In the Asia-Pacific region, the reported incidence of violence by an intimate partner varies from 10 per cent in the Philippines to 67 per cent in Papua New Guinea.[91] Does this mean that one of these countries is more violent than the other? Or that there is a greater willingness in one to report violence? Both could be true. Intimate partner violence varies from country to country but what rarely changes is women's hesitation to report it. Studies in Malaysia indicate that only a fourth of respondents believe a woman should report beatings.[92] In Cambodia, a third of women survivors stated that they did not seek assistance.[93]

Measuring the Issue
Research Initiatives

Without comprehensive, carefully documented research on violence against women, it is impossible to know whether women are experiencing more violence in some countries than in others, or whether they are reporting it more often. In the absence of proper research, it is difficult to compare and assess the scope of violence as well as the effectiveness of programmes to end it. With research, advocates can better understand obstacles and develop targeted methods for combating them. Research can motivate government and civil society to take action once the extent of a problem is proven. In Jordan, a study of 'honour killings' resulted in the Government's announcement that it would revise laws that discriminate against women and build a shelter for women in danger.[94]

Those who think that violence against women is not a problem cannot ignore documented evidence. Research on the way in which agents of the state respond to incidents of

Olga Lipovskaya, chairwoman of the St. Petersburg Centre for Gender Issues, leads a demonstration on International Women's Day, 8 March 2003, demanding an end to sexism and greater political representation for women.

violence has been a critical tool in gaining government commitments to end impunity. It is not just a matter of numbers but also of establishing patterns of abuse — whether in the home, on the streets, in the workplace or at the hands of the state — and patterns of discrimination that obstruct access to justice. Armed with this knowledge, activists have won support from the highest levels of judiciaries and police forces, worked with legislatures to craft legal and policy responses, and improved methods of intervention and prevention.

In recent years the research agenda on ending violence against women has grown substantially. Academic investigations are increasing our understanding of the causes and consequences of gender-based violence. Activist groups and governments are developing new approaches to data collection and dissemination that help them design more effective strategies. Following are some of the critical and emerging research areas.
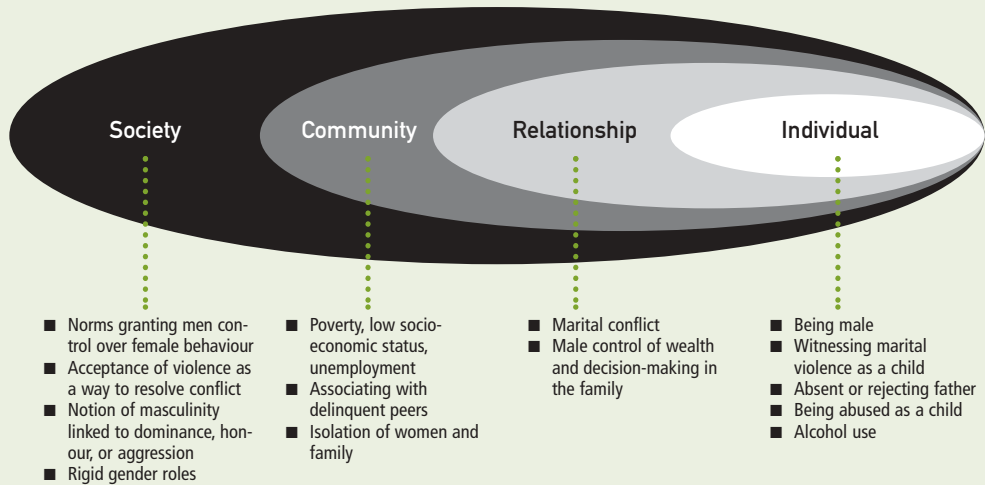
Causes of Violence Against Women

The causes of violence against women have been a major area of interest for researchers, many of whom have sought to create a model of male 'dominance', identifying the structures of patriarchy that allow men to believe they can abuse women. This perspective has been refined and expanded through several decades to provide a picture of myriad interwoven factors that give rise to violence against women. The most common are:

- **Cultural factors** including: sexual double standards; norms of chastity and fidelity applied only to women; the objectification of women's bodies that justifies violence as a way to control their sexuality; attitudes that celebrate aggressiveness and violence as markers of masculinity; national or religious extremist beliefs built on protecting 'good' women and punishing 'bad' ones; and acceptance of violence as an appropriate way to resolve conflict.

