



CARICOM GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS ON THE COLLECTION AND USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



**Spotlight
Initiative**
To eliminate violence
against women and girls

An initiative of the United Nations funded by the European Union



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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

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The Spotlight Initiative

The Spotlight Initiative is a global initiative of the United Nations which has received generous support from the European Union. Its aim is to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Launched in 2017 with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative represented an unprecedented global effort to invest in gender equality and women's empowerment as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Acronyms

CARICOM	CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
CSO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
EDF	EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT FUND
VAWG	VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS
HRBA	HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH
ICT	INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
IPV	INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
ISP	INFORMATION SHARING PROTOCOLS
LGBTQ+	LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER
MDAs	MINISTRIES, DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES
NCM	NATIONAL COORDINATING MACHINERY
NSO	NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES
PWD	PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
UPD	USER PRODUCER DIALOGUE
WHO	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has deep historical roots in the English-speaking Caribbean. Women and girls have suffered physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence both from intimate partners and non-partners for centuries. This violence is, in part, a brutal legacy of enslavement, and is undergirded by patriarchal sociocultural norms that privilege men and uphold their dominance of women. Data from five countries show that, on average, 46 per cent of women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence (IPV), including economic and emotional violence, over their lifetime. Although emotional violence is the most prevalent form of abuse of women, almost 30 per cent of women in these countries report having experienced physical abuse at the hands of a male partner.

Across the region, data establish higher levels of IPV among women whose partners are controlling. Other risk factors include women being the main source of family income, their educational level, intergenerational violence experienced by both victims and perpetrators, and the partner's involvement in other intimate relationships¹.

What is regarded as the 'normalization' of the pandemic of violence against women and girls in the Caribbean, has strengthened the move towards regional collaboration to collect and manage administrative data on VAWG. This, stakeholders across the region agree, is a critical measure to address and arrest this developmental crisis which continues to face our various countries. Findings from country-specific, regional, and global initiatives, have contributed to establishing ethical guidelines and protocols for the effective management of VAWG administrative data. This document represents the summary of these findings and charts the pathway towards action on a national and regional basis.

Among the initiatives that have shaped this pathway are CARICOM's 2019 Protocol Manual, the findings

from User Producer Dialogues (UPDs) held across the region, as well as the publication in May 2022 of *Global Technical Guidance* by UN Women and the World Health Organisation (WHO). These have provided useful resources to guide the development and implementation of an agreed and timely framework for a regional platform for collaborative action.

1.1 CARICOM PROTOCOL MANUAL FOR PROCESSING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The 2019 CARICOM Protocol Manual for the Processing of Administrative Data on Domestic Violence, a product of the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) Cariforum Crime and Security Cooperation Programme, provides templates for the collection of administrative data from victims/survivors and perpetrators of VAWG, along with samples of a template for data sharing. The Manual proposed that standardized definitions and objectives should be used in VAWG data collection and management so that "individual institutions can develop intra and

¹ Data from prevalence surveys conducted in Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname. See <https://caribbean-womencount.unwomen.org>

inter-agency protocols for implementation”². It also recommended that protocols developed “should involve an initial consultative process with relevant stakeholders to encourage support for the initiative and to develop a methodology for accomplishing the shared goal of reduction” of VAWG³. Issues that form the basis for this wider consultation were the stages in the data management process, namely, collection, preparation, input, processing, output, and storage.

1.2 USER-PRODUCER DIALOGUES

Under the aegis of the Caribbean Regional Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls, funded by the European Union and the UN (with UN Women as lead agency on data and research), consultations were conducted on the importance of administrative data in work to eliminate VAWG. Called User Producer Dialogues (UPDs), they were held with four different interest groups across several other CARICOM countries (See Annex 3). These regional-level dialogues included representatives of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and civil society organisations, many involved in addressing VAWG. Across the board, entities concerned with developing statistical systems for their national institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) responding to victims/survivors of VAWG, or regional research planning and academic institutions, have acknowledged the following:

1. VAWG data production and management deficits in the CARICOM region;
2. the urgency of addressing administrative data on VAWG as a complement to the prevalence data which have been produced in some countries ;
3. the high level of interest and motivation towards addressing the production and management of VAWG administrative data within a collaborative framework;

² CARICOM, 2019. Protocol Manual. For the processing of Administrative Data on Domestic Violence. The Crime and Violence Prevention and Social Development Project. Submitted by Rethink Solutions. p. 38

³ Ibid, p. 49.

4. the need for harmonization of tools and processes for VAWG data collection and management, beginning at the national level;
5. the need to strengthen collaboration for the collection and sharing of VAWG administrative data between state agencies and civil society actors at the national and regional levels;
6. the urgent priority for standardization, including of data definitions and processes within the data management cycle;
7. improvements are needed in analysis, dissemination, and use of VAWG administrative data.

These dialogues explored issues and approaches related to the collection, processing, analysis and storage of VAWG administrative data. In the process, key issues reflected in the templates of the CARICOM Protocol Manual have been concretized, and other key VAWG administrative data management issues advanced.

The UPDs also resulted in the positions in respect of:

1. the minimum data set on VAWG administrative data⁴
2. protocols for the following:
 - collecting and securing client information
 - sharing of data
 - ensuring data confidentiality.

1.3 GLOBAL TECHNICAL GUIDANCE: IMPROVING THE COLLECTION AND USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In addition to the CARICOM Protocol Manual and the Jamaica and regional UPDs, the recently published *Global Technical Guidance*⁵, has been a major resource for these protocols to systematize VAWG administrative data management in CARICOM. The *Global Technical Guidance* outlines eight (8) steps in improving the

⁴ The *Global Technical Guidance* developed by WHO and UN Women recommend that countries collect administrative data to monitor a core set of indicators on VAW. This core set of data is referred to as the ‘minimum data set’.

⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and World Health Organisation (WHO), 2022. *Global Technical Guidance: Improving the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women*. New York. UN Women.

collection and use of administrative data on VAW. These steps are derived from a review of existing VAWG administrative data systems and the expert inputs of data users and producers from across the globe, including experiences drawn from UPDs in Jamaica. The identified steps are as follows:

1. Know the appropriate use for VAW administrative data and identify priorities for data collection;
2. Create a national or subnational VAW administrative data coordinating mechanism;
3. Analyse and align VAW legislative, policy and data environment;
4. Convene VAW administrative data user-producer dialogues;
5. Agree on which data will be collected, analysed and reported;
6. Create an implementation plan to collect and use VAW data;
7. Implement and monitor regular reporting of VAW administrative data;
8. Engage in data communication.

