare sectors/industries. He also presented the different types of data needed, the criteria to assess the quality of the data and gave some recommendations on how this methodology could be used in the Arab region.

D. SESSION IV: COSTING VAW – EXPERIENCE FROM THE ARAB REGION

19. The fourth session started with a presentation by Ms. El-Adly on Egypt's experience in conducting an economic costing of VAW. She presented the research methodology and the sample selection and characteristics, as well as the steps followed to implement the study. She also referred to the type and nature of data collected, the findings and results of the survey which indicated that the total cost of domestic violence in Egypt was Egyptian pounds (LE) 6.15 billion. She also elaborated on the limitations of the survey and the challenges in the research. When asked about the impact and how the study was used to introduce policy reform in Egypt, she noted the results of the survey helped advocate for a new law on combating VAW, which was currently being reviewed in the parliament. It also led to an increase in the government budget for activities to combat VAW. Results of the study were disseminated among ministries, including the Ministry of Planning, which as a result included a specific budget for activities on VAW. Additionally, the Ministry of Interior increased the number of female police officers and integrated a lecture on combatting VAW in the policy academy curriculum, which was being facilitated by the National Council of Women. The study thus resulted in enhanced knowledge among government entities and the adoption of concrete actions to address VAW.

20. In the case of State of Palestine, Mr. Bassam Dar Abu Rabi from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, noted that the project on costing VAW was initiated by the ministry in partnership with ESCWA and UN Women. The project began by developing a nuanced understanding and definition of VAW and the aim behind this research. This was followed by an identification of the key national stakeholders to participate in the

project and developing a plan of action. Fieldwork was initiated and included interviews with key informants, followed by a national consultation workshop to ensure the buy-in of all stakeholders. In terms of specifying the scope of the research and the size of the study sample, factors such as the clarity of concepts, the availability of indicators, as well as the financial coverage required to implement the project, were considered. This preparatory phase also resulted in the development of an operational plan to cost VAW in the State of Palestine, including a clear methodology comprising a qualitative and quantitative component. As such, quantitative data would be collected through the household surveys on VAW carried out by the Palestinian National Statistics Bureau; qualitative data would be collected through the analysis of the State budget and analysis of all figures and information related to VAW. With the study currently at the data collection stage, there had been some challenges to date, the most important of which were the lack of expertise on the subject and the difficulty in choosing the target groups.

21. A short discussion followed regarding the differences between VAW due to occupation in the State of Palestine and VAW in the domestic sphere. It was recommended that in the Palestinian case, the costing exercise should focus on the latter while taking into consideration that violence against men due to occupation could be one of the underlying reasons for VAW. It was noted that this needed to be done with caution since it would be very difficult to determine that a man has abused his wife as a result of the violence he was subjected to at a checkpoint, as an example. This was determined to be an intensifier of risk rather than a cause of VAW and needed to be navigated very carefully in the analysis.

22. Ms. Lana Ben Saeed gave a short intervention on the case of Saudi Arabia in costing VAW. She said that the study was still in the planning phase and that the Family Affairs Council was working closely with ESCWA. She also added that the most important challenge in the country was the lack of accurate numbers related to VAW, however the study was attempting to gather the necessary data.

23. Ms. Mehrinaz El Awady elaborated on the case of Saudi Arabia, noting the country did not have previous surveys on prevalence of VAW. However, as part of the current reform underway to advance the status of women, a survey and a complete exercise to cost VAW would be done and would inform the government approach to address this phenomenon. ESCWA had advised Saudi Arabia on the steps to follow for the preparatory phase, including undertaking a situation analysis of VAW. This resulted in a short report highlighting several issues, most important of which the availability of data on VAW in Saudi Arabia, especially at the central level, and data provided by NGOs on the cost of services related to VAW. Saudi Arabia also undertook national consultations along with ongoing capacity-development for its statistical bureau.

E. SESSION V: COSTING VAW – INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

24. The fifth session on international experiences in costing VAW included three case studies from Kosovo, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

25. In her presentation on the experience of costing VAW in Kosovo, Kosovo Women's Network Programme Director Ms. Nicole Farnsworth indicated that the first attempt to conduct a costing study in Kosovo had been in 2012 under the umbrella of UNDP. GRB was a relatively unknown concept at the time. The presenter introduced participants to the methodology used, noting that the key limitations to the study included the institutions' poor administrative data collection practices, vague budget lines and a lack of clear programmatic information or workplans linked to budgets. With regard to impact, the speaker noted that the biggest impact of the study was perhaps improved awareness among stakeholders regarding the need to monitor and plan for costs related to domestic violence. The study also contributed to improving awareness of GRB and the need to better assess the costs of services to better inform the State budget. She concluded her presentation with a list of lessons learned from the Kosovo costing experience.

