



**PEPFAR**

U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

# Ensuring Justice for Children

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# Sexual Violence Against Children 101

**A Workshop for  
COMMUNITY LEADERS**

**17 YEARS OF SAVING LIVES THROUGH AMERICAN GENEROSITY AND PARTNERSHIPS**



# What can community leaders do to prevent and respond to Sexual Violence Against Children (SVAC)?

# 6 Steps Community Leaders can take to Protect Children

1

**LEARN THE FACTS** about sexual violence against children

2

**LEARN ABOUT EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS** to prevent and respond to sexual violence against children

3

**MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES** for abusers/perpetrators to abuse or exploit children (i.e. child safeguarding)

4

**REACT RESPONSIBLY** to sexual violence against children

5

**USE YOUR LEADERSHIP** to change the **CONVERSATION** about sexual violence against children in your community

6

**USE YOUR LEADERSHIP** to change the **COURSE** of sexual violence against children in your community

Source: Adapted from Darkness to Light at <http://www.d2l.org/education/5-steps/>

# **STEP 1: LEARN THE FACTS**

**What is child sexual abuse  
(sometimes called Sexual  
Violence Against Children)?**

# Defining Children and Adolescents

**In order to understand the definition of child sexual abuse or sexual violence against children, we first have to start with the definition of CHILD**

- Most countries and international bodies consider the legal definition of a child to be anyone under the age of 18.

**What about adolescents, are they included in the definition of a child?**

- Adolescence refers to the stage of development during which a child is developing into an adult. There are no strict age boundaries for adolescence, but it is sometimes referred to as the time period between puberty and the age of majority. Therefore, adolescents are also considered children, because they are usually defined as adults once they reach the age of 18.

**In addition to the legal age of a child, there are also sexual consent laws that define when a young person is legally allowed to consent to sex. Age of sexual consent usually applies only to older adolescents.**

- The age of sexual consent differs widely between countries.
- The age of sexual consent is often defined differently for males and females.

# Definitions: Child Sexual abuse & Sexual Violence Against Children/Adolescents

**Simply put, any type of sexual activity that an adult engages in with a child who is under the legal age of consent, is child sexual abuse/sexual violence**

- **Contact sexual abuse/violence:** This type of child sexual abuse can involve behaviors such as penetration, inappropriate touching, fondling, and kissing
- **Non-contact sexual abuse/violence:** It is also child sexual abuse if an adult engages in any other sexual activities with a child to meet the adult's interest or sexual needs (e.g., showing children their genitals; having children look at or be used in the creation of sexually explicit materials)
- **The concept of consensual sex is IRRELEVANT when discussing sexual activity between an adult and a child who is under the age of sexual consent, because these children are not able to consent to sexual activity. So, even if a child says “yes” to sex with an adult, it is still a CRIME.**

**Once an adolescent has reached the age of sexual consent, the concept of whether or not consent has been given becomes relevant.**

# Definitions: Child Sexual abuse & Sexual Violence Against Children

## Is there a difference between child sexual abuse and sexual violence against children?

- **Many terms are used to describe the behaviors we are talking about today (e.g., child sexual assault, child molestation, child rape).**
  - Some terms are legal definitions, and some are not.
  - Some terms are very specific and some are broad.
- **Child sexual abuse and sexual violence against children are both broad terms that can include many specific behaviors within them.**
  - When some people hear the term “child sexual abuse,” they only think of behaviors that occur over a period of time.
  - Sometimes when people hear the word “violence,” they only think of behaviors that involve physical force.
- **We use these two terms interchangeably in this presentation, because we want to talk about all of the behaviors that people think of when they think of either one of these terms.**
  - All of the behaviors that we discuss, can have negative effects on a child.
  - The label is less important than the knowledge that they are all harmful to children.

# Characteristics of Sexual Violence Against Children/Adolescents

- **Children/adolescents can be sexually abused by adults.**
- **Children can also be abused by other children who are in a position of responsibility, trust, or power over the victim.**
  - This is often by virtue of their age, stage of development, size, or position.
- **Sexual violence against children includes sexual abuse by a family member or close relative.**
  - This is referred to as **incest**.
- **Adolescents may also experience sexual violence in the context of romantic/dating relationships.**

**Source:** Responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused: WHO clinical guidelines. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017.



