

## 2020 Asia–Pacific Statistics Week

A decade of action for the 2030 Agenda: Statistics that leaves no one and nowhere behind

15-19 JUNE 2020 | Bangkok, Thailand

### **kNOwVAWdata course: an innovative model for improving skills of national statistical offices to measure and monitor violence against women in Asia and the Pacific**

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#### **Abstract:**

As United Nations (UN) member states strive to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5, and in particular target 5.2—to eliminate all forms of violence against women (VAW) and girls—there is a growing demand for reliable and comparable prevalence data on VAW. Robust guidelines exist, such as the World Health Organization questionnaire tools, originally developed for a multi-country study and turned into best practice, and the UN Statistics Division Guidelines for Producing Statistics on VAW (2014). However, a lack of technical and applied knowledge to properly implement surveys that measure VAW persists.

To build capacity for measuring VAW in Asia-Pacific, United Nations Population Fund's Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, with support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, formed the kNOwVAWdata Initiative. In partnership with the University of Melbourne and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, and guided by a Technical Advisory Group, the partnership uses international best practices in measuring VAW to build a sustainable training and mentoring programme. The kNOwVAWdata Course on the Measurement of Violence against Women was successfully piloted in 2018 in Bangkok and Melbourne, respectively, with a focus on the Asia region. The pilot course included 25 participants—many from statistics offices and relevant ministries—from 10 countries, including three countries about to embark on VAW surveys.

The pilot course was deemed a successful model through two independent evaluations. A key strength was course adaptability to meet participants' needs and embrace the diverse backgrounds and experience, with opportunities for shared learning. The wide variety of interactive training methods, including field visits and guest speakers, added to the rich learning experience. The kNOwVAWdata training model includes support to ongoing surveys, mentoring, and establishing a network of trained professionals.

kNOwVAWdata held its second course in 2019 in Fiji and Melbourne, with a stronger focus on the Pacific. Out of 85 applications and expressions of interest, 43 participants were able to secure self-funding, including 26 Pacific participants who were sponsored by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. While it is encouraged that course participation is funded through countries' national survey budgets, the kNOwVAWdata team is also developing a sustainable bursary programme.

The initiative's long-term vision is for wider expansion of the kNOwVAWdata course through international collaboration and co-branded training curriculums with open-source materials for use in regions beyond Asia-Pacific. The next step is to build alliances with other international organisations wishing to deliver the course in collaboration.

**Keywords:** Prevalence survey, Capacity building, Ethics and safety, Mentoring, Training course

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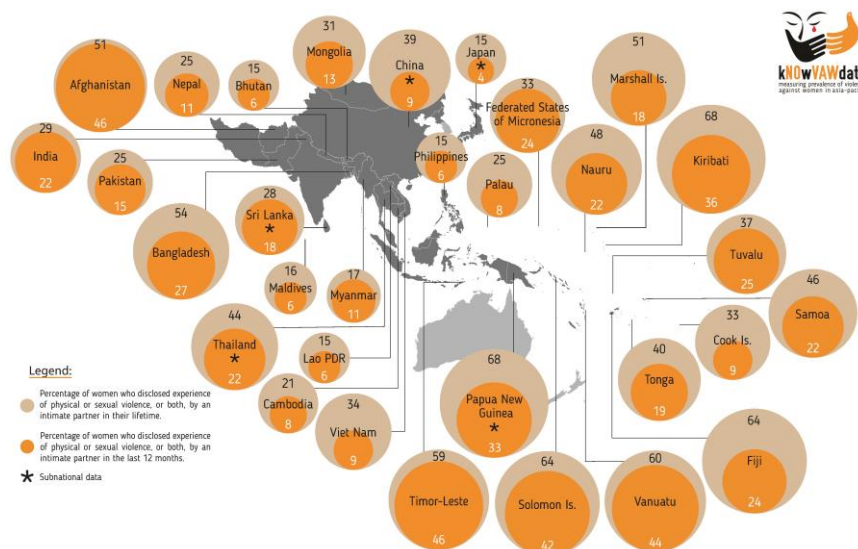
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#### 1. Introduction:

Globally, violence against women (VAW) is an urgent public health, human rights, economic and public policy priority. In the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, violence against women is defined as:

*“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”*

On average, it is estimated that one in three women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime, most often at the hands of an intimate partner (WHO 2013). In Asia and the Pacific, VAW prevalence surveys have been completed in 31 countries between the years 2000 and 2019, using either the methodology of the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women, or the Domestic Violence module of the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). These survey reports show that in countries across Asia and the Pacific, 15 to 68 percent of women disclosed experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lives (Figure 1).



#### WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, 2000 - 2019 UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Region

Source: Country reports from the most recent surveys conducted with the methodology of the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence or with the Domestic Violence module of the Demographic and Health Survey, during 2000-2019.