It is from this pool of resources- the CARICOM Protocol Manual, the Spotlight UPDs and the *Global Technical Guidance* that these ethical guidelines and protocols for the management of administrative data on violence against women and girls in CARICOM are drawn.

1.4 USING THE GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to help improve the quality of administrative data on VAWG, and the ethical practices which attend the collection of this data. Accordingly, the primary audience is those entities which produce administrative data on VAWG at the national and sub-national levels. These include, but are not limited to:

- a) Civil society organisation offering services;
- b) The police;
- c) Medical facilities providing care to survivors;
- d) The justice sector, including courts, mediation, legal aid, and prosecutorial services;
- e) Social services which provide assistance to survivors of VAWG.

Users are not required to have any specific technical knowledge in data production or management, as the guide applies to all those who provide VAWG services and through their administrative role, come in contact with survivors and victims of VAWG. Therefore, anyone who interfaces with victims and survivors through a reporting or intake process can benefit from aspects of the Guide.

Persons directly involved in data collection and production, such as in national statistics or planning agencies or departments, will also find the Guide useful. This is particularly so for technical personnel who make decisions about data protection and sharing, or who work in multi-sectoral teams which use VAWG data for policy-making and programming on VAWG.

Data users, that is, those entities which utilize VAWG administrative data for law and policy-making or designing interventions to prevent and respond to VAWG, may also benefit from the Guidance. They may find understanding the technical and ethical issues behind the collection and analysis of this data useful in their own work in advocacy or policy-making.

Data producers should use this Guide as a reference point for their collection, analysis, sharing, and dissemination of VAWG administrative data. The principles and steps outlined here are not prescriptive, and as such, each country will make adaptations to suit its local priorities, conditions and capacity. What is provided is technical guidance for the consideration of each member of CARICOM as they take steps to develop a data management system for administrative data on VAWG.

Agencies leading the activities to improve the collection, analysis, and dissemination of VAWG administrative data should ensure that other data producers are informed and sensitised about these guidelines and standards.

The guidelines outline the importance of protocols for VAWG administrative data management, define the types of violence which are covered and the possible sources and uses of administrative data on VAWG. Also included are recommendations on the development of a Minimum Dataset, the ethical standards for data collection, data management and sharing, training and capacity development, and the basics of an institutional framework within which to embed this administrative data system.

“The 2019 CARICOM Protocol Manual for the Processing of Administrative Data on Domestic Violence provides templates for the collection of administrative data from victims/survivors and perpetrators of VAWG along with samples of a template for data sharing.”



2. PROTOCOLS AND VAWG ADMINISTRATIVE DATA MANAGEMENT

A protocol is defined as a system of rules and guidelines that outline and explain the correct conduct and procedures which are to be followed under specific formally agreed situations. Protocols establish standards and ethical practices which are particularly important in the context of the collection and management of VAWG administrative data, as experiences of violence are among the most traumatic, personal, intimate aspects of the lives of victims and survivors.

Whether applied at the local, institutional, national or CARICOM regional levels, protocols serve, among other things, to:

- provide guidance on and towards good practices and ethical standards for the collection, analysis, sharing and dissemination of administrative data;
- establish a platform of understanding and agreement among partners around core issues such as tools and processes related to VAWG administrative data management;
- support the achievement of agreed outputs and outcomes;
- ensure that while work is taking place from different locations or with different institutions, operations proceed on agreed and shared principles.

“Considering the difficulties faced by the region in managing the epidemic of violence, particularly DV, initiatives that emphasize the importance of data are critical for developing informed, evidence based next steps”.

CARICOM PROTOCOL MANUAL, p. 12

Protocols, by developing and using similar templates and procedures, take on added importance by :

- i. making it easier for the output of data collection to be converted into useful information;

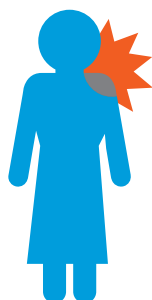
- ii. enhancing processing and sharing of data;
- iii. helping to arrest the trend of under-recording data and reduce the effects of under-reporting;
- iv. enabling CARICOM states to participate in regional initiatives for data collection;
- v. providing a framework for collecting more comprehensive statistics to guide interventions to address gender-based violence, including VAWG;
- vi. providing information to assess the effectiveness of strategies implemented;
- vii. provide a framework to regulate how data is effectively collected, processed and shared.

Protocols rest on a common agreement and understanding of core issues, such as what VAWG is and the objectives and value of collecting and managing such data. They also codify partner agreements on what data must be collected as they work together within a national and regional system that conforms to international standards.

In summary, these protocols will serve to establish and maintain standardization in practice, based on agreed principles and modus operandi among CARICOM partners, be they users or producers of administrative data on violence against women and girls.

3. TYPES OF VIOLENCE

These guidelines cover experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional violence experienced by women and girls⁶. In keeping with, WHO standards, these types of violence are defined as follows:



Physical Violence: This involves acts which cause physical harm to women. This includes slapping, kicking, biting, hitting with objects, burning, stabbing, strangling, shooting etc. This kind of violence also includes threats with weapons such as knives and guns.



Sexual Violence: This is any form of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour perpetrated through force, coercion or intimidation. This spans a gamut of sexual activities and includes abusive sexual contact, forced sexual contact (such as rape, attempted rape and grievous sexual assault)⁷, and non-contact sexual activities (e.g. sexual harassment, and forced participation in or watching of pornography). This category of VAWG also includes forced participation in sexual acts, which a survivor may find humiliating or degrading.



Emotional and Psychological Violence: Emotional and Psychological Abuse occurs when a woman is insulted, belittled, humiliated or intimidated by her partner or when he displays controlling behaviours such as restraining her access to friends and family. Verbal threats to them or someone they care about (e.g. children, family members) are also included⁸.

Each country may decide to include other types of VAWG in its national administrative data management system.

⁶ This is in line with global guidance which does not include other forms of VAWG such as trafficking and economic violence.

⁷ As per the definition of these offences under the Sexual Offences Acts in CARICOM.

⁸ This kind of violence is not recognized under the current Domestic Violence legislation across the region, but is included in the proposed amendments to the legislation in some jurisdictions. The prevalence surveys in the region collected data on emotional violence.

4. SOURCES AND USES OF VAWG ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Administrative Data is principally generated by entities that provide services to victims and survivors of VAWG. These first responders include law enforcement and health services, women’s crisis centres, shelters and hotlines, child protection services, and women’s rights civil society organisations. Other service providers who collect this type of information include courts, prosecutorial departments, and Legal Aid clinics.

