UN Women Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls Global Programme

Briefing on Baseline Studies

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This Briefing should be read in conjunction with the Global Programme's key *Documents* and its series of *Briefings* and *Guidance Notes*. These include the Programme Document, Impact Evaluation Strategy, Guidance for Scoping Studies, Guidance Note for Developing a Project Design and Glossary and Definitions of Key Terms. Links to the latest versions can be found at http://www.endvawnow.org/en/leading-initiatives under *UN Women Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls*.

In November 2010, the Global Programme was launched in five cities, Cairo, Kigali, New Delhi, Port Moresby and Quito, where it will be implemented over five years.

1 Introduction

This briefing provides an overview of baseline studies for partners and stakeholders working on the Global Programme for Safe Cities. It seeks to increase understanding of this important activity by explaining in non-technical language the reasons for carrying out baselining work and what it involves. Specialist expertise will be needed in each participating city to design and implement a baseline study so that it produces results which are accurate, reliable and useful.

2 What's the Purpose of a Baseline?

The baseline study forms the foundation for project evaluation, providing a benchmark against which change can be assessed. It is a collection of information that defines the situation relating to the focal interests of each project before any interventions begin to have an effect. By conducting similar studies at later dates, such as the project mid- and end-points, change over time can be measured.

Consideration of this change, compared with change in 'comparison' areas (where applicable) in conjunction with a plausible *theory of change* and information about the delivery of interventions, allows conclusions to be drawn about the results that can be attributed to project activities.[1] Coupled with good monitoring data, this should also enable the effectiveness of different interventions to be compared and project management/performance to be improved.

Although primarily undertaken for the evaluation, the baselining work should bring other benefits. It provides opportunities for partners to work collaboratively and it will generate a substantial knowledge base that can deepen understanding of the local situation and be used to inform project development.

3 How Does a Baseline Study Differ From a Scoping Study?

A scoping study is a broad assessment of matters related to a particular issue or problem that is undertaken to inform project design. In the case of the Global Programme, the problem is sexual violence and sexual harassment of women and girls in public spaces. The scoping study should build understanding of the nature of the problem (characteristics, locations, scale, causes, etc), the context in which interventions will be delivered, what community stakeholders are already doing in this area and who should be involved in the project. As such, a good assessment is more valuable than great precision.

A baseline study will be focussed on measuring (quantitatively and qualitatively) those things that a project aims to change or which might change as a result of interventions.

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[1] Without a plausible *theory of change* there can be no justification for concluding that change has been *caused* by the project. It could be a consequence of other known or unknown developments or even random (unexplainable) change. Information about activities and the quality of their implementation should be gathered through systematic monitoring.

Because it is to be used as the benchmark against which future change will be assessed, accuracy is particularly important.

4 When Should a Baseline Study be Carried Out?

Getting the timing right for baselining work is essential. Crucially, it should be completed before project activities start to have any effect on those specific variables that they are intended to change. If it happens after change has started, the effect of interventions may be underestimated. On the other hand, baselining should not normally begin until it is has been collectively decided what actions are to be taken and what they are intended to achieve, so that appropriate indicators can be measured. If it is done before this, the 'wrong' information may be collected. This means that ideally the project design process should be largely completed before the baselining plan is finalised.

5 What Information Should be Collected?

The evaluation of the Global Programme will take place at two levels. As well as assessing the results in individual cities, the aim is to reach overarching conclusions about the effectiveness of six core strategies implemented in a variety of national and urban contexts across the Programme.[2] For this there needs to be consistency in the information collected by participating cities. The Impact Evaluation Strategy therefore includes a basket of key outcome and impact indicators that all cities are expected to include.[3]

These Programme level indicators will need to be collected in ways that take into account local conditions, circumstances, objectives and interventions. It will also be important to consider whether to include any supplementary indicators specifically related to the selected interventions. Indeed, it is highly recommended that city-specific indicators that reflect the specific contexts and expected results of each city project are

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[2] The six core strategies are:

Capacity-development of duty bearers, rights holders and other key actors at community, local, city and national levels.

Policy-oriented advocacy with local and national authorities and other key stakeholders on measures (including policy and practical measures) to prevent and reduce sexual violence in public spaces, increase economic opportunities for women, integrate gender in economic and social development plans, including gender responsive budgeting.

Facilitation of constructive dialogue and partnership building between local governments and community organisations with a key role played by women's grassroots groups.

Outreach and partnership with the media.

Increasing public awareness and community mobilisation, including outreach to men and youth of both sexes to promote gender equality and end violence against women and girls.

Facilitation of policy linkages and coordination within and across local, district, provincial and national levels.