# Legal framework for addressing sexual violence against children

- **Age of sexual consent**
  - Legally defines the age in which a person is recognized by the laws of a country as being able to consent to sexual activity
- **Sexual violence and other relevant laws**
  - These vary by country, but may include laws clearly defining the criminalization of rape or the prevention of domestic violence
- **Child Marriage**
  - Legally defines the age in which a person is permitted to marry in a country
- **Mandatory Reporting**
  - Legally defines who is responsible for reporting observed or suspected abuse and neglect based on reasonable cause—common examples are medical professionals, teachers, social workers, etc.

# Who is Vulnerable to Child Sexual Abuse/Violence?

- **Any child can be vulnerable to sexual violence/abuse.**
- **Sexual violence can happen to both girls and boys at any age--from infancy through adolescence.**
- **Some groups of children have higher rates of abuse/violence**
  - Girls
  - Adolescents
  - Children with disabilities, including emotional, developmental, or physical challenges
  - Children and adolescents lacking a parent or guardian/caregiver providing basic needs and supervision

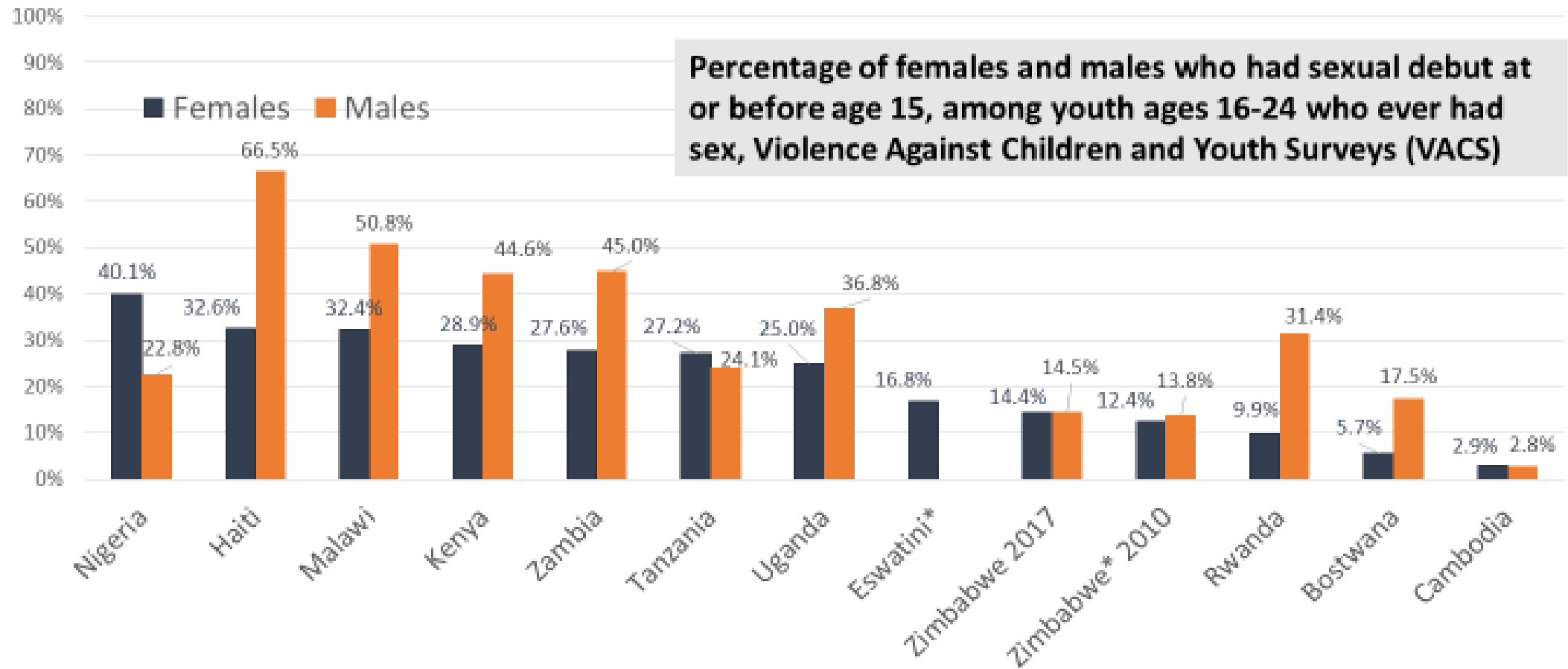


**STEP 1(a):  
LEARN THE FACTS  
QUESTIONS?**



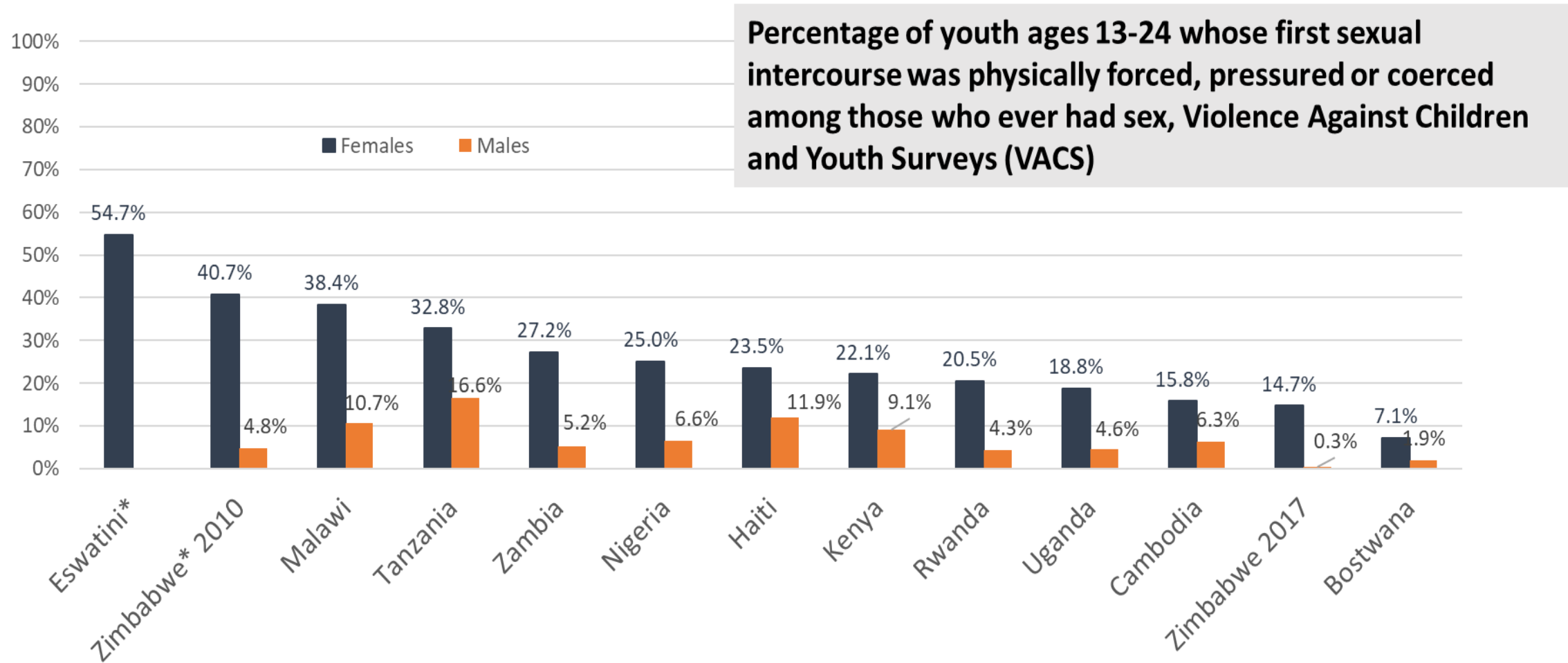
# Child Sexual Violence is Common

# Early sexual debut among females and males



\*Data only available for ages 18-24 for Zimbabwe; data only available for females in Eswatini.