VAWG administrative data is highly valued for meeting the priority objectives of:

- improving policies and programmes to prevent VAWG
- bringing effective support to victims/ survivors
- holding perpetrators accountable
- designing legislation, policies and programmes to prevent and respond to VAWG
- supporting improvement in the design of measures and processes to facilitate effective response by entities and institutions.

It supports these priorities by providing information on wide-ranging issues, such as

- the number of cases or incidents of VAWG reported to a specific service
- the perpetrator and the relationship with the victim/ survivor

- the utilisation and demand for different types of services
- an estimate of the capacity of the VAWG prevention and response through approximations of the need for such services and their costs
- the response of the entities to violence and how far they meet the needs of women and girls
- information to monitor and evaluate existing programmes and policies to prevent and respond to VAWG.

This data can, in some systems, facilitate case management across key sectors such as health, law enforcement, and the courts. Despite its great value, administrative data cannot provide an estimate of the magnitude or prevalence of VAWG in the population. Prevalence data is collected from household surveys, a process which also has its own standards and ethical guidelines.

“The User-Producer Dialogues (UPDs) held across the region highlighted the urgency of addressing administrative data on VAWG as a complement to the prevalence data, acknowledging the need for harmonization of tools and processes for data collection and management.”



5. THE MINIMUM DATASET

Data collection, processing, dissemination and storage all have ethical issues that must be taken into account when developing an effective VAWG administrative data management system. However, before consideration is given to these matters, the first step is agreeing on the contents of a minimum data set. This is important since the first point of contact between the victim/survivor and the service agency from which they seek support involves some data collection. That interaction between the client and service provider can aggravate or ameliorate stress levels. Confining data collection to critical information can help reduce the trauma associated with retelling experiences, without compromising the efficacy of information collected.

Discussions on the scope of a minimum data set were an important feature of the UPDs, and the consensus was that the preferred option was to seek less, not more, data from clients. Ultimately, there was agreement that the data set outlined in the *Global Technical Guidance* should be accepted. This includes data on:

- Sex and age of the survivor
- Sex and age of the alleged perpetrator (where known)
- Survivor-perpetrator relationship (critical in distinguishing intimate partner violence and other forms of domestic violence, from other, non-domestic, forms of VAWG).
- Types of violence experienced.

This minimum data set will document all types of violence reported to service providers by victims and survivors. The global recommendation is that law enforcement and the justice system, the two main official sources of crime data globally, must record all types of chargeable offences, rather than only the ones which are considered the major or most serious offences. This would ensure that the data from these sources provide as complete a picture as possible of all the types of VAWG that are perpetrated.

BOX 1

Importance of the Minimum Data Set

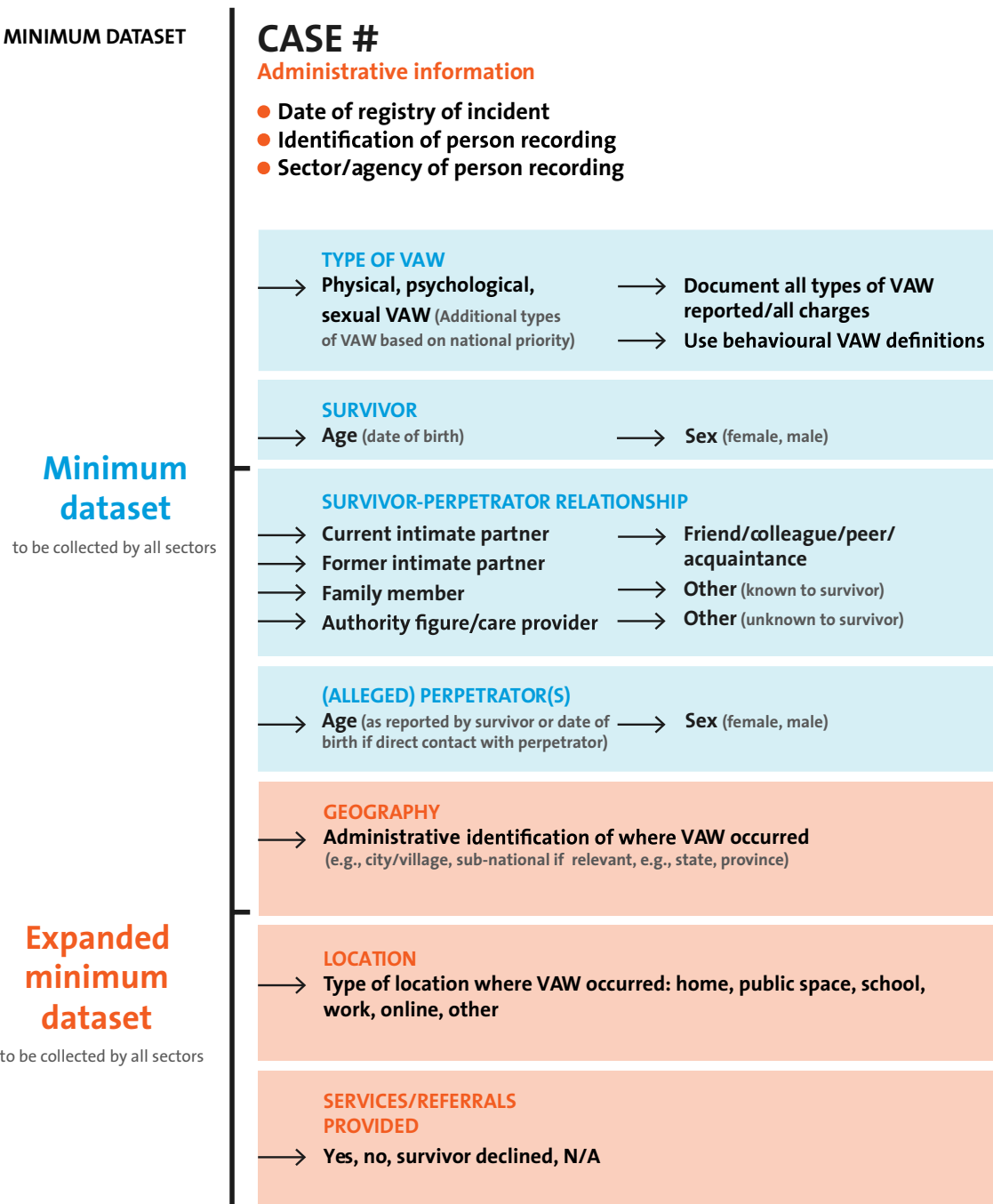
Collecting a minimum data set that includes the sex and age of the survivor and the perpetrator as well as the survivor-perpetrator relationship and the type of violence experienced allows each sector to monitor service demand and to describe key characteristics of survivors and perpetrators interacting with services, as well as to understand types of VAW for which services are sought. Collecting the survivor-perpetrator relationship, sex and age provides some insight into power dynamics between survivors and perpetrators.