[3] The Impact Evaluation Strategy is available at:
http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/safe_cities_ie_strategy.pdf.

also developed. For example, the scoping study may reveal that certain acts of sexual violence are taking place in certain areas at certain times and are affecting particular groups of women and girls. Or it may show that women's use of certain public spaces at certain times is severely curtailed by their fear of sexual harassment and violence. Or that men and boys are perpetrating sexual violence because of a lack of gender awareness and patriarchal attitudes. Each of these examples may point to different interventions intended to have different effects, and the baseline study will need to take this into account.

It should be noted too that interventions are likely to be implemented at different levels. They may be very local (community, neighbourhood), local (administrative district within a city or at city level) and even national (for example, if a project aims to change a law on sexual violence and harassment in public spaces). **What is essential is ensuring information is gathered about those things that the interventions are intended to change** at all applicable levels.

6 How Should the Baseline be Measured?

Although surveys often form the core of a baseline study, a good analysis will be based on **a range of research approaches and tools, which gather both quantitative and qualitative information**. Designing the research and analysing data will require specialist expertise, but there is no reason why baselining work should not be a participative process involving local people in many different ways. Indeed, in keeping with the philosophy of the Global Programme, **an inclusive participative approach should be a priority**. However, this is likely to require some capacity development of local citizens to build their evaluation skills and it will also be essential to ensure that researchers maintain objectivity.

At an early stage researchers should determine the most appropriate ways to access communities and individuals for the collection of baseline information (the 'entry points'). This may involve early contact and consultation with, for example, community or faith group leaders to explain the purpose of the research and secure their support. However, some leaders may have patriarchal attitudes, feel threatened by the research and dissuade women and girls from participating. So conducting the baseline study may be most difficult where the project benefits are most needed, and careful assessment about the best way to make progress is needed!

Surveys can generate extremely useful baseline data and it is expected that surveys of women and girls, as well as men and boys, will be conducted in all participating cities. However, these should be complemented by information gathered in other ways, such as key informant interviews, in depth interviews, group consultations, observation and by using a range of media, such as still photos, video recording and artwork. The 'most significant change' technique offers a distinctive approach to gathering information throughout the life of a programme based on story-telling and cities may wish to consider using this too.[4]

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[4]   For more information, see Davies R and J Hart (2005). *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) technique*. Available at http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf.

Using a variety of data collection methods enables issues to be explored from different perspectives. This 'triangulation' should increase the reliability of the information gathered and reduce the risk of erroneous conclusions being reached. Moreover, whilst quantitative data can generate numerical measures of change, complementary methods of collecting qualitative data can also provide vital explanations of how and why changes have occurred.

The Global Programme's Impact Evaluation Strategy indicates which methods might be used for specific indicators. However, there is plenty of opportunity for local partners to be creative and develop their own additional ideas.

7 What Ethical Issues need to be Considered?

All research amongst women and girls relating to violence against women raises significant ethical issues and risks for both the women and girls themselves and researchers undertaking this work. Asking women questions about their experiences of harassment and violence can result in 're-victimisation' as they recall and relive what happened. Speaking about such occurrences can also put them at risk of further violence if, for example, male family members hear about it and blame a female victim rather than the perpetrator. A fundamental principle is therefore that participants should be informed about the purpose and content of the research and research should only go ahead after informed consent has been given.

Researchers may also be exposed to risk if, for example, they have to travel into locations (areas and buildings) that may be unsafe or if a female respondent's family members find out and are unhappy about this subject being investigated. They may also face a dilemma if, during a confidential interview, they learn about violence or abuse that they feel should be reported to the authorities. Interviewers may even need support during a survey as they too can be traumatised by what they see and hear.

These and many other ethical issues need to be carefully considered by the programme partners as well as the researchers and arrangements made to manage the ethical challenges and minimise the risks. These should include setting up referral processes to ensure that interviewees can access gender and culturally sensitive support services, if they feel in need of help. There should be agreed procedures covering how to act if the research uncovers serious violence or abuse. Interviewers may need to be provided with escorts, so that they can complete their work safely.

Researchers should also incorporate arrangements that enable respondents to benefit from their participation, so that the investigation does not just 'take' from the community but also gives something back. This could include sharing the findings and involving community members in making presentations of the results.

The ethical issues, risks and responses mentioned above are only examples, not a complete checklist. More comprehensive guidance on these matters has been published by the World Health Organisation/PATH.[5] Programme and research teams should consider this carefully when preparing for the baseline study and all other research.