For more information: [asiapacific.unfpa.org/knowVAWdata](http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/knowVAWdata)  
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Figure 1 - Asia-Pacific regional violence against women map

The impacts of this scourge of violence permeate beyond emotional and physical trauma to survivors. It can affect their long-term health and wellbeing, including their educational and earning potential. The burden is experienced across the development spectrum, from a family’s financial stability through to an economic toll on the health, social services and justice sectors. It can also impact women’s capacity to care for their children, as well as children’s learning abilities. And, it increases the likelihood of ongoing cycles of violence. Taken together, VAW is not only a strain on the whole community; it also burdens countries across the world. As such, addressing VAW effectively cuts across many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that underpin the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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Reliable, comparable prevalence data on VAW are essential to justify, inform and monitor effective and equitable prevention and response efforts tailored to individual country and subnational contexts. A recent push for VAW prevalence data is one of the driving forces behind the surveys conducted across the Asia-Pacific region and worldwide recently, as countries are required to measure progress towards achieving SDG 5 for gender equality. With SDG Target 5.2—to “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in private and public spheres, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and other types of exploitation”—and its dedicated indicators on intimate partner violence and sexual violence by perpetrators other than partners, the demand for VAW prevalence data is increasing. However, despite growing awareness of the causes and consequences of VAW and the need for public policies to address it, there remains a substantial lack of ethically and statistically sound prevalence data. This gap is largely due to an inadequate technical capacity to measure VAW prevalence safely and accurately.

Due to the sensitivity and stigma of the topic and the safety risks for participants, special approaches and skillsets are required to measure, analyse and use VAW, but these capacities are still scarce. To address this gap, an initiative called kNOwVAWdata was launched by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in 2016. kNOwVAWdata works to improve the technical ability for countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region to measure accurate, reliable and comparable VAW prevalence via national and subnational surveys.

kNOwVAWdata builds on a long history of support from UNFPA and DFAT to countries conducting VAW prevalence studies throughout Asia and the Pacific. A hallmark of this flagship UNFPA-DFAT initiative is a partnership with the University of Melbourne and Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS). Under this partnership, UNFPA and the University of Melbourne have developed and implemented the kNOwVAWdata course on the Measurement of Violence against Women. The 4-week course is the only one of its kind that leaves participants with the technical and practical ability to undertake VAW prevalence surveys in their countries.

## 2. Methodology:

### Course foundation

The landmark kNOwVAWdata course aims to build the skills needed to safely and ethically gather robust and reliable data in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. The course curriculum was informed by the experience of Dr Henrica A.F.M. (Henriette) Jansen, who has provided training and technical assistance in measuring the prevalence of VAW for two decades and across more than 40 countries worldwide. The curriculum draws from decades of existing materials and resources developed by global experts and uses international best practice standards to support learning of complex and complete research, analysis and knowledge translation skills for measuring the prevalence of VAW. The curriculum especially makes use of the methodologies developed for the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women, and the Domestic Violence module of the Demographic and Health Survey.

This comprehensive training is the most valuable investment to ensure ethical, robust and reliable measurement of VAW. These are skills that require exposure to expert-knowledge, time and practice to learn and implement. Specifically, the course supports learners to plan and/or conduct national VAW prevalence surveys; appropriately analyse quantitative data sets and increase data literacy, which enables proper interpretation of data; and effectively use data in policy making and programme design.

### Course participants

The kNOwVAWdata course trains professionals who are currently or will soon be involved in carrying out VAW prevalence surveys in their countries, such as representatives from national statistical offices and other state institutions, researchers, academics, students and civil society practitioners. It is appropriate for experienced and less experienced researchers; even the most experienced researchers may not be aware of the additional safety and ethical issues faced when interviewing women currently

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experiencing, or at risk of, violence. Collecting and analysing this data involves understanding the complexities of women's lives within their specific contexts, nuances that are not apparent without understanding VAW.

Having participants from different organisations within the same country, such as government and national statistics offices and civil society agencies, is extremely valuable since these individuals often represent both producers and users of data. Working together from the initial planning phase of a survey builds trust in the methodology and results. This type of collaboration further facilitates the implementation of ethical and safety recommendations and can increase data usage for policies and programmes.

#### Course structure

The 4-week course is offered annually in situ as a continuing education module through the University of Melbourne. Eventually the University of Melbourne will embed the curriculum in its ongoing degree programmes. The course is delivered in a pair of 2-week blocks, each consisting of 10 sessions. There is a break of at least 8 weeks in between the two blocks. The length and intensity of the course reflects the seriousness and sensitivity of measuring VAW and stresses the importance of a thorough grounding in the content. The course structure is as follows:

- Module 1: Introduction to key concepts, gender sensitisation, forms of data for researching VAW, and data literacy
- Module 2: Planning and implementing a survey to measure the prevalence of VAW
- Module 3: Analysing data and looking beyond prevalence surveys, other ways of measuring VAW
- Module 4: From data to action: Interpreting and reporting on VAW for policy and practice

Sessions are adapted to reflect the backgrounds, needs and strengths of each cohort. For example, if participants are particularly interested in measuring VAW with disabilities, a session may be more heavily dedicated to this. Depending on demand, the curriculum may be adapted to have a greater focus on administrative data or on measuring prevalence of violence in humanitarian settings.

