Understanding VAW and research

- Violence against women in the Arab region is rooted in the culture of unequal gender power relations that is maintained through the masculine discourse of men as superior to women.
- Violence against women is both a tool for control and a result of women’s subordination status and the alleged gender roles identified for women.
- Most studies make violence appear as an individualist matter (a formula of oppressor and oppressive).
- Victimization of women, little consideration to the intersection between VAW and class, economic status, refugee, ethnicity, migration etc.
- VAW in the Arab region should be understood through the life circle of women, it is not one incidence.
Definition and forms of VAW

• most of the research surveys, and analysis of VAW have focused on family violence/marital violence and to a large extent ignored the relation between VAW at the public level experienced in a range of settings, and the private that experienced within the family.

• Physical and emotional violence of spouses is the most investigated forms of violence

• All forms of violence need to be addressed through various institutions of government and with multi approaches such as policy planning, legislation, healthcare, education, labour and criminal justice as well as by media, human rights and religious institutions
Perceptions on VAW

- It is widely common in the research to assume that women accept acts of violence.
- The low percentage of women reporting violence is related to the community’s perceptions towards those who report violence as “bad” women, lack of protection mechanisms, and expectation of bad treatment at the police stations.
- Questions designed to understand women’s perceptions should differentiate between why (the justification of violence), how and women’s knowledge about her.
- Due to the confusion to such unclear understanding of VAW, surveys show that women’s perception towards violence:
  - In Syria, 56% of women who were interviewed for the VAW study think they were beaten because of mistakes they have committed.
  - In Palestine, 27.9% of women agree that a husband should beat his wife in case she left the house without his permission (domestic violence Survey).
  - The vast majority (90 percent) of women interviewed for the Jordanian Health and Population Survey (2007) accept at least one reason as a justification for wife beating.
• women who are married at younger ages are more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife and are more likely to experience domestic violence themselves

• In Syria (MICS3, 2006), Women who married at younger ages were more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife and were more likely to experience domestic violence themselves

• Iraq (MICS 2006): 47.3% of married women aged 15-49 believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she goes without telling him, 42.8% if she neglects the children, 36.2% if she argues with him, 34.1% when she refuses to have sex with him, 19.6% when she burns the food and 59.1% for all these reasons
• the perceptions of women in urban areas have differed largely from those who were in the rural areas; urban women were less likely to accept justifications of violence

• in Bahrain’s study “Violence against Women in Bahrain”, 2008, most of the respondents did not recognize the principle of “women’s discipline by beating to be the duty of spouses, fathers and brothers”, where the percentage of those who disagree was (92.4%), and those who agreed were only (7.4%) of total respondents

• Oxfam’s study “The Effects of Socialization on Gender Discrimination and Violence” (2011) shows that the perception of men towards VAW is mainly about blaming women for the necessity of violence, rather than holding the responsibility of violence. The study shows that statements of blaming women used as justification for men’s violence was higher (258) than the number of statements that indicated the responsibility of men (148)
Statistics and data on VAW

• There is a need for improved data collection, in particular on under-documented forms.
• Data and statistics, while improved, still do not give a real picture of VAW in the region.
• The systematic gathering and dissemination of data and development of proper indicators are lacking in the region as a whole.
• There is a big gap between statistics and policy making processes. There is not a complete module in the region that built strategic action plans in coordination with statistics, data, and information departments.
Under-documented forms of violence against women:

- Female suicide
- Sexual violence in the workplace and at the community level
- Trafficking in women and violence against domestic workers
- Sexual harassment and violence in households (like incest)
- Economic violence - including denial of employment and other opportunities related to income generation, denial of income-related resources and violence related to work and employment situations
- Violence against women with disabilities
- State and community violence
Development of indicators

- In most surveys the indicators developed were related to the number of women experiencing violence and perceptions on wife beating.
- Indicators that show women’s knowledge or awareness of violence (definition, consequences), existing laws, services, and other protection mechanisms were not included in the surveys.
- There was no indicator to examine the underrepresented or marginalized population groups of women and those who may be at higher risk of victimization, such as ethnic minorities and migrants, refugee women, and women with disabilities.
- None of the official surveys or studies was designed based on human rights approach. Therefore, indicators developed were related to forms of violence were limited to that of physical and emotional rather than violations of women’s human rights such as women’s rights to mobility, education, access to jobs, and political participation.
Recommendations

- States should strengthen the knowledge base on all forms of violence against women to inform policy and strategy development, build and sustain multi-sectoral strategies and allocate adequate resources and funding.

- The scope of the survey should be based on the international standards and definitions.

- Surveys should include underrepresented or marginalized women’s groups and those who may be at higher risk of victimisation, such as ethnic minorities and migrants, women, and women with disabilities.

- Ensure that data is disaggregated, not only by sex, but also by other factors such as race, age and disability, as appropriate.
Recommendations

• Measurement of sexual violence and abuse, psychological violence, neglect, levels of severity of violence and types of violence should be part of the national surveys and developed in the context of interdisciplinary research.

• National surveys on the prevalence, incidents, and impact of violence should be conducted regularly to monitor the problem and assess the effectiveness of existing strategies, programs, intervention, and protection programs against violence against women.

• Culture, traditional values that legitimize violence should be measured and taken into consideration in all surveys on VAW.

• A set of agreed-upon regional indicators should be developed or adapted of those agreed upon internationally.