Collection of these foundational VAW administrative variables by all sectors allows for analysis of similarities and differences in the types of VAW, survivors and perpetrators, and related power dynamics and potential responses, for which services are being sought and responded to by different sectors. This knowledge can identify strengths and gaps in sectoral and cross-sectoral responses, contributing to more comprehensive prevention and response to VAW at the subnational or national level.

Source: UN Women/WHO Improving the Collection and Use of Administrative Data on Violence Against Women: Global Technical Guidance

Figure 1 below provides details on the variables which will be key components of this minimum dataset and their level of disaggregation. These, also in keeping with the global guidelines, are:

FIGURE 1: MINIMUM DATASET



5.1. AN EXPANDED DATASET

Expanding the minimum dataset to include more variables may become necessary, particularly when prevention and response interventions require more details. The expanded data set may include, information on the area/ community where the violence took place, the specific location (e.g., In the home, public space, work, school, etc.), or if particular services are demanded and utilized. This information can help to direct efforts and resources to specific

communities or locations within communities and help service providers determine which services are needed or used by survivors of violence.

Countries can determine if they wish to expand the minimum dataset, and what variables to include, based on the national requirements for data to prevent and respond to VAWG. Preferably, this determination can be made using the UPD process, which brings users and producers into conversation around data needs

6. DATA COLLECTION

Ethical principles related to the rights of the clients, the process governing data and information collection, and how these are handled are central to the collection of administrative data on VAWG. Both the CARICOM Protocol and the *Global Technical Guidance* affirm the following general guiding principles for the collection and use of VAWG administrative data⁹:

6.1 SURVIVOR-CENTRED/DO NO HARM

Though having high-quality data is central to local and national efforts to prevent and respond to VAWG, this is never more important than the needs of the women who have survived this violence. All approaches to data collection must, therefore, put victims and survivors first. Operationally, this requires service providers to:

- Prioritise service over data collection: Women who seek help for violence should receive the service they need before they are asked to provide full details of their experience. Depending on the service, this may not always be possible, but where service can be provided immediately (e.g., health care services), this should be done.
- Reduce the response burden of survivors. Limit the number of questions asked of survivors, asking only for details that are absolutely necessary for service provision. Also, make every effort to minimize the number of times survivors are asked to recount their experiences.
- Respect women's right to refuse to answer any question: Survivor autonomy must be respected, and services should not be denied (where possible) because women do not answer any or all of the questions asked by the service provider or indicate that they do not want their report documented.
- Data collection forms and information management systems should be designed to allow non-response.

⁹ These widely accepted principles form the ethical foundation of research on VAWG, whether via administrative data collection, qualitative data collection or prevalence surveys. These principles were also identified in Jamaica as critical by both users and producers of VAWG administrative data during consultations for the development of these guidelines.

This will also allow data analysts to distinguish a refusal from missing data.

- Avoid invasive and potentially re-traumatizing questions to survivors: Do not ask about issues irrelevant to the care being sought by the survivor or potentially discriminatory or prejudicial to the survivor. Information about the conduct of the survivor may be pertinent in law enforcement, and adjudicatory settings, but not to other service providers, and so should not form part of the information requested of survivors in those sectors. **Under no circumstances should survivors be questioned about their sexual history.**
- Adopting a non-discriminatory approach to vulnerable communities, for example, people who are members of the LGBTQI+ community, whose needs and rights are not explicitly recognized in programming, policies and legislation relating to VAWG.

6.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

A core principle of ethical research, confidentiality is particularly important when collecting sensitive information from victims and survivors of VAWG. Breaches of confidentiality can severely compromise the safety of survivors of VAWG and their families with catastrophic consequences. It is particularly important to protect survivor confidentiality when the woman may be at risk of further victimisation from the original perpetrator or their agents.

Respect for the confidentiality of clients and their families

- Recognise that reports on VAWG incidents are personal and sensitive.
- Improper disclosure of incidents can threaten the lives of many persons, including the victim/survivor.

- Take special steps to safeguard confidentiality, such as:
 1. Ensuring that interaction with the victim/survivor is done in private settings to establish privacy and confidentiality;
 2. Ensuring that staff is made aware of all protocols that support confidentiality;
 3. Ensuring that the survivor gives written consent for sharing any information about her experience or report;
 4. Ensuring that only information relevant to the service being provided to the survivor is shared with other service providers;
 5. Ensuring that personal data on the survivor, e.g. name, address, phone number, or information on family members, is NOT be shared with others UNLESS it relates to a specific service that the client requests. This “need to know” principle must be strictly applied;
 6. Ensure that all members of staff of service provider have a non-disclosure agreement which forbids them from discussing with family, friends or colleagues, the cases that they are handling, unless in the context of case management;
 7. Ensuring that information collected on each client is safely stored in secured electronic or manual files according to data protection protocols that are established;
 8. Establishing statistical disclosure controls to anonymize data to prevent identification of the individual client.

BOX 2

Confidentiality

The 2019 CARICOM Protocol affirms confidentiality, privacy and human rights as fundamental ethical principles in VAWG administrative data management that exist across all stages of the data processing cycle:

“At the core of both ethical and security concerns are the concepts of confidentiality and privacy. The right to privacy is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is acknowledged through several legislative documents across the Cariforum region. Furthermore, numerous Member States possess data protection laws and/or policies that govern the management of personal information. In processing administrative data on DV, institutions will require well developed strategies for guaranteeing the protection of these rights and systems for appropriately and efficiently managing any breaches”.

CARICOM Protocol, p. 34

THE LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY: WHERE THE SURVIVOR IS A MINOR

Across CARICOM, legislation secures the care and protection of children¹⁰. Such legislation provides for mandatory reporting of certain violations. Examples of this are abuse against children by prescribed duty bearers such as school officials, medical professionals and social service professionals. In Jamaica for example, this obligation is extended to members of the public who may have reason to believe that a child is likely to be abandoned, neglected or, physically or sexually abused. This report must be made even if the information received is privileged¹¹ or confidential. The implication of this law is that the normal rules of confidentiality will not apply in cases where there is actual or suspected abuse of children. Anyone receiving the information must report it to the relevant authorities in those cases.