#### Teaching method

The course combines lectures and exercises to facilitate practical application of the knowledge and skills learned. Instructors draw upon actual studies and prior experiences of course participants to illustrate real-life examples. The instructors are highly skilled in active participant learning and have experience in VAW research. A key component of the course is the application of knowledge through the development of individual or country research protocols. This starts on the first day and culminates in presentations at the end of the course. Participants are encouraged to work together in country groups to enhance peer-to-peer learning and develop a global community of practice.

While in-person learning is best for the kNOwVAWdata course, online modules are currently being developed for anticipated release in 2021.

#### Replication

In the spirit of kNOwVAWdata's mission to expand the global skillset for safe and ethical measurement of VAW, the *kNOwVAWdata Course Curriculum* and other course documents have been developed as open-source resources for use by other facilitators and trainers. In fact, this is a crucial part of the kNOwVAWdata initiative's approach to sustainability. The kNOwVAWdata team is actively seeking partners to offer the kNOwVAWdata course at other institutions around the world. An elaborate guidance document has been developed to support course replication and any necessary adaptations to ensure the highest quality ethical and scientific standards are maintained; and the kNOwVAWdata team will work closely with partners throughout the process. Institutions that replicate the course to the same standards can use the kNOwVAWdata name, with approval from the original course developers.



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#### Sustainability

The kNOwVAWdata course is establishing a growing network of qualified and experienced professionals who serve as resources to one another through a community of practice as countries undertake VAW prevalence surveys. This mentorship aspect is core to kNOwVAWdata’s mission. Additionally, the curriculum was designed using a participatory process, including input from and review by a Technical Advisory Group of global experts. As the kNOwVAWdata course is replicated in new contexts, curriculum adaptations will be informed by local knowledge. Finally, to sustainably support course participation from priority countries, the initiative is planning to introduce a bursary programme in the near future.

#### **3. Result:**

The kNOwVAWdata course was piloted in 2018 in Bangkok and Melbourne with 24 participants from 10 countries. It was run as a full-fee course for the first time in 2019 in Fiji and Melbourne, with a stronger focus on the Pacific. While 85 applications and expressions of interest were submitted, 43 participants from 11 countries were able to secure self-funding, including 26 Pacific participants who were sponsored by New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The course is proving to be a success as made evident by two independent evaluations. One evaluation by DFAT is an examination of its development assistance for ending VAW and girls. It found that the kNOwVAWdata initiative has contributed to building capacity for conducting prevalence studies, including capacity of national statistical offices and research organisations, and has enhanced the ability of countries to report on SDG indicators. A separate independent evaluation of UNFPA’s work on gender-based violence and harmful practices found that: “kNOwVAWdata is addressing one of the most important tools for effective planning, services and advocacy to end violence against women—representative, reliable, comparable, and independent data on prevalence of interpersonal and intimate partner violence.” This evaluation also found that the kNOwVAWdata initiative is a “concrete example of bridging across statistical offices, ministries of health, and the national gender mechanism.”

Pre- and post-knowledge assessments conducted with participants of the 2018 kNOwVAWdata pilot course showed a significant overall improvement in participants’ knowledge related to measuring VAW prevalence in ethical and rigorous ways.

Participants’ feedback about the 2018 pilot course was overwhelmingly positive. They said some of the most effective aspects of the course include:

- The expertise and experiences of the instructors and guest speakers;
- Weekly, anonymous feedback from participants was addressed as the course progressed;
- The South-South networking and knowledge sharing of lessons learnt from multi-sectoral participants who had been involved in previous VAW surveys;
- The ongoing mentorship, from both instructors and between participants;
- The participatory and varied learning methods that made complex concepts more approachable and memorable; participants planned to use these techniques in their own trainings for survey enumerators;
- The assignment for each country to develop a VAW survey proposal and protocol was a useful, productive way to simultaneously learn and achieve tangible outputs that also supported their professional commitments;
- Knowledge growth in statistical, qualitative and internal and external advocacy methods, depending on the backgrounds of individual participants; and
- An appreciation for the methodologies, technical nuance and complexities of VAW surveys, which differ from other national surveys.

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#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion:

Participants reported a profound increase in confidence to engage and advise others professionally and personally on VAW measurement and data use as a result of the kNOwVAWdata course. This confidence surge appears to stem from a combination of the high quality curriculum; support from course facilitators and mentors; the burgeoning community of practice among participants, especially those with fellow participants from the same country; and the ability to share their expertise in their home countries during the course break. Another outcome was a solidified personal commitment to working on VAW issues.

While most participants will increasingly apply skills from the kNOwVAWdata course over the next few years, initial reports of skill use include sharing learning with colleagues at their organisations; providing technical inputs to both DHS and standalone VAW surveys; and plans to develop technical reports of VAW survey findings, knowledge products and advocacy campaigns.

For effective and sustainable action to reduce VAW, it is important to include local experts in the process. The kNOwVAWdata course provides a mechanism for countries to develop locally based skills and tools needed to collect and analyse their own VAW data and monitor progress towards SDG 5.

#### Websites:

On the initiative: [asiapacific.unfpa.org/knowvawdata](http://asiapacific.unfpa.org/knowvawdata)

On the course: [knowvawdata.com](http://knowvawdata.com)

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