“Putting women’s safety first"
Reflections from the field

Mary Ellsberg
Manuel Contreras
Maureen Murphy
WHO Safety Guidelines

Consideration of respondent and interviewer safety should guide all project decisions.
Minimizing harm

To Respondent

• Physical harm (reprisals as a result of disclosure)
• Psychological (re traumatization)
• Social harm (stigmatization)

To Researcher

• Physical harm (from abuser)
• Psychological (vicarious trauma)
MINIMIZING RISK TO THE INFORMANTS

• Total privacy
• One woman interviewed per household
• Men and women interviewed in different households/clusters
• Use of alternative questionnaires if interrupted
• Study is presented to household as a women’s health survey
• Referrals for specialized care
• Educational information provided
Putting women’s safety first

Take actions to reduce any possible distress to participants (referrals, information, counselling/ RH services).
Selection and training of Interviewers
3-4 weeks of training, including gender
“...When I heard stories about women being beaten and tied up, I would leave there feeling desperate... I would be a wreck, and my supervisor would tell me “get a hold of yourself, you cry for every little thing.” But how could I control myself, I couldn’t stand it?...I would try, but sometimes it was impossible, and I would burst into tears during the next interview.”

female interviewer, Nicaragua
Maximizing benefits:

Using research results for social change
Technical Advisory Groups

From Data to Action
Special considerations for researching violence against women in conflict and humanitarian settings

SOUTH SUDAN:
PREVALENCE, FORMS AND PATTERNS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS
Sampling and Methods

- Only sites with IRC presence
- Only sites with minimum security
- Increased sampling intervals in POC sites
- Only women in POC sites
- Only qualitative research in Bentiu
Volatility of security situation:

When to cut losses?
Monitoring adverse events

• 1% respondents refused to participate for fear of violence
• No women dropped out during violence questions
• No increase in attention in services observed
• Responses of respondents:
  • 87% - 98% felt same or better
  • > 60% felt better in 4/5 groups
  • In one site 4.4% men felt worse (remorse)
Additional ethical guidelines are available for:

- Perpetrators (SVRI)
- Violence against children (SVRI)
- Violence in emergency/conflict situations (WHO)
- Trafficking (WHO)
- Vicarious trauma among researchers
- Indigenous peoples (Australia)