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A Framework for Understanding Partner Violence

Ecological Model of Factors Associated with Partner Violence

Society
- Norms granting men control over female behaviour
- Acceptance of violence as a way to resolve conflict
- Notion of masculinity linked to dominance, honour, or aggression
- Rigid gender roles

Community
- Poverty, low socio-economic status, unemployment
- Associating with delinquent peers
- Isolation of women and family

Relationship
- Marital conflict
- Male control of wealth and decision-making in the family

Individual
- Being male
- Witnessing marital violence as a child
- Absent or rejecting father
- Being abused as a child
- Alcohol use

What causes violence against women? Increasingly, researchers are using an 'ecological framework' to understand the interplay of personal, situational and sociocultural factors that combine to cause abuse. In this model, violence against women results from the interaction of factors at different levels of the social environment.

The model can best be visualized as four concentric circles. The innermost circle represents the biological and personal history that each individual brings to his or her behaviour in relationships. The second circle represents the immediate context in which abuse takes place, frequently the family or other intimate or acquaintance relationship. The third circle represents the institutions and social structures, both formal and informal, in which relationships are embedded: neighbourhood, workplace, social networks and peer groups. The fourth, outermost circle is the economic and social environment, including cultural norms.

A wide range of studies agrees on several factors at each of these levels that increase the likelihood that a man will abuse his partner:

- At the individual level, these include being abused as a child or witnessing marital violence in the home, having an absent or rejecting father, and frequent use of alcohol.

- At the level of the family and relationship, cross-cultural studies have cited male control of wealth and decision-making within the family and marital conflict as strong predictors of abuse.

- At the community level, women's isolation and lack of social support, together with male peer groups that condone and legitimize men's violence, predict higher rates of violence.

- At the societal level, studies around the world have found that violence against women is most common where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honour, or dominance. Other cultural norms associated with abuse include tolerance of physical punishment of women and children, acceptance of violence as a means to settle interpersonal disputes, and the perception that men have 'ownership' of women.

By combining individual-level risk factors with findings of cross-cultural studies, the ecological model contributes to understanding why some societies and some individuals are more violent than others and why women, especially wives, are so consistently the victims of abuse.

- **Social and economic factors**, such as: household structures that enforce women's isolation and economic dependence; lack of access to education; dowry and bridewealth that devalue women's lives and contributions; economic changes and disruption leading to dislocation and frustration; poverty as an aggravating factor that makes women vulnerable to gender violence; and a climate of widespread societal violence.

- **Impunity and lack of recourse** including: communities' tolerance of violence or lack of community responsibility for ending violence and sanctioning the perpetrators in their midst; state complicity and/or failure to protect women from violence; immigration and refugee situations that put women at risk of gender violence and outside the protection of laws; and discrimination against women based on identity factors such as class, race, caste, ethnicity or indigenous status.

- **Individual and psychological explanations** such as: pathological need to (re)assert dominance and control; psychological imbalance and low self-esteem caused by traumatic experiences; childhood exposure to violence; alcohol and drug abuse; and personal stress.[95]

Despite the variations in potential causes, a consensus is developing among researchers and theorists that no single factor can account for violence against women. Instead, experts are proposing a multi-causal, multidisciplinary approach, which seeks to understand violence as the end-product of a convergence of different adverse factors at the individual, cultural, political and socio-economic levels.[96] The next steps in understanding causes will be towards using newly-developed knowledge to focus on promoting action and accountability for ending such violence.

To date there is no comprehensive and systematic mechanism for collecting reliable data on violence against women in Arab countries. Existing studies have not been comprehensive because of the lack of adequate government statistics. Only recently have governments realized the importance of compiling statistics and keeping records of their social problems, including data on violence against women. Government departments lack human resources to collect data and specialists to analyse it. Therefore, the available statistics cannot be classified or analysed, which hinders NGOs and governments from designing strategies that respond to reality.