6.3 INFORMED CONSENT

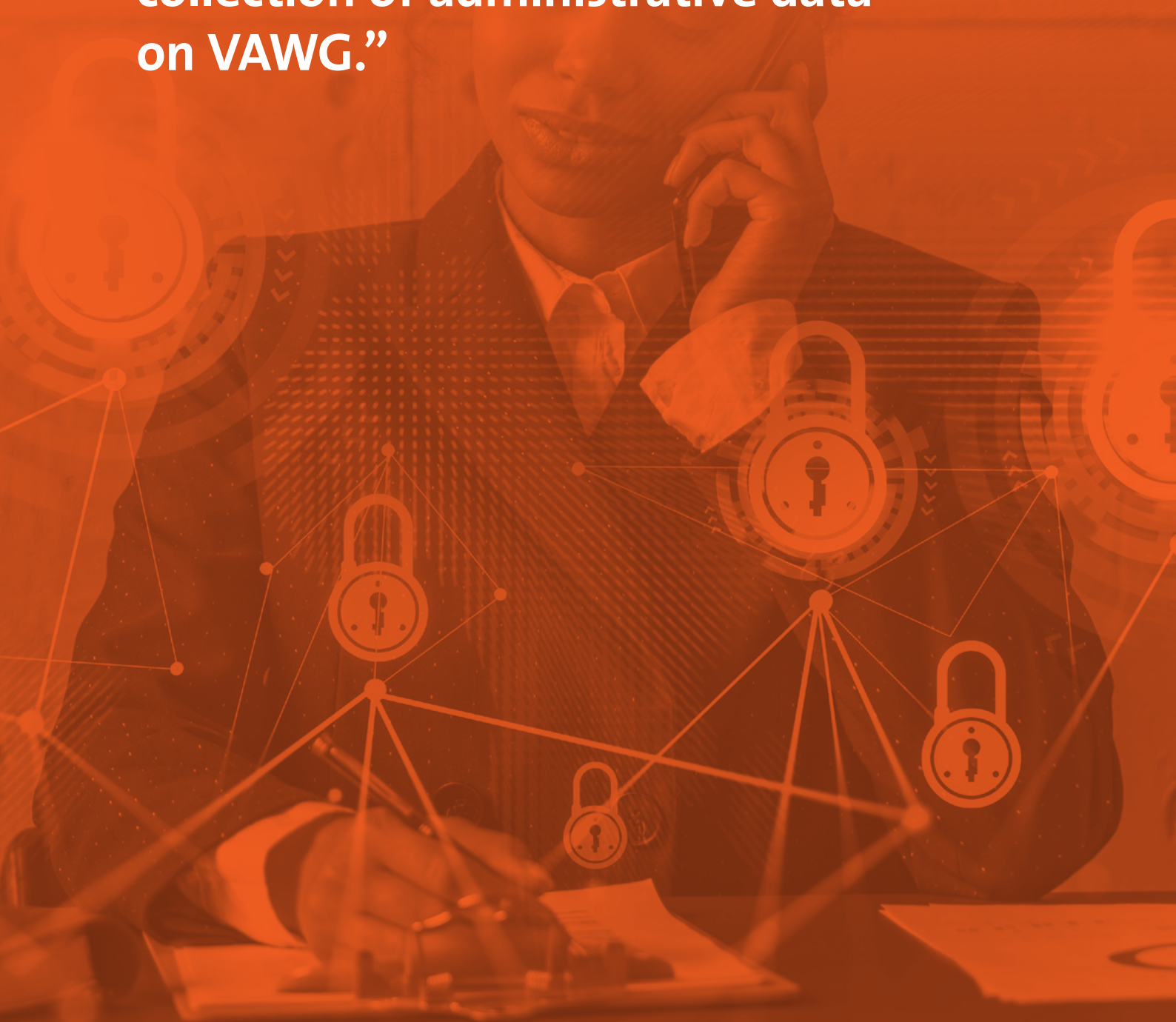
All adult survivors of VAWG have the right to make their own decisions about the services they receive, from whom, and when. The principle of informed consent requires that service providers clearly explain the options available, and the implications of each option, allowing survivors access to accurate information on which they can make decisions about their next steps. Informed consent means that the survivors understand the consequences of the choice that they make and, without being forced, accept the consequences. The client must, therefore be informed of the implications of any actions and give consent before possible actions are taken. For example:

- The service provider explains precisely what will be done on the particular matter;
- The client is encouraged and enabled to ask questions, and those questions are answered fully and clearly;
- The client is supported to decide on a given course of action based on information shared by the service provider;
- The client’s informed consent is obtained before any information related to the incident, or the client, is shared with others, and before any referrals are made.

¹⁰ See Annex 1-Country Definitions and Other Guiding Documents of the CARICOM Protocol Manual, pp. 57-61

¹¹ For example, as a result of attorney-client relationship.

“Ethical principles related to the rights of the clients, the process governing data and information collection, and how these are handled are central to the collection of administrative data on VAWG.”



7. DATA SECURITY, MANAGEMENT AND SHARING

Provision must be made for all data collected from survivors of VAWG to be stored and managed securely. This requires consideration and response to the various threats that can result from environmental and human factors - fires, floods, power outages, theft, cyber-attacks and human error.

Agreed responses to these threats rest on measures such as:

- Use of expert Information and Communications Technology (ICT) personnel to determine and advise on appropriate systems and related protocols, and to develop an appropriate risk management strategy;
- Limiting who has access to the data: Only individuals who are directly involved in providing services to the survivor, or those with roles in data entry/management, and who will be trained and have signed confidentiality agreements in line with information sharing protocols (ISPs), should have access to personally identifiable information¹². Policymakers and other decision-makers (even in the service organisation) should only have access to general, aggregated statistics.
- Use of specialised software for electronic-based data systems. This software should have built-in security features which will allow only authorised persons access to the data collected from survivors of VAWG.
- Extensive training of personnel involved in all cycles of the data management system.

Annex IV of the *Global Technical Guidance* provides instructions on procedures to create secure records in everyday practice and to create secure records in storage¹³. That Annex is presented in Annex 1 of this document for ease of reference.

7.1 INFORMATION SHARING PROTOCOLS (ISP)

Information Sharing Protocols (ISPs) detailing the type of data that can be shared, with whom, and under what conditions, can facilitate:

- Timely dissemination of data;
- Victim and survivor anonymity and safety;
- Monitoring and Evaluation of progress in addressing VAWG-related issues;
- Perpetrator rehabilitation through the design of more targeted and evidence-based programmes.