26. Ms. Kalashnyk then presented Ukraine's efforts in costing VAW, starting with a study in 2008 initiated by La Strada in partnership with the Institute for Social Studies and the Ministry of Interior. This research

showed that the average cost of one case of family violence in Ukraine is US\$1,462, of which only \$350 is borne by the government. Another costing exercise was conducted in 2017 initiated by UNFPA using approaches proposed by the European Institute on Gender Equality. The presenter talked about the classification of potential economic costs and their consequences, as well as supporting data. She concluded by saying that the study showed that the total economic cost of VAW in Ukraine is \$207.8 million.

27. In response to a question on why the cost of VAW borne by government was so low, she mentioned that women in Ukraine feared reporting violence or did not want to report it. In some regions, they also did not have access to good services, such as shelters, and as such it was difficult for women to travel to seek help. These were all contributing factors that led women to pay for support from their own pockets, and thus lowered the cost for the government.

28. The session ended with a presentation by Ms. Olive on the United Kingdom's experience in costing GBV. After giving participants an overview of the country's history in conducting costing studies on VAW, she spoke about the types of violence that should be included in such studies and the types of costs that should be measured (to the economy, to the public). She also stressed the importance of including physical and emotional impact, which might not have a monetary value but were still very important to cost. She also presented the different methods that were used to gather data and gave participants a detailed breakdown of the costs incurred in the United Kingdom as a result of VAW. The 2012 costing study showed that the total cost of GBV was €33 billion a year which, if extrapolated to the entire European Union, would mean that GBV costs the EU an estimated €258 billion each year.

F. SESSION VI: DETAILED OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE "STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE" ON COSTING VAW IN THE ARAB REGION

29. This session was facilitated by Ms. Mehrinaz El Awady, along the same structure as the first session, but after experts had had a chance to look at and discuss the various elements of the Step-by-Step Guide. During this session, participants went over the detailed outline of the guide and provided comments and recommendations and important highlights to be integrated in each of the sections. The final structure of the guidelines was agreed upon and would be reflected in the final draft of the document.

II. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE OF THE MEETING

30. The meeting was held at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 20-21 September 2018.

B. ATTENDANCE

31. The meeting brought together a group of international experts on costing violence against women, as well as representatives from Arab countries who have been or were currently involved in a costing of violence exercise. The annex to the present report provides a list of participants.

C. OPENING

32. Ms. Mehrinaz El Awady, Director of ESCWA's Centre for Women, welcomed the participants to the expert group meeting noting that this workshop built on previous ESCWA efforts to support Arab States in estimating the cost of VAW. The Director noted that ESCWA had published numerous studies related to VAW, including: a study on violence against women in the domestic sphere; a study on services offered by States and NGOs to survivors of domestic violence; a study on trafficking of women and girls in the Arab region; and a report on VAW-related legislation in the region. Additional studies focused on specific types of VAW, including one on child marriage. In 2016, ESCWA initiated and led a regional project entitled "Estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region". This two-phased regional

project in partnership with UN Women generated a substantial body of analytical and operational findings that resulted in the production of the first tailor-made economic model on costing violence against women in the Arab region. Following this, ESCWA worked with several of its member States to adopt and adapt this model to the national context. This was currently being implemented in Lebanon, the State of Palestine and Saudi Arabia, with efforts underway to expand and implement this approach in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and many other Arab States.

33. In an effort to build on this momentum, ESCWA in partnership with UNFPA came up with the idea of developing a “Step-by-Step Guide” which would document the different methodologies, contexts, and key issues to be considered by member countries when undertaking a costing exercise. Ms. Elawady said that the idea behind the “Step-by-Step Guide” was to develop a reference for Arab States in the domain of costing VAW. It would provide essential information that could guide their efforts and would also document cases from the Arab region as well as other countries in Europe and Asia.

34. Ms. Enshrah Ahmed, Gender, Human Rights and Culture Advisor at UNFPA Arab States Regional Office, thanked ESCWA for their partnership and for hosting this important meeting which aimed at providing insights and information on what was being done around the world in the area of costing VAW. She also mentioned that Egypt had undertaken a study on costing VAW and that the figure estimated out of this study was approximately LE 2.17 billion for survivor women and their families alone, without costing the wasted working days. She emphasized the fact that this large amount of money should have been invested in other important issues such as women and girl’s education and health. This was why advocacy message to policymakers across the region had become so important. She concluded by saying that it would be very interesting to listen to the new experiences of the State of Palestine and Saudi Arabia on costing VAW to determine how this platform could be used and to learn mutually from what has been done and what was being presently done in this area.

35. Before launching the first session, Ms. Elawady thanked Dr. Nata Duvvury, of the National University of Ireland at Galway (who unfortunately could not be present at the meeting), as the brain behind the whole costing project, for her ongoing support and guidance.

Annex*

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