

# "Putting Women First"

## Ethical and Safety recommendations for Research on Violence against Women

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Reproductive Health/Sexual Health**

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# Objective of this session

- **Research on sensitive topics raise specific ethical and safety issues, that may go beyond those covered by CIOMS Guidelines:**  
*the example of Violence against Women*
- **To give you access to the guidelines developed for this type of research**

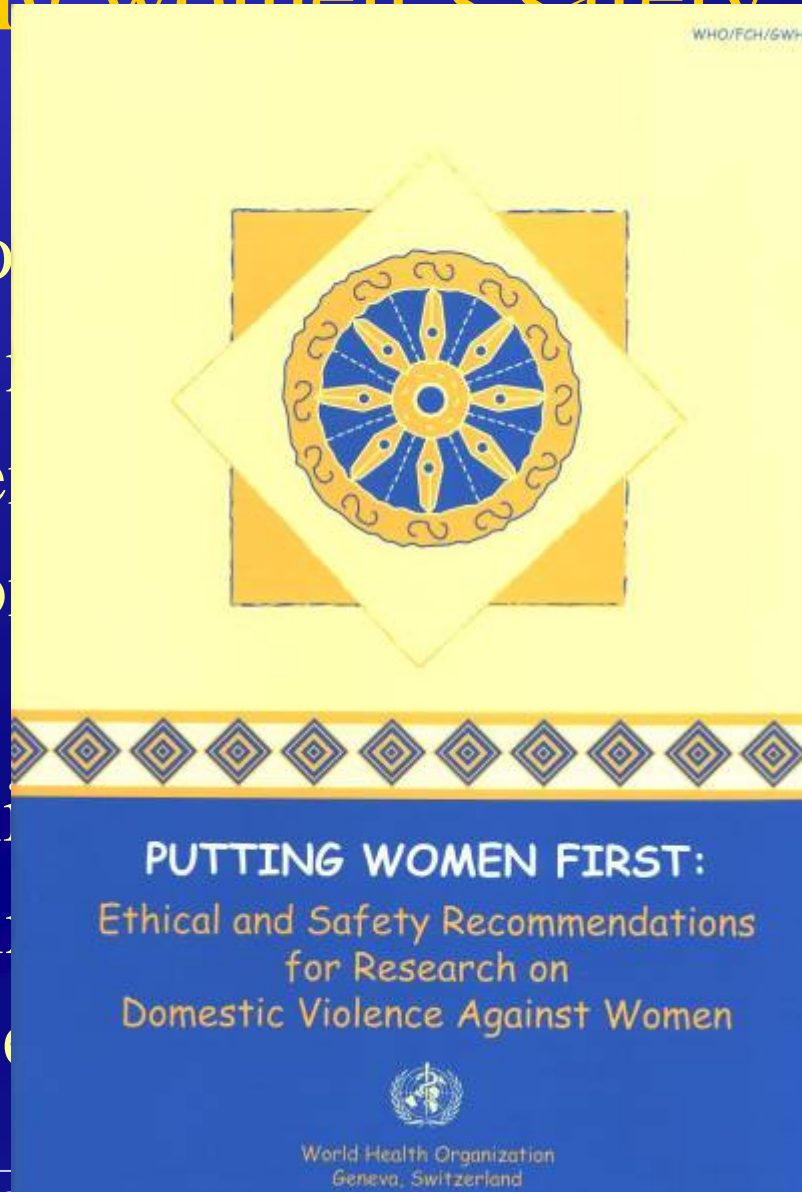


# To whom do women talk about physical partner violence?



# Putting women's safety first in

- 1. Safety of
- 2. Studies
- 3. Confide
- 4. Selection
- 5. Actions
- 6. Possibil
- 7. Proper i
- 8. Violence



Research team  
Methodologically sound  
Data quality  
Members  
Respondents  
Mechanisms  
Study results  
Surveys



# 1. Safety of respondents and research team

- Interviews only in a private setting, participant should feel free to reschedule or relocate
- Frame the study not in terms of violence (but further information should be give as part of consent procedure)
- Only one woman per household
- Train interviewers about interruptions
- Logistics and budget planning should consider respondent and interviewer safety



## 2. Studies need to be methodologically sound

- Ethically it is unacceptable to conduct a poorly designed study that cannot address the aims
- Practically too: too low estimates can be used to question the importance of violence
- Avoid loaded terms as abuse, rape, violence
- Give attention to wording, length of interview, multiple opportunities for disclosure, etc.
- Sex, skill, attitude and training of interviewer
- When results unexpected, discuss findings with key informants, community groups before dissemination



### 3. Confidentiality for safety and data quality

- Address this in training of interviewers; no interviewers working in their own community
- Confidentiality procedures, consent process
- Handling of tapes, names
- Presentation of findings: no one community or individual can be identified
- Handling of photographs



# Fieldwork

## *Brazil*



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## 4. Selection and training of team members

- Training should include introduction on gender and violence
- Training as opportunity for research staff to come to terms with own experiences
- Addressing emotional needs of team members
- Role of interviewers: Not counselling, not trying to "save" respondents



# Support for interviewers

## *Peru*



ganization

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## 5. Actions to reducing distress to respondents

- Ask all questions in supportive and non-judgemental manner (language of questions)
- Train interviewers to deal with distress
- Train when and how to terminate interview
- All interviews should end in a positive manner