–UNIFEM Regional Scan, Arab States

Research: A First Step in Changing Attitudes

People in the Maghreb region of North Africa share a commitment to egalitarian values, but they also consider violence against women socially acceptable. Those are among the findings of a series of opinion polls conducted in Algeria and Morocco by the Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité, with support from UNIFEM. Collectif 95 was established by a group of women's associations and research scholars from the region who, as part of their mission, seek to understand how violence against women is perceived socially — and how that affects family and personal law. Over several years they have surveyed a representative sample of 1,500 people in both countries and have begun a similar project in Tunisia.

Their findings show sometimes seemingly contradictory attitudes towards women's roles. For example, a majority of men in Algeria and Morocco consider women's employment a 'necessary evil' but favour their political participation. In both countries women and men still maintain traditional ideas about women's role in the family: The man is expected to be the breadwinner, while the woman is the caretaker.

In Algeria, traditional values are reinforced by economic conditions: As a result of the increasing unemployment rate, men appear to feel threatened by competition from women in the job market and tend to revert to more traditional values. In addition, a housing shortage is forcing many young couples to live with their parents, who may expect them to abide by traditional values while in the family home.

The impact of traditional values on violence against women is ambiguous: On the one hand, fully two thirds of the women surveyed in Algeria and Morocco believe domestic violence can be justified under certain circumstances, including when a wife disobeys her husband. At the same time, a significant majority of respondents in Morocco support an amendment to the Personal Status Code (Family Law) that would allow polygamy to be abolished, make it easier for women to get a divorce, enable divorced women with children to keep the family home, raise the official age for marriage from 15 to 18 and allow women over 18 years of age to marry without their father's permission.

Despite the ambivalence towards women's rights expressed in the surveys, the findings have had an impact in several ways. In Morocco, women's NGOs used the results to fine-tune their campaign for the amendment to the Personal Status Code and were able to reach out to a broader audience. In Algeria, the Head of State, in a historic reference to women's rights, discussed the findings in an official address, describing them as indicators of persisting inequalities in Algeria and calling for these disparities to be abolished.[97]

Assessing the Prevalence of Violence

Global knowledge and information about the prevalence and consequences of violence against women come from a wide range of formal and informal sources, including crime statistics, victimization surveys and household- and population-based surveys. However, despite numerous recommendations to governments to promote research and collect data, information remains uneven. States often cannot compare data because they have looked at different populations and accumulated different types of statistics. Similar abuses may be considered

crimes in some countries and not in others. Studies by governments, inter-governmental groups and NGOs are testing new methodologies for assessing violence, refining existing methods and developing results that are easily comparable.

The US-based International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) completed a series of studies in Bulgaria, India, Mexico and the Russian Federation to explore the impact of domestic violence on development. Some of the initial findings have illuminated the interwoven effects of class, education and economic independence. In India, for example, although domestic violence is pervasive in all classes, with anywhere from 40 to 66 per cent of women reporting that they have suffered physical violence, women in urban slums with little or no schooling seem to suffer the most. The numbers relating to education were particularly striking: Sixty per cent of the women in the province of Gujarat with no schooling reported that they had suffered physical assault, compared to 10 per cent of the women with secondary schooling or higher.[98]

To be able to compare information like this with findings from other countries, a variety of recent efforts are focused on standardizing information and its collection. The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and Statistics Canada are coordinating the International Violence Against Women Survey, which will utilize a standard questionnaire and rely largely on the network and infrastructure of the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) that is used in more that 70 countries around the world.[99] The World Health Organization (WHO) maintains a database on intimate partner violence and physical violence against women, has just issued a ground-breaking report, the *World Report on Violence and Health,* and is in the midst of a multi-country study on violence and women's health (see box, p. 66).

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has also been a leader in developing comparable statistical models and indicators for the entire region. It has developed a set of indicators to measure the incidence and trends of domestic violence against women. The indicators focus on women aged 15 years and older and document various social and economic factors such as age, economic participation, family structure of the household, education level and area of residence.[100] The hope — and expectation — is that all national institutes of statistics will participate in generating information.

The European Union adopted a set of indicators in 2002 designed not only to measure the incidence of domestic violence, but also to assess a host of factors — including availability of legal, counselling, employment and health services, the existence and application of legislative measures, and a series of other governmental and non-governmental responses to domestic violence. These indicators were proposed by the Danish presidency of the Council of the European Union to measure progress in addressing the issue, thereby employing research to assess and compare the implementation of policies and laws among EU members (see Appendix 2).

The WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women

This study, begun in 1997, breaks new ground in gathering comparable data on the prevalence of violence against women. It uses a standard methodology, utilized by interviewers who have received standardized training. Its goals are to obtain reliable estimates of the prevalence of different forms of violence against women; document the health consequences of violence against women; identify the risk and protective factors for domestic violence; explore and compare the strategies used by women who have experienced violence; and use the findings nationally and internationally to advocate for an increased response to domestic and sexual violence against women.

As of 2003, studies had been completed in Bangladesh, Brazil, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Tanzania and Thailand. New Zealand and Serbia are replicating the study, and research based on the same methodology is being carried out in Chile, China, Ethiopia and Indonesia.

The study teams coordinate with research institutions, Ministries of Health, other government entities and NGOs. Each study team includes at least one women's organization that has worked with women experiencing violence. The research itself consists of a household survey of a representative cross-section of women and girls: 1,500 in a large city and 1,500 in a representative province. The survey poses direct questions about the respondent's experience of violent behaviours over a specified time frame. Follow-up questions ask about violence during pregnancy, injuries suffered as a consequence of the violence, what help was sought and obtained, if any, and what services were used.[101]

Research on Resource Allocations

As part of an effort to track government resources allocated to violence against women, advocates are increasingly using gender budget analysis. This method of analysis enables advocates to examine national or municipal budgets for many purposes, including creating sex-disaggregated breakdowns of who benefits from specific public expenditures and developing time-use implications of revenue and expenditure decisions. The results provide detailed information that can be used to press governments to live up to their obligations under human rights instruments and national policy.

In Latin America, a study carried out by ICRW showed that budgetary allocations for domestic violence are determined in an ad hoc manner and do not meet existing needs. In the Dominican Republic, for example, a gender budget analysis showed that in 2002, the Ministry of Health budget for primary care of domestic violence survivors was US$15,000 although the estimated need, at US$10.5 million, was dramatically higher. The study also found that in the six countries surveyed there was no appropriation in the national budget for programmes to combat domestic violence.[102]

In South Africa, the Women's Budget Initiative (WBI), a collaboration between women parliamentarians and NGOs, focused on a domestic violence law passed in 1998. The initiative researched government funding mechanisms and found that while Rand 2 million had

been earmarked for training civil servants responsible for implementing the law in 1998, this was not enough money to fully implement the law. Over the years, the WBI has continued to monitor budget allocations in relation to the law, pressing for more resources, and has organized advocacy campaigns and addressed parliament in an effort to hold the government accountable.[103] Recently it has also been working on developing resources for training to end the 'secondary victimization' that often occurs when a woman reports a rape to the police.

Measuring the Cost of Violence

Gender-based violence has significant and long-lasting personal effects. However, the impact of violence transcends the personal sphere, reaching deeply into social, political and economic life.[104] Although exact numbers are hard to come by, until recently investments in ending violence against women were low, while the costs were — and remain — high. The cost of violence is borne by all: the survivor, her family, friends and society at large. There can be no question that violence against women must be addressed primarily as a human rights violation, but measuring its costs is a powerful refutation of governments' arguments that ending violence is not a pressing issue. As one advocate put it, "The public costs of private pain make it everyone's business."[105] Currently the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children in Canada, and the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) in the United States are all conducting studies to estimate the personal, social and economic costs of violence against women.

During the last ten years, various methods have been developed for estimating the costs of violence — the damaged health, wages lost and social instability. The most common methodology divides costs into four types: direct, non-monetary, economic multiplier effects and social multiplier effects.[106]

Direct costs refer to the value of goods and services used in treating or preventing violence. For example, the direct annual cost of violence against women in Canada has been estimated to be Canadian $684 million in the criminal justice system and $187 million for police. Counselling and training in response to violence is an additional $294 million, for a total of over Canadian $1 billion a year.[107] Studies in Nicaragua, the United

> **A very strong indicator of any government's priorities is its budgetary allocation to any given issue. While political commitments have been made towards ending violence against women, this has not been reflected in the way that national governments have allocated resources in their budgets. A special focus on increasing resources for ending violence against women is imperative.**
>
> **– UNIFEM Regional Scan, Southern Africa**

Using Research to Protect Women

Sometimes research generates direct intervention, as was the case in Nigeria, where young women hawkers who trade or sell items at truck stops, or motor parks, are frequently victims of sexual assault and battery. A UNIFEM-funded study conducted by the University of Ibadan's Department of Social Medicine showed that more than half the hawkers interviewed, who ranged in age from 8 to 32, had been attacked or beaten by truck drivers, and close to one fourth had been raped. "If you don't cooperate," by agreeing to have sex, "the drivers may make it difficult for you to operate in the motor park," said one young girl.