These ISPs are an important tool to advance the legal and ethical obligations to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Each member State will determine the provisions of the information-sharing protocols that will be the framework within which VAWG administrative data is shared among partners. But, at a minimum, to provide effective protection, an ISP should include the following considerations:

- The purpose of the information sharing;
- The names of all the collaborating institutions;
- The position and role of personnel responsible for implementing the ISP in each participating agency;
- The roles and responsibilities of the participating agency in relation to data aggregation, analysis and reporting;
- The variables and level of aggregation of data to be shared;
- Data analysis and reporting plan;
- Required skills for personnel collecting and managing data;
- Data security issues, including conditions of data access within and across institutions;
- Responsibilities and processes for reporting data breaches;
- Consequences and sanctions for individuals and institutions for breaches of the ISP;
- Conditions for use and/or sharing with entities protocols which are not a part of the ISP¹⁴.

¹² This latter stipulation might not apply if the decision is taken that all data, for statistical purposes, will be aggregated at the service delivery site.

¹³ Annex 1: Example of a Checklist for Privacy and Confidentiality in Documentation, taken from *Global Technical Guidance*, p. 73.

¹⁴ *Global Technical Guidance*, p. 44

8. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Focus on training and capacity building can make a fundamental contribution in bringing these ethical principles to life. While training is one element, capacity building refers to the strengthening of processes, investment of resources, and development of the skills and strategic approaches for the achievement of goals and objectives. Effective capacity building and training in each aspect of the data management cycle is a fundamental requirement for strengthening VAWG data collection and use across CARICOM.

8.1 HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The overarching goals of collecting and managing administrative data on VAWG are to utilize these in designing and implementing policies and programmes to eliminate VAWG, support victims and survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. The understanding that VAWG is a violation of the human rights of women and girls and requires responses anchored in a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), underpins these goals. This HRBA foregrounds the needs, experiences, and positions of women and girls and their families. Their human rights, in the face of intersectional discrimination, should be effectively protected and sustainably promoted by each CARICOM State, as a duty bearer.

The commitment to capacity building is vital to understanding, accepting and working within HRBA. This is to promote among victims and survivors of VAWG, the Rights Holders, the following:

- Their human right to a life free from violence and abuse and the responsibilities of the Duty Bearers - governmental institutions and service providers - to help to ensure and secure these rights;
- That gender inequality and discrimination are at the heart of the violence and abuse faced mainly by women and girls, and the need for deep social changes and for their empowerment as women and girls;
- Their right and responsibility to seek and use opportunities to uphold, defend, promote, and protect their human rights.

Principles that support these understandings of the HRBA to advance gender equality and women's empowerment must be established and normalized in institutions and in the process of engagement with clients in the collection and use of VAWG administrative data. This is the essence of survivor-centred approaches, which "place the rights, needs and safety of women at the centre of both service delivery and administrative data collection and use¹⁵."

In this context, the dynamics of gender power relations and how they impact the violence faced by victims and survivors who present for services will inform all aspects of the response. The diversity of the persons seeking services should be taken into account, as well as their varying needs, reinforcing non-discriminatory practices on any basis, including age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, persons with disabilities (PWD) or those living with HIV/AIDS.

Service providers, therefore, have a duty to ensure that personnel dealing with VAWG data collection and management understand the ideological underpinnings of VAWG, by providing training in, at a minimum:

- **The causes and consequences of VAWG¹⁶;**
- **Non-judgmental, trauma-informed interviewing skills;**
- **Active listening;**
- **Gender and human rights;**
- **Working with children¹⁷.**

15 Guiding Principles, **Global Guidance**, Annex 1, p. 65.

16 This is particularly important based on evidence from the UPDs which in the main, did not demonstrate a deep understanding of the root causes that perpetuate VAWG.

17 CARICOM Protocol, p. 42

8.2 RESOURCE MOBILISATION

The development of an articulated system on administrative data on VAWG will require the investment of additional resources in all CARICOM countries. While this data is already collected in some form in all countries, creating a national system which includes data from all key service providers, will involve the investment of new resources, particularly in data security, sharing and management.

CARICOM recommends that these new investments should capitalize on existing operational capacity and efficiencies, leveraging them, where feasible, as the foundation on which to build a more 'joined-up' system.

Though it is desirable to include data from a range of service providers in the VAWG administrative data system, member states may decide that, at the outset, only data from a core of VAWG service providers can be incorporated¹⁸. This decision should be based on an assessment of the readiness of service providers to produce and share the required data. An initial focus on agencies such as the police, hospitals, and justice system, has several advantages, particularly in situations of financial and human resource constraints. By focusing on these core services, resources can be directly invested in training personnel in those areas, building out the ICT infrastructure and institutional mechanisms, developing ISP, strengthening data security, improving analytical capabilities, and promoting the use of the data.

Where this 'core services' approach is taken, member states can widen the scope over time as the system matures. This may require parallel investments in building the capacity of other service providers and data producers to improve their readiness to contribute to the system.

¹⁸ UN Women and World Health Organisation (2022). Improving the Collection and Use of Administrative Data on Violence Against Women: *Global Technical Guidance*, p.30.


8.3 PROCESS AND SKILLS UPGRADING

Improvements in the collection, analysis, use, and dissemination of administrative data on VAWG will rest on upgrading the knowledge and skills of data producers and data users. In some instances, a review of the data collection processes and instruments will also be important.

Where member states have agreed, for example, on the collection of a minimum set of standardised data, data collection instruments used by service providers will have to be revised or reviewed to ensure that key data points are being collected. It is important to note that the collection of data to support a minimum dataset does not preclude the collection of additional data which may be needed by each service provider for operational purposes. However, staff responsible for collecting this data will have to be trained on the importance of the data they are collecting and the ethical principles for data collection outlined in these guidelines, including confidentiality and data security.

Improving skills in data analysis and use may also be necessary in some member states. This is critical for the usefulness and sustainability of the VAWG administrative data system. The system must generate data which is up-to-date, relevant, and accessible, and which can be used to guide interventions to prevent and respond to VAWG. Upgrading data analysis and use skills is key to accomplishing this objective.

“Administrative data on VAWG is highly valued for meeting the priority objectives of improving policies and programmes to prevent VAWG, bringing effective support to victims/survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable.”

The background is a solid orange color with a faint, stylized graphic overlay. The graphic consists of several interconnected elements: a central gear mechanism with three interlocking gears, a hand pointing towards the right, a bar chart on the left, a circular arrow icon at the bottom, and various other geometric shapes and lines suggesting a data-driven or technological theme.

9. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

A collective standardised approach to implementing the ethical considerations related to the various components of the VAWG administrative data management cycle, rest on a strong organizational framework. The CARICOM Protocol recommends integration of efforts through a National Statistical Office (NSO). It proposes that “implementation of these protocols should involve an initial consultative process with relevant stakeholders to encourage support for the initiative and to develop a methodology for accomplishing the shared goal of reduction¹⁹”.

