

SECTION VI

**LIAISON WITH NON-POLICE ORGANISATIONS AND
REFERRAL AGENCIES**

Section VI: Statistics, Data Collection and Case Management

The problems of domestic violence and sexual assault can only be addressed adequately where there is a reliable data base revealing the seriousness and extent of the problems both nationally and internationally. In this context, it is important to discern that a data base can be used for a number of different purposes. It can alert police, who often underestimate the seriousness of the issues, to the extent and importance of the problems. It can be used to justify the expansion of police operations, to justify funding and resources and for a tool to be used in the analysis of the aetiology of the abuse. However, here it is important to note that police statistics and any data produced from them will only be as valuable as the original information provided. Thus, if there is a flaw in the original collation - for example, if crimes of violence are not recorded in such a way to include information to the relationship of the offender to the victim - the data base will reflect that flaw and be limited thereby. It is clear that police collection and use of statistics can be improved upon and it is further clear that criminal statistics need not be collected by the police alone. Here it is important that the value of 'victim surveys' which randomly assess the level of victimisation in the community be appreciated. So also, it is important that police appreciate that statistics are collected and collated by the social services, medical personnel and private organisations, such as women's groups. Sharing and comparative analysis of information from whatever source is extremely valuable, providing clear information as to required services. Here it is important to note that openness of police recording serves to give the police credibility and also serves as an informal monitoring process for the police, improving reporting and flow of information within the police.

A number of important issues arise in the context of practical statistic collection. First, it is critical to monitor the implementation of amendment to the law, so that critical analysis of whether the new law is being adhered to correctly can be made. This should reveal the value of the particular reform strategy. Second, operations offices involved in cases and statistical collection should be given feedback on the management of such statistics, so that they do not get the impression that they provide information into a vacuum. Thirdly, data should be collected prospectively, rather than retrospectively at all times respecting confidentiality. Data should be collected in an institutional fashion in a centralized form. This data should be collected at all levels - local, state, national and international - and collated and analysed as a basis for short term and long term strategy. Data should be collected at all stages of the progression cases so that the final picture of cases can be linked with police investigating procedures. This will have the effect of pointing out any weaknesses in police investigation and procedure. The most important issue, however, with regard to statistical collection is that definitions are carefully delineated as any form of monitoring without careful definition will be misleading and ultimately meaningless.

Guidelines

* A statistical data base is essential to shape responses to the issues of domestic crime. This data base will also provide a basis to urge legislative change and to monitor effectiveness of current and amended laws. This, in turn, provides accurate information to shape appropriate legal change.

* Clear definitions must be used when gathering data.

- * Data should be collected continually and prospectively at all levels: local, provincial , national, regional and international.
- * Data should be culled from sources other than the police.
- * Data should be collected from the perspective of the victim and other concerned agencies, as well as from the perspective of the police.
- * Data and statistical information must be shared with other agencies and be analysed by qualified statisticians so that trends and areas requiring further research are quickly identified.
- * A code of ethics governing the collection, use and sharing of statistical information and other data should be developed. This code should particularly reflect the importance of confidentiality to the victim.