- *"Somehow it made me feel good, because it was something that I had never told anyone before. Now I've told someone".*
- --Respondent, Brazil



## 6. Possibilities of referral, support mechanisms

- If possible meet prior to field work with potential providers of support
- Develop list of resources and offer to all respondents – either small enough to be hidden or include a range of other services
- Where few resources exist, consider having a trained counsellor or women's advocate accompany the teams



# 7. Proper interpretation and use of study results

- Research findings should be fed into ongoing advocacy, policy-making and intervention activities
- Involve advocacy and service groups etc from the beginning as part of research team or advisory committee. Also in use and advocacy
- Researchers need to be proactive in ensuring that research findings are interpreted appropriately by public and media-



## 8. Violence questions in other surveys

- Be aware of the challenges of ensuring data quality and ensuring respondent safety
- It makes sense only if research team is willing and able to address basic ethical and methodological guidelines.



*... ”We were so naïve. When we first added questions on violence into our survey on contraceptive use we did nothing special...it never occurred to us that we would have problems. Later we found out that three women had been severely beaten for participating in our survey. We felt awful and realized then that we were in over our heads..*

**(Researcher from Mexico)**



# Interviewer Training



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# Goals of interviewer training

- To increase sensitivity of participants to gender issues at a personal as well as a community level;
- To develop a basic understanding of gender-based violence, its characteristics, causes and impact on the health of women and children;
- To understand the goals of the Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence;
- To learn skills for interviewing, taking into account safety and ethical guidelines;
- To become familiar with the questionnaire and protocol of the WHO Multi-Country Study.



# Example of training schedule

## Week 1

- Presentations from advocacy groups/NGOs
- Sensitization to concepts of gender and violence
- Anonymous disclosure about personal and others' experiences of partner violence
- Exposure to support options for women living with violence (including field visit)
- Aim and overview of the WHO Study and questionnaire
- Interviewing techniques and safety measures





## Week 2

- Detailed question by question explanation of questionnaire
- Role-plays and field practice of approaching the household and using the complete questionnaire – including interviewing survivors of intimate partner violence, practice at how to respond if interview interrupted or if respondent becomes distressed
- Separate sessions for supervisors on supervisory procedures



## Week 3

- Sampling procedures, including repeated visits and re-sampling
- Pilot testing of questionnaire and all field procedures, including logistics, safety measures, supervisory procedures in at least two different locations, alternated by debriefing and feedback sessions
- Final adjustments to questionnaire and field procedures
- Training of data entry staff on all aspects of data management using questionnaires from pilot study



# Evidence of the value of training

Serbia and Montenegro 2003

- 13 inexperienced, carefully selected interviewers, trained during 3 weeks
- 21 professional interviewers, selected because of their interest in the topic, trained during one day



# Special training vs professional interviewers

	Inexperienced, 3 week training	Professional, 1 day training
Response rate	93%	86%
Disclosure rate	26%	21%
Respondent satisfaction – with violence	46%	29%
Respondent satisfaction – without violence	46%	38%





*“I learned a lot from the beginning of the training, till the end of the survey. The survey opened wounds, but I had to learn to face it and cope with it. The respondents really needed and enjoyed this experience... My career path changed, ... because I could do something which can make a difference...”*

*Interviewer from Namibia*



# Points to take home

- A population based survey on violence against women should be and can be done ethically and safely
- Women are willing to share experiences with trained and empathetic interviewers



# Group work

## INDIVIDUAL CONSENT FORM



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# WHO VAW Study Objectives

- Estimates of prevalence of violence against women
- Associations between partner violence and health variables
- Risk and protective factors for domestic violence against women
- Strategies used by women who experience domestic violence



Hello, my name is \*. I work for \*. We are conducting a survey in STUDY LOCATION to learn about women's health and life experiences. You have been chosen by chance (as in a lottery / raffle) to participate in the study.

I want to assure you that all of your answers will be kept strictly secret. I will not keep a record of your name or address. You have the right to stop the interview at any time, or to skip any questions that you don't want to answer. There are no right or wrong answers. Some of the topics may be difficult to discuss, but many women have found it useful to have the opportunity to talk.

Your participation is completely voluntary but your experiences could be very helpful to other women in COUNTRY.

Do you have any questions?

The interview takes approximately \* minutes to complete.

Do you agree to be interviewed?



NOTE WHETHER RESPONDENT AGREES TO INTERVIEW OR NOT

[ ] DOES NOT AGREE TO BE INTERVIEWED  
THANK PARTICIPANT FOR HER TIME AND END

[ ] AGREES TO BE INTERVIEWED

Is now a good time to talk?

It's very important that we talk in private. Is this a good place to hold the interview, or is there somewhere else that you would like to go?

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**TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWER**

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE READ THE ABOVE CONSENT PROCEDURE TO THE PARTICIPANT.

SIGNED:



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# Introduction of Section 7 to ask about violence experience

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*“ When two people marry or live together, they usually share both good and bad moments. I would now like to ask you some questions about your current and past relationships and how your husband / partner treats (treated) you. If anyone interrupts us I will change the topic of conversation. I would again like to assure you that your answers will be kept secret, and that you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. May I continue?”*





THANK  
YOU

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<http://www.who.int/gender/>



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