The *Global Technical Guidance* also recognises the need for an institutional framework for managing VAWG data and proposes a model for national coordination, namely the establishment of a National Coordinating Mechanism (NCM)²⁰. Such a body could, among other things, enable the main data producers to collaboratively define roles and responsibilities for collecting, analysing, and disseminating VAWG administrative data from the national level into a regional framework. The NCM would primarily have a statistical role in VAWG prevention and response. This would include commitments to:

- provide technical guidance and operational support for improvements in the quality and utility of the data collected and shared;
- agree and sign off on tools and data management instruments;
- provide an institutional framework for resource mobilisation for systems-wide VAWG administrative data capacity strengthening of the coordinating mechanisms serving at national and regional levels;
- provide a platform to drive political support for the collection and use of VAWG data at national and regional levels.

An important first task is to build out from the national to a regional coordinating framework. This requires, among other things, attention to the following aspects of such a national mechanism:

- Leadership for the Mechanism - Considering the capacity and mandates of any existing entities, or whether there is a need for a new entity;
- Main Objectives of Mechanism- The TOR should set out the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of the NCM, its structure, leadership, and membership. In accordance with the *Global Technical Guidance*, the remit of the Mechanism operating at the national level should also be to provide clear direction on reporting relationships in the public sector data management architecture, frequency of meetings, and establish administrative support for the body;
- The vision for the VAWG data system is also an important factor in determining the scope of the NCM. The objectives should consider not only how to improve data quality and collection, but also how to generate interest in the data being produced and facilitate their utilization for policy making and programme design.

The NCM would also, with the support of experts, decide on tools to be used in the entire data management cycle. Addressing the privacy and confidentiality of victims and survivors would remain a central concern throughout all stages.

19 CARICOM Protocol. P. 49.

20 Adapted based on WHO/UN Women *Global Technical Guidance*, pp. 18-22

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A sensitive, respectful, professional and sustainable response to violence in the lives of women and girls is possible in CARICOM countries. However, this rests, among other things, on a commitment to embrace the potential of data to guide evidence-based, effective interventions to combat VAWG. Administrative data on VAWG is one type of such data. Improving the collection and use of VAWG administrative data is an important platform for this work in the region. It is particularly important as this data is already routinely collected and can be made available more consistently and institutionalised more readily than the collection of VAWG prevalence data which is recommended to be collected every five to ten years.

The importance of administrative data on VAWG was underscored during the Covid-19 pandemic, which made the conduct of traditional household surveys to collect this data ill-advised. Developing a robust system for VAWG administrative data collection ensures that some current data on women's experiences of VAWG is always available as long as

routine services are offered and accessed by women. This readily and routinely available data from first responders and other service providers can yield rich insights on which to design and revise programmes to prevent and respond to VAWG, and anchor legislation, policy and practice. This potential can be optimized through sustained training and capacity building, resource mobilization, and a robust institutional framework.

Although this guidance highlights the key considerations needed to improve the collection, analysis and use of VAWG administrative data, member states will adapt the guidance to their context and needs. In some instances, members may be able to proceed with consolidating data which are already being collected by key agencies, and in others, the process of data collection may have to be initiated. Whatever the circumstances of each member state, the guidance provided in this document can help strengthen their capacity to utilize administrative data in their efforts to eliminate VAWG in the region.

References

UN Women and World Health Organisation (2022). Improving the Collection and Use of Administrative Data on Violence Against Women: Global Technical Guidance.

CARICOM (2019). Protocol Manual for the Processing of Administrative Data on Domestic Violence. CARICOM Secretariat, Georgetown, Guyana.

Glossary

Administrative Data

Data that is collected primarily for internal administrative purposes in the routine operations and delivery of service provided by an organisation.

Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Emotional and Psychological Violence

Insulting, belittling, humiliating or intimidating a woman, and controlling behaviours such as restraining her access to friends and family. Verbal threats to the woman or someone she care about (e.g. children, family members) are also included.

Physical Violence

Physical acts which cause physical harm to women. This includes slapping, kicking, biting, hitting with objects, burning, stabbing, strangling, shooting etc. This kind of violence also includes threats with weapons such as knives and guns.

Sexual Violence

Any form of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour perpetrated through force, coercion or intimidation. This includes abusive sexual contact, forced sexual contact (such as rape, attempted rape and grievous sexual assault), and non-contact sexual activities (e.g. sexual harassment, and forced participation in or watching of pornography). This category of VAWG also includes forced participation in sexual acts, which a survivor may find humiliating or degrading.

Annex 1: Checklist for privacy and confidentiality in documentation

Example of a Checklist for Privacy and Confidentiality in Documentation

- Privacy and confidentiality in documentation
- Confidential documentation and recordkeeping are vital to the safety of patients experiencing intimate partner or sexual violence. Records may take the form of paper, external computer hard drives or CDs, or they may be network-based. Regardless of format, all types of files must be secured. This checklist will help you make sure that records are secure.
- How can we create secure records in practice?
- All staff members understand the importance of confidentiality and secure recordkeeping, and staff members who routinely care for women subjected to violence have been trained to keep records secure.
- Identifying information about a woman, including her name and contact information, is not visible or accessible to those not caring for this patient.
- Staff members do not leave documents where a patient (unless requested), those accompanying the patient or anyone else might see them. Staff members do not carry charts open or lay them on shared desks or counters.
- When documenting information from women about their experience of violence, staff members avoid asking for or writing this information on records in a public place.
- Staff members do not write a notation indicating intimate partner violence or sexual violence on the first page of a record, which is more likely to be seen if flipped open.
- Staff members use a code, such as an abbreviation or symbol, to indicate cases of intimate partner violence or sexual violence on charts (recommended option). They do not write 'DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUSPECTED' or 'RAPE' or other explicit wording in large print across the chart. Some countries (such as Malaysia) use a colour coding system on medical records that is known only to the relevant health staff.
- Any sensitive information that needs to be destroyed is shredded by an authorized staff member.
- How can we create secure records in storage?
- There is a secure site to store files.
- Documents are locked away at all times.
- Only a limited number of designated staff members have access to patient records.
- Staff members who need access to records have received training on record confidentiality and storage practices.
- Staff members authorized to access stored files have a means of access that is not available to others. (As the setting allows, this may be a key to a room, an electronic password or a security code to enter a room, or another method of obtaining access to a restricted area.)

