

DATA COLLECTION 'BY AND FOR' MINORITISED WOMEN JULY 2019



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imkaan



Imkaan is a UK-based, Black feminist organization and the only second-tier women's organization in the UK dedicated to addressing violence against Black and minoritized women and girls. The organization has nearly two decades of experience of working around issues such as domestic violence, forced marriage and 'honour-based' violence. Imkaan works intersectionally at local, national and international levels, within a clear rights-based agenda, and in partnership with a range of organizations, to improve policy and practice responses to minoritized women and girls.

This policy brief is part of a series produced by Imkaan for EU/UN Women's Programme on Ending Discrimination and Violence against Women: 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds'. The Programme aims at ending discrimination and violence against women and girls (VAWG), with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged groups of women, in six Western Balkans countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo* and Serbia and Turkey.

The policy briefs have been informed by Imkaan's interviews and focus-group discussions with minoritised women's organisations across the Western Balkans and Turkey from September 2017- April 2018. The content of the policy briefs have been further refined through a capacity-building workshop delivered by Imkaan for seventeen 'by and for' activists from the region in Sarajevo, Bosnia in April 2019.

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* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UN Women, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

CURRENT CONTEXT

Article 11 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter “the Istanbul Convention”) requires State parties to collect data with the aim of preventing and combating violence against women and girls [VAWG]. Violence against women and girls is defined in the Istanbul Convention as,

“all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life¹”

Collecting data and conducting research on all forms of violence against women and girls is critical in order to design relevant policies and measures needed to protect and support women and to eliminate violence against women and girls. Furthermore data collection and research are necessary to ascertain whether policies are working towards preventing and combating such violence.

However, despite this, across the Western Balkans and Turkey, there is a lack of baseline data on violence against women and girls. Surveys on prevalence of VAWG that have been carried out so far in the region have focused almost exclusively on domestic violence, while other forms of violence covered by the scope of the Convention are not examined, such as, for example, stalking, forced marriage, sexual violence and sexual harassment².

In particular there is a lack of data on minoritised³ women and VAWG, i.e. there is not enough data on the prevalence of different forms of VAWG among women with disabilities, rural women, elderly women, migrants and asylum-seeking women, ethnic minority women, especially Roma, and other groups of minoritised women. Furthermore there is a dearth of disaggregated data, i.e. data disaggregated by ethnicity, age, disability status, religion etc. This is despite Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention urging State parties to “collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention⁴”.

“Data is not ethnically segregated so we don’t have the full picture on our target group i.e. Roma women. Institutions do not segregate data based on nationality, ethnicity or religion so we cannot obtain data about Roma women” (Minoritised activists, Serbia and BiH)

¹ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210, Istanbul, 11.V.2011 , Pg 3.

² Duhacek, D., Brankovic, B., Mirazic, M. (2019) Women’s Rights in Western Balkans. Report prepared for the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (p. 49). January 2019. Available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608852/IPOL_STU\(2019\)608852_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608852/IPOL_STU(2019)608852_EN.pdf)

³ In this report the term ‘minoritised’ (rather than ‘minority’ or ‘minority ethnic’) is used to highlight that “groups and communities do not occupy the position of ‘minority’ by virtue of some inherent property (of their culture or religion, for example), but rather they come to acquire this position as the outcome of a socio-historical and political process” (Burman, 2005, p.533).

⁴ Article 11, Istanbul convention, p. 5

“Every institution maintains their own database, but none of them are relevant and none of them reflect intersectionality. Social workers don't ask question about nationality - but this is very important for our work” (Minoritised activist, BiH).

Finally, VAWG data is not easily available and accessible to all. For example, state institutions do not always make data available online so minoritised women's organisations find it hard to access relevant data required for donor applications and programme development. Furthermore, differences in how and what data is collected, and different definitions of violence make the task of analysing data difficult.

“Institutions do not make data available online and don't easily share data especially the statistics institutions. Also they have different data for the same thing so we don't know which data is relevant” (Minoritised activists, Montenegro, BiH and Serbia).

