



UN Statistical Framework for Measuring Femicide/Feminicide: A Weak Attempt at Addressing A Critical Gender Issue

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Abstract

The UN Statistical framework for measuring femicide was adopted in 2022, following an almost decade-long process and advocacy efforts to accurately identify and measure femicide. The UN invested considerable efforts to promote the framework as a tool to accurately count femicide, followed by a study (Dawson, Angus, Zecha, 2024) which argued the utility of the framework. However, some feminists counter-argue the necessity to re-imagine the measurement of femicide (Walklate and Fitz-Gibbon, 2023). Drawing on our own critical reading of the framework and its supplementary documents we apply Cornwall-Rivas' critique (2015) of gender and development and we argue that the design of the framework renders it both skewed towards a Western view of femicide and unable to meet its core objective of accurately measuring it. First, we argue that the design and consultation process excluded a significant proportion of voices it aimed to represent, rendering the framework unaccountable to those it aims to serve. Second, we argue that the framework obscures both structural violence, the state as a perpetrator and both social and contextual and individual contributing factors to femicide. Third, through an analysis of two distinct case studies (honor killing in South Asia and familial femicide in North America) we demonstrate that femicide provides limited data of use to prevention efforts. Lastly, given the findings, we propose to apply Cornwall and Rivas' (2015) application of the UN's own human rights-based framework, with focus on accountability, inclusion and non-discrimination to account for structural causes of violence and diverse cultural and intersectional experiences. We also point to a postcolonial feminist approach to data collection (Gill, 2013) as an ethically appropriate method for collecting both data for getting to a better definition and later to collect data based on it.

Keywords: femicide, United Nations, honor killing, accountability, ethical data collection