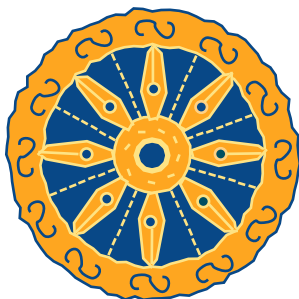


# PUTTING WOMEN FIRST:

Ethical and Safety Recommendations  
for Research on  
Domestic Violence Against Women



Department of Gender and Women's Health  
Family and Community Health  
World Health Organization  
Geneva, Switzerland



## The Dharma-Chakra, or Wheel of Law

The Dharma-Charkra or 'Wheel of Law' is the most important symbol Buddhism. In an individual's life, 'Dharma' becomes manifest as 'good' or noble conduct. Chakra means the wheel and symbolizes a constantly changing universe. The 8 spokes of the wheel correspond to the 8 paths to enlightenment, namely:

- 1.□ Right view
- 2.□ Right resolution
- 3.□ Right speech
- 4.□ Right conduct
- 5.□ Right means of livelihood
- 6.□ Right effort
- 7.□ Right mindfulness
- 8.□ Right concentration

Cover design: Máire Ní Mhearáin

Design inspired by the stone wheels of the Konarak Sun Temple in Orissa (province of Orissa, India)

(source: *Ikat Textiles of India*, by Chelna Desai).

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# Introduction

**V**iolence against women, in its various forms, is endemic in communities and countries around the world, cutting across class, race, age, religious and national boundaries. According to the United Nations Declaration, violence against women includes “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations, 1993)”. The most common type of violence against women worldwide is “domestic violence” or the physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse of women by their intimate partners or ex-partners (Heise et al., 1999). There are other forms of violence, such as dowry harassment and wife inheritance, which are linked to traditional or customary practices and are limited to specific regions and communities.

It is only now, through the sustained activism by women’s organizations that violence against women, including domestic violence, is starting to receive substantial attention internationally. As domestic violence against women becomes increasingly

recognized and discussed, important questions are being raised concerning its magnitude in different settings, and its causes, consequences and related risk factors. Likewise, there is increasing recognition of the need for better data on the effectiveness of different interventions.

Due to the limitations of service-based data, accurate figures on the prevalence of domestic violence must be obtained through population-based surveys in which a representative sample of randomly selected women are asked directly about their experiences of violence. Population-based surveys can also be used to obtain important insights into some of the consequences of violence and risk factors associated with violence and in the long term, to monitor trends and to explore the impact of different interventions. On the other hand,

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