# Physically forced or coerced sexual debut among females and males



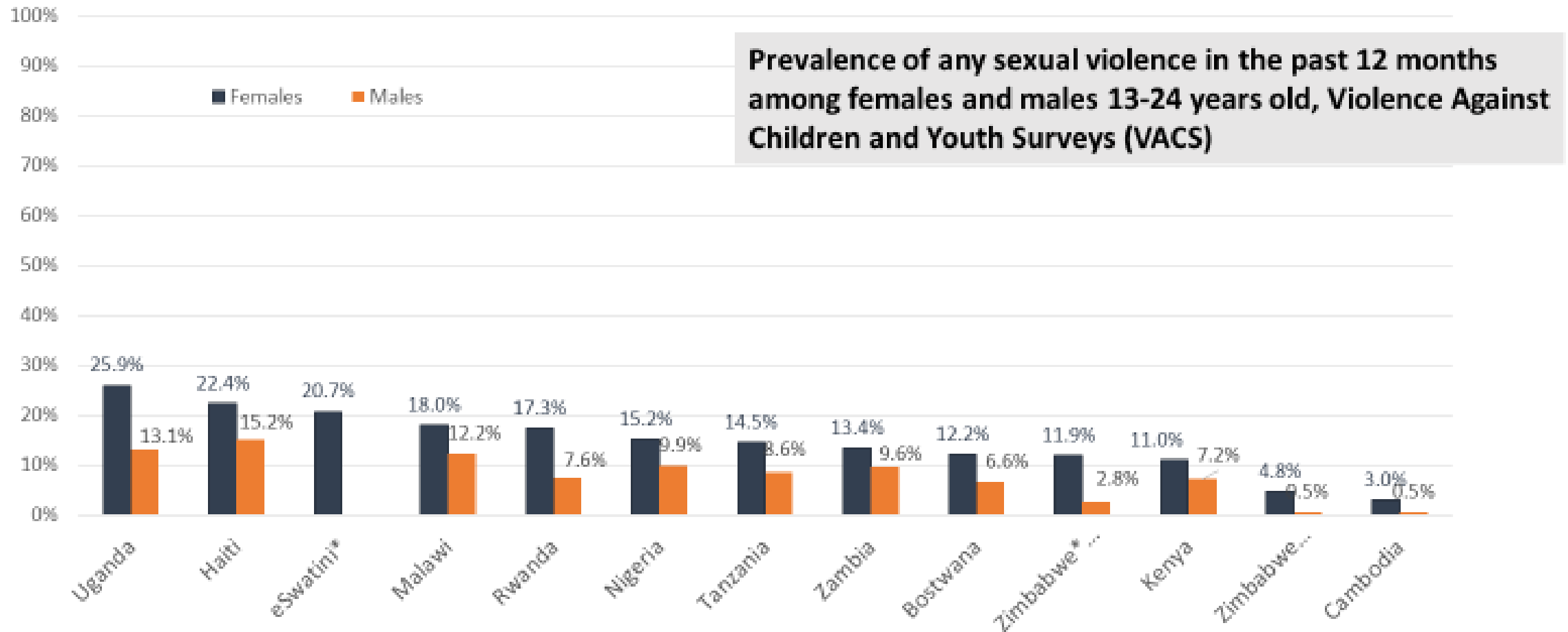
\*Data only available for males ages 18-24 for Zimbabwe. Only females were surveyed in Swaziland.

Source: VACS



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# Sexual violence in the past 12 months among females and males



Sexual violence includes unwanted sexual touching, unwanted attempted sex, pressured or coerced sex, and physically forced sex.

