

**REPLICATING THE UN
MULTI-COUNTRY STUDY
ON MEN AND VIOLENCE:
UNDERSTANDING WHY
SOME MEN USE VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND HOW
WE CAN PREVENT IT**

**Selecting a topic and
methodology for
gender politics of policy
research**

Acknowledgements

This Selecting a Topic and Methodology for Gender Politics of Policy Research was produced for Partners for Prevention by Stephanie Miedema and Emma Fulu, both with Partners for Prevention in Thailand, with Alan Greig, an independent consultant.

The objective of this guide is to take you through a number of steps to help determine what approach and topic could be relevant for political analysis in your setting. This guide presents a broad review of conceptual and methodological options for gender politics of policy analysis, yet it is not comprehensive. We urge researchers to think creatively about where spaces exist within politics and policies related to gender, violence and other axes of social oppression in their locality in order to conduct contextually relevant research that can be used to promote more gender-equitable political systems and institutions.

Choosing a topic and an approach

The following outlines five overarching areas of possible approaches and topics for research on the gender politics of policy at the national level:¹

1. Policy scans

Policy scans have been the most widely used research methodology to examine public policy in relation to men, violence against women and gender equity. A snapshot of a situation, they can provide a necessary baseline against which to assess progress in policy change; they are also a useful means of identifying the discourses and paradigms that shape political thinking within the context of a specific country.

Recommended methodologies:

- desk review of existing policies and legislation, not limited to those specifically targeted towards gender inequality and violence but a range of policies that impact the gender order and its violence
- interviews with instrumental policy actors to assess how laws and policies are being translated into action 'on the ground'.

2. Research on institutional 'gender regimes'

Research on the 'gender regimes' of institutions examines how practices and representations of masculinities within gendered political spaces impact understandings of and responses to violence against women across the domains of socio-political organization. These include domains of security (police, law enforcement, prison systems, military settings and structures); the political economy (national development planning, donor and multilateral and bilateral priorities and funding, workplace and gendered division of labour); social reproduction (such as the health sector response to violence against women, the education sector's response to violence against women); social discourse (such as organized religion or the media industry).

Recommended methodologies:

¹ For more on each of these approaches, please reference the Gender Politics of Policy Research Protocol.

- review of key documentation pertaining to ‘internal’ policies and procedures and ‘external’ strategies and activities
- semi-structured and open-ended interviews with institutional actors and decision-makers, service users and other related actors
- participant observation of critical events and moments in the gendered ‘life’ of an institution
- periodic reflexive consultation with key actors regarding the research findings and analysis; these consultations will simultaneously serve as a process of actively recognizing and discussing internal and external gender regimes within an institution as well as an opportunity to iteratively refine the research process itself.

3. Policy life history case studies

Policy life history case studies examine the gendered dynamics and pressures shaping the development of public policy over the course of a ‘life’ of policy initiatives, particularly those that will have a bearing on gender equity and violence against women. The study explores the forces that shape this policy life, from initial conceptualization and deliberation to policy implementation. Life history case studies can focus on: distinct and specific public policies on gender equity and violence; relations between different juridical systems and implications for understanding and responding to violence against women; gender-focused policy strategies within existing, broader development policy institutions and practices; emerging policy thinking and discourse; regulatory policies related to masculinities and femininities (such as in the media).

Recommended methodologies

- semi-structured and open-ended interviews with a range of institutional actors and decision-makers and other related actors
- retrospectively or contemporaneously, track events, critical moments and turning points in the life of a policy and the gender politics of the forces and factors at play.

4. Gender politics of social movements

Recognizing the intersection between gender violence and other forms of social oppression, another possible area of focus is the investigation of gender politics of non-government actors engaged in specific social justice struggles over public policy. Exploration into the masculinities of social justice organizations and movements seeks to highlight how work on gender equity and violence prevention can engage more closely with those involved in social justice struggles in order to more effectively challenge the structural conditions that fuel violence against women and other forms of social oppression.

Recommended methodologies

- review of organizational documents regarding internal policies and procedures and review of programme activities and evaluations to assess the gender cultures of social movements

- in-depth individual and group interviews with actors, leaders and decision-makers within specific social movements, using semi-structured and open-ended interview guides
- participant observation, where applicable, to track critical events and key moments in specific social justice campaigns.

5. Social discourse analysis

Research on the generation and circulation of social discourses on men, gender and violence can generate a better understanding of the gendered ideological contexts within which public policy institutions and processes operate. Areas of study of social discourse include the production, dissemination and consumption of gendered texts, narratives, symbols and representation of men, gender and violence across a range of institutional settings, including the media and corporate advertising as well as academic and religious institutions.

Recommended methodologies

- textual or visual media-based discourse analysis
- in-depth individual and group interviews within key institutions (such as corporate advertising, or religious institutions).

Considerations prior to research

1. What is the political climate in your country context? What are the defining characteristics of the political landscape? How will this impact your research?
2. What topic is most relevant and useful to influence policy and/or programme change in your setting?
3. What is the existing capacity in-country to conduct research on a selected topic?
4. Who are the important actors for this project and how will you actively promote early and continuous buy-in and support?
5. What structures or mechanisms will be put in place to ensure ownership and buy-in of key political actors (such as the national working group)?
6. What is feasible in terms of budget, capacity and time, keeping in mind the potential sensitivities of conducting political analysis around issues concerning gender, sex and violence?