The University staff decided to use the knowledge gained from their research to help the hawkers. They organized a series of trainings for the women, truck drivers, members of the judiciary and police. Over a period of 18 months, 17 interactive training sessions were conducted. They used role-playing to help police officers and drivers understand the problems facing the women. Meanwhile, the women learned self-defence techniques. "After each lecture on self-protection we put the information to work," Dr. Olufunmilayo I. Fawole, the principal investigator and project coordinator, said. "The hawkers would practice situations in which they had to assert themselves to avoid violence."

A follow-up study showed that police had established security patrols at several truck stops, and that hawkers had an increased understanding of their rights and knew how to assert them. Attacks had decreased by almost 50 per cent, and many of the women and girls had formed small collectives to support and protect each other.

States and Zimbabwe have found that women who have experienced physical or sexual assault — whether in childhood or as adults — are more intensive users of health services.[108]

Non-monetary costs include increased suffering, illness and mortality; abuse of alcohol and drugs; and depression. A 1993 World Bank study estimated that annual rates of rape and domestic violence translated into 9 million years of disability adjusted life years (DALY), including years lost to premature mortality as well as the actual time lost because of disability or illness.[109]

The broad economic effects of violence against women are described as **economic multiplier effects** and include the value of goods and services not produced when abuse leads to increased absenteeism, decreased productivity while on the job or job loss. According to one study, in 1997 female victims of domestic violence in Chile lost US$1.56 billion in earnings, or more than 2 per cent of the country's 1996 GNP. Women who suffered some form of domestic violence earned salaries that were, on average, approximately 50 per cent lower than women who did not suffer such violence. The same study found that women in paid employment in Nicaragua lost US$29.5 million because of domestic violence, the equivalent of 1.6 per cent of the 1996 GNP.[110] Research conducted in India estimated that women lost, on average, five working days after an incident of violence.[111]

Social multiplier effects are described as the impact of violence on interpersonal relations and quality of life. These include the effect on children of witnessing violence, reduced quality of life and reduced participation in democratic processes. In India, for example, public health workers have reported that they are afraid to travel alone between villages for fear of being raped.[112] Women who have

been abused by intimate partners are often socially isolated, frequently at the partner's insistence. This prevents a woman from participating in community and income-earning activities and, perhaps most important of all, robs her of the social interaction that might help her end the abuse.[113] From this perspective, looking at costs shows how violence against women is both an extreme manifestation of gender-based discrimination and a mechanism of domination, limiting women's options.

ESTIMATED COST OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN [114]

Country or Region	Total Cost Estimate	Year	Type of Violence	Types of Costs Included
New South Wales, Australia	US$1 billion (A$1.5 billion)	1991	Domestic violence against women	Individual, government, employer and third party: health care, legal, criminal justice, social welfare, employment, child care and housing[115]
Canada	US$2.75 billion (C$4.225 billion)	1995	Physical violence, sexual assault, rape, incest and child sexual abuse	Individual, government and third party: social services, education, criminal justice, labour and work, health and medical[116]
Finland	US$53.4 million (FIM296 million)	1998	Female victims of violence who sought help	Direct costs incurred by health sector, social sector and criminal justice system[117]
Netherlands	US$80 million (NLG 165.9 million)	1997	Physical and sexual domestic violence against women	Police and justice, medical, psychosocial care, labour and social security[118]
New Zealand	US$625 million to 2.5 billion (NZ $1.2-$5.3 billion)	1994	Family violence, including threats of violence to women and children	Individual, government, third party and employer: medical care, social welfare and assistance, legal and criminal justice and employment[119]
Switzerland	US$290 million (Sfr. 409 million)	1998	Physical and sexual abuse of women and children	Police, civil justice, housing, refuge, social services and healthcare[120]
United States	US$5.8 billion	2003	Intimate partner violence against women including rape, physical assault and stalking	Medical and mental health care, lost productivity and lost lifetime earnings[121]