RELEVANCE OF DATA COLLECTION 'BY AND FOR⁵' MINORITISED WOMEN

Within this context it is critical that VAWG data reflects the lived realities of minoritised women who live at the intersections of a number of oppressions based on class, age, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, geographical location, religion, education status, etc. However very rarely is research about minoritised women conducted by minoritised women themselves. Frequently it is academics, think tanks, mainstream NGOs or government departments who collect data *about* minoritised women; and often such research is framed around a deficit model. For example, it is common for research studies to describe minoritised women as 'uneducated' and/or 'unemployed' instead of as having **limited access** to education and employment. Research of this kind rarely locates minoritised women's experiences within the context of structural inequalities and intersecting oppressions that they are subject to. Furthermore, minoritised 'communities' often experience being excessively scrutinised and studied within the context of being constructed as the 'other' and the dynamics of power and privilege inherent in such scrutiny are rarely interrogated.

Within this context the production of 'grassroots-informed' research conducted by minoritised women themselves is critical. Such 'by and for' data collection helps to ensure that research is grounded in the lived realities of minoritised women and girls, reflecting their particular needs and highlighting the work that minoritised women are engaged in to address their own needs.

⁵ 'Specialist services are designed and delivered by and for the users and communities they aim to serve' Voice4Change England and NAVCA Specialist Services: A Guide for Commissioners 2012, accessed online at http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk/webfm_send/158 [Accessed 31 May 2019]

This also shifts inequalities in terms of who speaks for whom. Furthermore, organisations run ‘by and for’ minoritised women hold a wealth of knowledge, expertise and understanding about minoritised women’s lived-realities; information that is critical in designing appropriate and relevant policy. It is this unique understanding that they have of minoritised women’s lives that results in their services being accessed by the most marginalised women.

Given that data collection is a key element of evidence based policy-making and can contribute greatly to improving responses to violence against women and girls by the judiciary, support services and law enforcement agencies, it is critical that minoritised women play a central role in collecting, analysing and presenting data to demonstrate their realities, needs and solutions to VAWG.

WHAT IS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT ‘BY AND FOR’ MINORITISED WOMEN’S ORGANISATIONS DOING DATA COLLECTION?

CONTEXT

1. ‘By and for’ organisations understand and meaningfully explore the ways in which intersecting oppressions impact women and girls lived-realities, felt-needs and experiences of VAWG.
2. They collect and analyse data within an understanding of structural oppression i.e. systems that serve to perpetuate multiple forms of oppression i.e. racism, ageism, ableism, classism.
3. They collect and analyse data sensitively and responsibly to avoid the reproduction or reinforcing of harmful assumptions and stereotypes about women and girls
4. They avoid a ‘victim’ narrative and instead seek to research in ways that acknowledge women’s current experiences and histories of multiple oppressions but equally identify women’s strengths, achievements, activism(s) and political resistance.

DISRUPT POWER DYNAMICS

1. ‘By and for’ organisations create an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding during data collection as usually researchers are minoritised women themselves.
2. They reflect on their own position and privilege and ensure that these dynamics are acknowledged and addressed during data collection and analysis.

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

1. ‘By and for’ organisations give space for minoritised women’s organisations to reflect on their strengths, achievements and specialism rather than deficits.

2. They draw out the distinctiveness of 'by and for' models of working.
3. They focus on women as leaders, thinkers and movement-builders (not only as 'victims').
4. They provide important counter-narratives to discourses that typically reinforce discriminatory ideologies.

METHODOLOGY AND ACCESSIBILITY

1. 'By and for' organisations use different methodological approaches to build richer narratives (e.g. oral histories, case studies, photographs, diaries, film); they highlight the importance of qualitative research and do not focus solely on numbers.
2. This often include women (as participants and researchers) who often get excluded from research/evaluation. For example, through word of mouth, they get an understanding of the community spaces women access and contact those spaces.
3. They ensure interviews are held in spaces that are accessible for women.
4. They ensure resources are in place to enable access e.g. for transport, translation.

WHY IS AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH ESSENTIAL WHEN CARRYING OUT DATA COLLECTION?

Intersectional approaches to data collection are essential if we want to understand the realities of women's lives and the different ways that they are subjected to violence, as well as their pathways to support and the barriers that they might be faced with. For women subjected to multiple inequalities (such as racism, sexism and homophobia for example), an intersectional approach allows you to take account of the structural barriers and oppressions that minoritised women face, and the intersecting nature of these issues. For example, one would need to situate the experiences of violence faced by a young disabled woman from a minoritised community within particular contexts of ageism, sexism, racism and ableism. These contexts are critical in that they not only impact the ways in which she is subjected to violence but also her access to support, safety and justice.