8 What 'Technical' Issues Need to be Considered?

8.1 Definition of the 'Population'

In preparing for the baseline study, there are many technical issues to think about, especially with regard to any 'people surveys', which are considered separately below. Of particular importance is definition of the 'population' or 'populations' on which the study is to be focused, that is the specific groups of women and girls, men and boys, local authority officials, police officers, journalists, etc on whom the programme is expected to have an impact. Clarity on this matter is essential so that the research can be focused appropriately - looking for change in a group which has not been 'targeted' could lead to an underestimation of the programme's effect.

However, population definition is not easy! The group of beneficiaries/agents of change may be defined as (say) *'all women aged over 18 years who live in the intervention area'*. However, if the interventions are to impact on public spaces such as markets or bus stations, which are used by many women travelling into and out of the intervention area, then this definition would be inadequate. In these cases the population that the programme might aim to affect might be better defined as *'women over 18 years who frequently use public spaces in the intervention areas'*, but who do not necessarily live in the area. The problem with this definition is that it would exclude those women who avoid the public spaces because of concerns about sexual harassment and sexual violence, precisely those women who should benefit most from the programme. Interventions may also be directed at men and boys, and defining the male population that the programme is intended to influence requires similar careful consideration.

A further complication is that, for good statistical analysis of survey data, it should be possible not only to define the population in words but also to be able to identify precisely who is in that population and the characteristics of those individuals (the 'sampling frame').

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[5] See Chapter 2 in Ellsberg M and L Heise (2005). *Researching violence against women. A practical guide for researchers and activists*. London: WHO/PATH. Available at: http://www.path.org/files/GBV_rvaw_front.pdf. Also, visit UN Women's Virtual Knwoledge Centre on Ending Violence against Women and Girls, which has an entire section on ethical research for VAW , is updated on an ongoing basis, and contains all of the latest guidelines, - http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/322-conducting-research-data-collection-and-analysis-.html
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This is usually possible for a residential population but almost impossible for a shifting group of shoppers in a market or travellers moving through a bus station, or indigenous groups who may migrate between the intervention sites and their local communities.

8.2 Questionnaire Surveys

Surveys are likely to be the main component of the baseline study, providing structured and quantifiable data that is particularly well-suited to measurement of change. Survey design, delivery and data analysis requires specialist expertise and should be undertaken by the programme's research partner or another contractor with relevant credentials. However, the research team must work closely with the programme team to ensure that the right information is collected. Elements of surveys that require careful consideration and planning include:

- *Questionnaires.* Getting the wording right to elicit the information wanted, avoid ambiguity, eliminate bias and avoid under/overlaps in multiple choices is critical. Separate questionnaires will be needed for women/girls and men/boys, and there may well be a need for variations within these groups. Decisions will have to be made about the use of slang or local terms, such as 'eve teasing', instead of 'sexual harassment'. Indeed, it may be best to avoid the term 'sexual harassment' since it may not be commonly used and because it can be interpreted in many ways. It is better to talk about specific behaviours.

- *Sampling*. Each survey almost certainly will only collect data from a sample, not the whole population. However, the value of the data will depend on being able to use it to make confident estimates about change in the population based on change in the sample. This requires the use of 'inferential' statistical techniques and having a sample of a particular size and quality.[6] The sample size needed to provide answers that, for example, give population estimates with a 99% probability of being within a particular range can be determined using a mathematical formula.

  Quality will depend on such things as the unbiased selection of individuals to include in the sample. In a household survey, this may mean having a systematic process first to choose specific households and then to choose the specific individual within the selected household for interview.

- *Delivery*. Surveys can be conducted in many ways, including through face-to-face interviews and self-completion. Getting answers to questions on sensitive subjects, such as sexual violence, may be easier if respondents can give them without having to voice answers to an interviewer, for example by writing on a form themselves, pointing to an answer on a choice card or entering an answer confidentially into a computer in a safe environment.

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[6]   As the name suggests, 'inferential' techniques allow inferences and estimates to be made about a population from data that has been drawn from one or more samples of that population. The inferences and estimates are normally specified with a 'significance level' or 'confidence interval' which indicate how certain one can be that they are correct.

- *Interviewers*. The quality of interviews will have a major influence on the results achieved. Careful selection of people with appropriate attributes and the provision of good training is vital. It is essential for interviews with women on sexual harassment and violence to be conducted by women.

- *Piloting*. Testing of questionnaires and interviewers in the field is a vital part of survey planning. Invariably field testing throws up unanticipated issues and revision of questionnaires. Sometimes, several iterations of testing and revision are needed before a final version is confirmed. Piloting may best be carried out outside the intervention area, so that it does not interfere with the actual study.