Masculinities and Men as Partners

In recent years there has been a growth in research on masculinity. Studies have sought to understand whether something in the construction of male identities leads to violence, and whether certain characteristics can be used to subvert violence and promote

gender equality. In 2001, the United Nations International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) implemented a research project entitled 'Men's Roles and Responsibilities in Ending Gender-Based Violence'. The project built on years of research that has looked at how masculinities are created and perpetuated and what it means to be a man in different cultural contexts.[122] The focus of the research is primarily strategic, to identify the ways in which male violence develops and to find the most productive methods for preventing it.

The INSTRAW study shows that violence against women cannot be fixed one man at a time; working with men who use violence necessarily entails addressing the larger social context of violence.[123] One study in the INSTRAW project suggested that social transformation would require reconfiguring society's conversations about violence. A researcher in South Africa looked at 'stories' about rape and found that narratives effectively 'erased' the perpetrator or demonized him in a way that made it possible for other men to disassociate themselves from sexual violence, rather than recognize it as a communal problem. By drawing on racial stereotypes, narratives also served to reinforce racial divisions and to obscure sexual violence that occurred within, as opposed to across, communities. The researcher posited that unravelling these stories and revealing the linkages between gender inequality and sexual violence is necessary for engaging both sexes in the task of eradicating gender-based violence.[124]

Another area of research on masculinities looks at relations among men as a way to identify points of entry for promoting gender equality. A series of studies in India supported by UNIFEM examined factors relating to the formation of masculinities through male-male relations.[125] A variety of settings were studied, including family businesses, boys' clubs, men employed in domestic work and men working in beauty parlours. The research attempted to understand how both family and work contribute to male identity and whether male friendships give rise to supportive practices among men. The study of a boys' club showed that this neighbourhood institution contributed to the development of egalitarian, if male-only, relationships. One interesting finding was that these young men also recognized their responsibility towards women. In one case, when a woman went to the club to complain about her husband's violence, club members warned the husband to stop and even arranged for a counsellor to talk with the couple.[126]

Gaps in the Research

If new research on violence against women represents progress towards ending it, that same research also points to the huge gaps that continue to exist. As noted above, activists and government advocates currently cannot compare domestic violence rates across regions; nations cannot measure comparative costs of violence or of efforts to address it.

A major reason data are so insufficient may be the refusal in many countries to acknowledge violence against women — a culture of denial and gender bias that is only slowly being chipped away. At the macro level, the silence about violence against women has been broken, but at the local level where individual women have to confront family members or leering police, it is not always easy to speak up. The attitudes that perpetuate gender-based violence and the secrecy that hide it from public view are hard to eradicate.

The stigma, disbelief, ridicule or retribution attached to speaking out makes it nearly impossible to obtain accurate national statistics on rape in many countries. Having suffered one trauma, many women do not want to undergo additional emotional pain at the hands of the police. According to the Philippines National Police, approximately two in ten rapes are reported. The rest are kept hidden; in many cases a woman's family discourages her from reporting the incident.[127] Recent figures for the United States indicate that reports of rape increased from 30 per cent in 1999 to 40 per cent in 2001, probably due to various campaigns encouraging women to come forward. But more than half the women in the country still do not report rapes, according to a National Crime Victimization Survey.[128]

The issue of comparability as discussed earlier is also critical. Existing studies are often inconsistent. Studies of the cost of violence, for example, almost all analyse data differently and use different criteria. The time period in which the cost is being calculated and the items included may also differ from one study to the next. And most national studies are actually extrapolations based on one region, or one sector, and do not really paint a true picture of national costs.

Women's groups themselves often lack the means to provide the level of statistical evidence that is required to build a valid record. Even where data is collected, it is unlikely to be integrated into formal data collection processes. Few organizations analyse conditions before they begin work to establish a baseline, and so cannot effectively monitor the work or provide detailed evaluations on the impact of interventions. It is up to policy makers to allocate resources and expertise for the development of reliable data and statistics, so that the full extent and costs of the pandemic are understood, and indisputable.