It's also important that we don't make assumptions about particular communities or groups of women, and the types of violence they are subjected to - for example, it can be easy to assume that young women are likely to experience 'forced marriage' and may not be affected by any other forms of violence. This is of course not the case, so rather than putting groups of women into boxes, an intersectional approach needs to be a very open process.

Taking an intersectional approach ensures that these different contexts are acknowledged, looked into, and that all women's needs are appropriately identified and can then be addressed. If

we don't take an intersectional approach, we end up with data that only speaks to, or reflects the lived realities of some women, and invisibilises the needs of other groups of women.

HOW DO YOU FRAME AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO DATA COLLECTION IN PRACTICE?

- Ensure you have meaningful processes in place which are geared towards **maximising community participation**. You might, for example, need to think thoroughly about how you design the process. An intersectional understanding will influence how you ask the questions, what you ask and how you interpret the data and must be embedded within communities throughout the process.
- Carry out a thorough **mapping exercise of specialist organisations in your area**. For instance, who are the 'by and for' organisations and how can you partner with them? This will include organisations for whom work on VAWG is not a primary function but who are community-located and provide a critical space for women/girls. You may also have groups that are particularly good at working within specific issues/contexts; for example, engaging with minoritised young women.
- If you want genuine collaboration, **ensure that the expertise you require** for carrying out intersectional data collection **is recognised and resourced**. Organisations that do intersectional work are unlikely to have the resources to provide coordination, interpreting services, or arrange meetings at short notice. Think about resourcing at the outset.
- Consider **resourcing 'by and for' organisations** so that they have the necessary infrastructure to collect data themselves. For example, fund them to work in partnership with academics, practitioners or consultants that are minoritised women themselves and/or have a good track record of working on equalities and a sound understanding of grassroots community models of working.
- Acknowledge and address **power dynamics** in data collection. This might involve thinking through who is asking the questions and how questions are asked, as well as recognising and addressing any power dynamics between researcher and 'researched'. Relatability and trust is crucial.
- Ensure that data collection **methodology captures the lived-realities of minoritised women**. For example, it might be helpful to use open-ended questions and a narrative approach to reflect women's journeys. This will help capture richer more holistic, contextual nuanced data on VAWG and look at the issues through multiple lenses.
- Meaningful data-collection also needs to **consider accessibility**. This includes not only thinking about whether the physical spaces being utilised for research are accessible to all women but also ensuring that minoritised women involved in research as participants are appropriately supported through the process. For example, how do you ensure that data

collection occurs in spaces where minoritised women feel safe and secure? Ensuring accessibility also involves taking into consideration costs such as transport, childcare, interpreting, room hire in accessible spaces, and support costs if minoritised require a session with a support worker before and/or after taking part in research.

- o Consider carefully **how you use and disseminate the data** that is being collected. In an age of surveillance, organisations are under pressure to collect and share data in ways that can have harmful repercussions, especially for minoritised women. For example, women with insecure immigration status are routinely denied access to VAWG services and are sometimes reported to authorities, incarcerated or deported. Agreements around appropriate information-sharing and consent should be established to mitigate against any particular harms. These processes are integral to doing justice to minoritised women's lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Collect comprehensive disaggregated data on violence faced by minoritised groups of women, including Roma women, rural women, disabled women, LGBT, and refugee women.
2. Collecting these statistics should be a collaborative exercise between the organisations delivering services and academics with a sound understanding of intersectionality. Data collection should be led by 'by and for' practitioners/organisations. It should *not* be a complex heavy handed state led process or one where data is misused and goes against the principles of confidentiality, safety, protection and justice of minoritised women.
3. 'By and for' organisations should be supported to develop their capacity to collate data. Their organisations should be resourced so that they have the necessary infrastructure [e.g. databases] to produce research that highlights gaps in existing services for minoritised women, as well as influencing policy on violence against minoritised women and girls.
4. Ensure that information and collected data are easily available to the public.

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