Annex 2: Tools to support the data management cycle

Tools to support the data management cycle can include the following:

VAWG Data Mgmt. Life Cycle	Examples of Process and Tools	Comment
Collection	<p>1.Data Collection Template/Tool</p> <p>2.Tools - Instructions re confidentiality and data protection</p>	<p>Use of a dynamic standardised instrument; linked to Minimum Dataset.</p> <p>This instrument outlines standard operating procedures for data collection. It facilitates data, processing, analyzing and sharing. For use by data collectors.</p>
Preparation Input	Instruction Tool and training re preparation and input	<p>Preparation and input treated as one process.</p> <p>Time lines for inputting data after collection to be agreed; strong technical expertise required. Process of anonymization takes place.</p>
Processing	Instructions tool for minimum standards for data processing	Data validation process; also statistical analysis and preparation for reporting.
Output	Information sharing protocol (ISP) tools and guidelines for data sharing with different users.	Formal framework for sharing for example, through MOUs; to include frequency and time frame of sharing; treatment of anonymized data.
Storage		Use of experts in data storage critical. Focus on current and archival data.

Annex 3: UPD Participants

The participants for each of the four User Producer Dialogues convened are provided below.

Participants in the Regional UPD held on October 4, 2022

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS			
	Name	Organisation	Country
	Participants		
1.	Karen De Souza	Red Thread Women's Organisation	Guyana
2.	Pamela Nauth	Help and Shelter	Guyana
3.	Mindy Pratt	Haven House Shelter	Belize
4.	Alexandrina Wong	Women Against Rape	Antigua and Barbuda
5.	Laurie Shiell	Centre Against Abuse	Bermuda
6.	Phylicia Alexander	Redroot	St. Vincent & the Grenadines
7.	Sherna Alexander-Benjamin	Centre for Non-violence and Research Development/ Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women	Trinidad & Tobago
8.	Vanya David	Dominica Council of Women/ CARIOA	Dominica
9.	Kamla Tewarie	Hindu Women Organisation	Trinidad & Tobago
10.	Milton Joesiah Coy	Grenada Human Rights Organisation Inc.	Grenada

Participants in the Regional UPD held on October 6, 2022

ORGANISATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES (OECS)		
Name	Organisation	Country
Participants		
1. Diana Emmanuel	Central Statistics Office	St. Lucia
2. Elaine Henry-McQueen	Grenada Spotlight Initiative Programme Coordinator	Grenada
3. Jicinta Alexis	Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Social Affairs	Grenada
4. Miranda Biroo	Central Statistics Office	St. Lucia
5. Olympia Joseph	Central Statistics Office	St. Lucia
6. Patrice Bosso	M&E Specialist - UNICEF	
7. Umain Gray	Central Statistics Office	St. Lucia

Participants in the Regional UPD held on October 11, 2022

CARICOM NATIONAL STATISTICAL ORGANISATIONS					
	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Job Title	Country/Region Name
1.	Claire	Guy-Alleyne	Police T&T	Superintendent	Trinidad & Tobago
2.	Vishnu	Hunt	Guyana Police Force	Deputy Commander	Guyana
3.	Wendy	Sandaal	KPS	Onder inspecteur	Suriname
4.	Andrelene	Royal	Economics and Statistics Office	Senior Statistician	Cayman Islands
5.	Janice	Ifill	Barbados Police Service	Police Prosecutor	Barbados
6.	Adel	Lilly	Ministry of Human Services and Social Security	Manager - Gender Affairs Bureau	Guyana
7.	Nikita	Mohammed	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office	Programme Coordinator	Trinidad & Tobago
8.	Karlene	Bramwell	Gender Affairs Unit	Senior Policy Analyst (Gender, Diversity & Equality)	Cayman Islands
9.	Visram	Ramjattan	Guyana Police Force	Prosecutor	Guyana
10.	Colin	Stephens	Guyana Police Force	Classroom and drill instructor	Guyana
11.	Shellon	Daniels	Guyana Police Force	Superintendent of Police	Guyana
12.	Yvonne	Towikromo	Ministry of Home Affairs/ Bureau Gender Affairs	Policy Adviser (Gender)	Suriname

13.	Cynthia	Yacab-Williams	Women and Family Support Department	Human Development Coordinator	Belize
14.	Kleita	Pitcher	Government of Bermuda - Ministry of Social Development and Seniors	Policy Analyst	Bermuda
15.	Janet	McKenzie	Royal Bahamas Police Force	Chief Superintendent	Bahamas
16.	Vedyawattie	Looknauth	UNDP	Programme Analyst	Guyana
17.	Nadia	Skeete	Barbados Statistical Service	Statistician I	Barbados
18.	Melvelyn	Symonette	Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development	First Assistant Secretary	Bahamas
19.	Kemoloy	Murphy	Gender Affairs Unit, Government of Anguilla	Gender Development Coordinator	Anguilla
20.	Christine	Husbands	The Barbados Police Service	Inspector	Barbados
21.	Renate	Bareon	Bureau Gender Affairs	Policy officer	Suriname
22.	Andrea	Catch	Belize Crime Observatory	Statistical Officer	Belize
23.	Stephen	Powel	Gender Bureau Suriname	staff member	null
24.	Wayne	Stanley	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	Detective Inspector	Trinidad and Tobago
25.	Yasmin	Tzib	Belize Crime Observatory	Statistical Officer	Belize
26.	Melinda	Reijme	Ministry of Home Affairs/ Bureau Gender Affairs (BGA)	Policy Advisor	Suriname
27.	Tameshia	White	Economics and Statistics Office (ESO)	Statistician	Cayman Islands
28.	Sandra	Diaz Cadle	Ministry of Public Service, Constitutional and Political Reform and Religious Affairs	Coordinator, Training and Development	Belize
29.	Patricia	Desouza	Royal Anguilla Police Force	Detective Constable	Anguilla
30.	Alexya	Perez	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration	Project Officer	Belize
31.	Adele	Clarke	UNDP/RCO	Programme Coordinator	Guyana
32.	Elia	Cho	Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing	Administrative Officer	Belize
33.	Christopher	Aroon	Police Officer	Inspector of Police	Trinidad and Tobago

Participants in the Regional UPD held on October 13, 2022

REGIONAL DIALOGUE		
Name	Organisation	Country
Participants		
1. Sharon R.A. Priestley	UWI Mona	Jamaica
2. Lisa Indar	Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)	Trinidad & Tobago
3. Sasha Sahadeo	Caribbean Women in Leadership	Trinidad & Tobago
4. Joy Crawford	Eve for Life	Jamaica
5. Sue Ann Barratt	Institute of Gender & Development Studies, UWI, St. Augustine	Trinidad & Tobago
6. Godfrey St. Bernard	Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, UWI, St. Augustine	Trinidad & Tobago



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

An initiative of the United Nations funded by the European Union