- *Quality*. A range of quality control and validation measures will need to be built into the survey design to check that information is being collected, recorded and analysed correctly.

8.3 Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation is arguably the most important part of a baseline study and adequate time and resources need to be allocated. Before any data collection commences, attention should be given to how it will be collated, coded and investigated. This does not just apply to quantifiable data from surveys but also information from in depth interviews, consultations and other activities. By considering this at an early stage, it should be possible to organise data collection in ways that facilitate its analysis.

There are a range of tools and techniques for analysing numerical and textual data, structured and unstructured, including computer software that can automate much of the process. Research partners should be familiar with these and able to suggest what will be most suitable in the local context.

8.4 Replication

Although it may seem some way off, it needs to be remembered when planning the baseline study that survey and other work will need to be repeated at a later date, probably at a mid-point, an end-point and even a point after the programme ends. The implications of this are that the methods and other aspects of the work need to be, as far as possible, replicable. This requires careful documentation of the way in which information is gathered and avoidance of arrangements linked to situations or conditions that are transitory or extraordinary.

9 Who Should Conduct the Baseline Study?

From what is written above, it should be clear that the baseline is a core component of programme evaluation. For this reason it is highly desirable that the baseline study is conducted by the same researchers who will carry out the rest of the evaluation. This should increase research consistency and continuity, allow the important relationship between programme and research partners to develop, and ensure a coherent research strategy.

However, cities might not want to enter into a long-term contract for the whole evaluation, including the baseline, with a new untried/untested research partner. It might be better to commission the baseline study from a research partner that can show it has the capacity and competence to undertake the whole evaluation, but to make the award of further work dependent on satisfactory completion of the initial assignment.

For several reasons the most appropriate research partner for the baseline is likely to be an institution rather than an individual. It is a substantial research task that requires a wide range of skills and resources. The survey, for example, will require development and piloting of questionnaires for different population groups; a rigorous sampling design; training of interviewers; capacity for data coding, entry and secure storage; and analytical skills involving application of appropriate inferential statistical techniques. Other work to collect qualitative data (small-group consultations, key informant interviews, women's safety audits, observation, photo/video recording, etc) will also require skilled researchers to plan and organise the activities, and to analyse the data.[7]

The fieldwork will also need to take into consideration the ethical issues and challenges related to research into this sensitive topic and the research methods need to reflect the Programme's commitment to rights-based and participative approaches. At the end of all the fieldwork, the findings will need to be brought together in a baseline report.

One person is unlikely to be able to offer the skills and resources required. Additionally, contracting an institution will reduce dependency on one person (and the risk that carries) and should increase the 'credibility' of the research.

10 Local Communication

The baseline is likely to be the most visible programme activity in the intervention areas to date. Given that the subject being researched is a sensitive one, there is a possibility that it may generate strong feelings, even adverse reactions. It will be sensible therefore to take steps to inform community leaders, respected community members, potential participants and other significant actors before work starts.

In doing so, it will be vital to emphasise positive messages about the programme and the baseline, notably that they are a reflection of a local government and community that is committed to addressing this challenge and pursuing social change to improve the quality of life of citizens locally. Indeed, this should form part of a broader communications strategy to be implemented alongside the main programme activities.

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7   The Women's Safety audit (WSA) is a potentially useful tool at various stages of project development. However, within the context of the Global Programme, the WSA is considered an intervention, so that its benefits can be evaluated, and consequently WSAs not be carried out before, or as part of, the baseline study.

11 Conclusion

The information provided in this note should make it clear that a baseline study is an extremely important and challenging research activity that requires time, people and other resources. It should be seen as an integral part of the programme evaluation and, if at all possible, conducted by an institution that will also complete the remainder of the evaluative work. This should be reflected in the commissioning arrangements.

Although the work programme should be designed and managed by each Safe City's research partner, programme partners and stakeholders should be aware of what is involved and the exercise will require their active engagement. It is critically important for the success of the programme that baselining (as well as all subsequent data collection activities) is a participative activity that engages communities in the intervention areas.

The baseline needs to collect data relating to the key indicators in the Programme's Impact Evaluation Strategy, but these may be supplemented by indicators relevant to local circumstances.

Questionnaire surveys will be a major component, the study should incorporate qualitative information and there is scope for creativity in developing appropriate methods for this. However, such research poses ethical issues and risks which need careful attention.

12 Further Information

Baseline study guidelines (2003). AusAID. Available at http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/baseline_guidelines.pdf.

How to plan a baseline study (undated). Rome: UN World Food Programme, Office of Evaluation and Monitoring. Available at http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ko/mekb_module_10.pdf.

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