

Mapping help-seeking behaviour

An important first step in estimating the household level costs of domestic violence, particularly in settings where data is lacking, is to map the help-seeking behaviour of women experiencing violence, as well as the type and extent of public or private services that are or should be made available. This step is important to understand which services should be included to estimate the out-of-pocket costs of women experiencing violence.

The *tree branch model* is a useful tool that can be applied in mapping help seeking behaviour for different categories of services generally considered in estimating the cost of domestic violence: health services, criminal justice, civil legal services, housing and refuge and social services. The starting point is a woman going to some sort of provider such as a health clinic, police station, legal aid cell or shelter.

However, in most countries of the Global South, a majority of women will not take this initial step, especially with respect to police stations, legal aid or shelters. This lack of utilization of services is partly driven by the norms of acceptability of domestic violence. It equally reflects the lack of services available due to the inadequate policy attention paid to the needs of women experiencing domestic violence. A mapping of the available services in the local context would lead to a clear identification of the specific services that need to be considered in the costing exercise.

There are various approaches and tools that can be explored and adopted when mapping women's help-seeking behaviour. One of these approaches is to adopt a participatory process. In this approach, a randomly or purposively selected group of women is gathered together for a half-day or one-day exercise. An open-ended narrative of a case of a woman experiencing domestic violence is presented to the group. The group is then asked about the hypothetical actions this woman can/will take in that specific community, with questions about the people and organizations at her disposal, and so forth. The responses and discussion are recorded in a Venn or circular diagram. Also known as a chapati diagram, the Venn diagram is useful for analyzing social distance, organizational structures or institutional relationships.

Whenever possible, the input of survivors of violence is another source of information for mapping help-seeking behaviour. Since women may contact more than one service provider, this should be noted in the discussion to understand their pattern of referrals.