\*Data only available for females ages 18-24 for Zimbabwe. Only females were surveyed in Eswatini

# Violence against children can result in **severe**, often lifelong **negative** outcomes







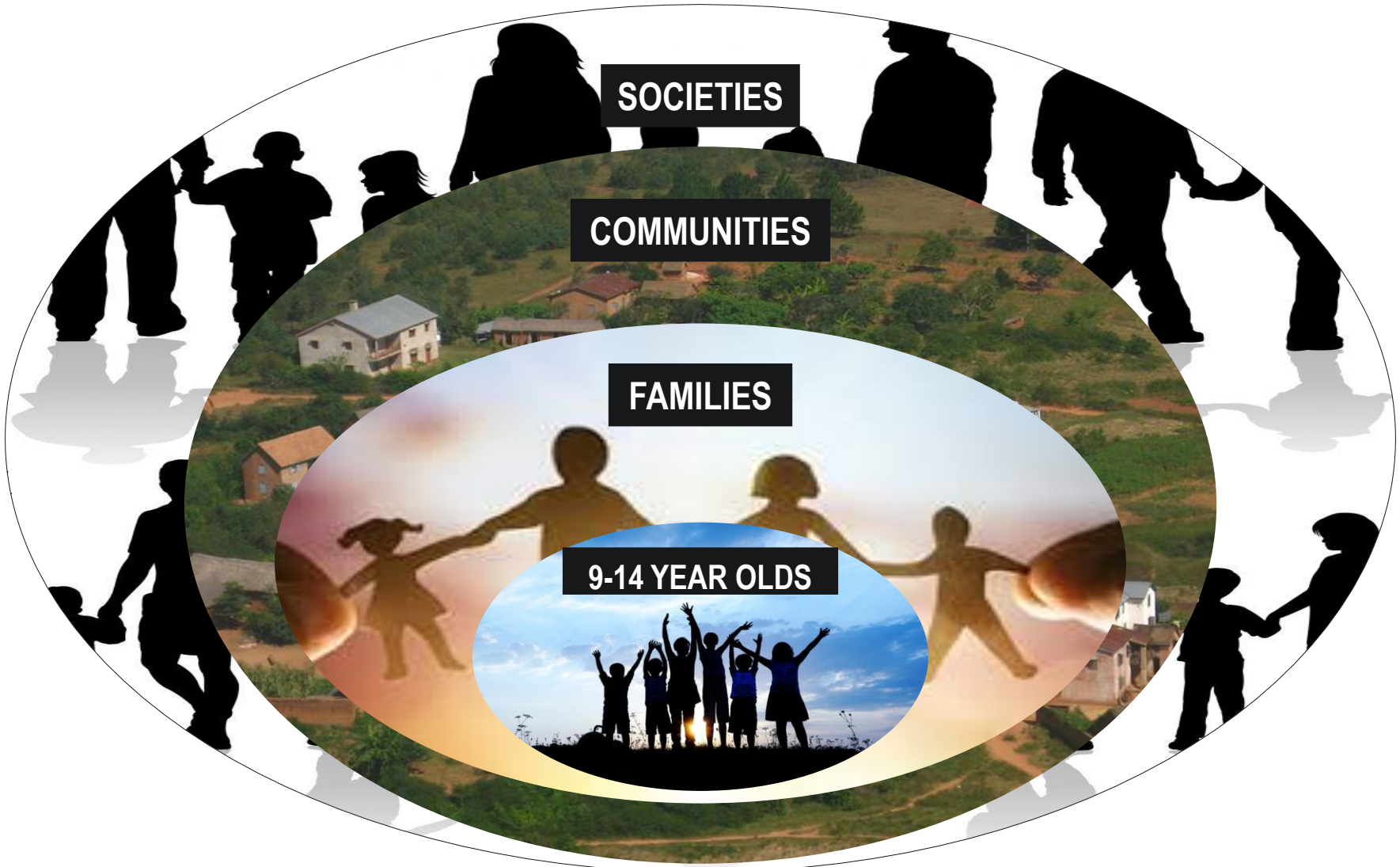
**STEP 1(b):  
LEARN THE FACTS  
QUESTIONS?**



**STEP 2: LEARN about EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS to prevent and respond to Sexual Violence Against Children**

**What programs may be available for you to implement in your community?**

# Circles of Protection





# **STEP 3: MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES** **for people to abuse children**

## **Child Safeguarding**

# Organizations – Child Safeguarding Policies & Procedures

## What is Child Safeguarding?

- **Policies** and **procedures** implemented by an organization to prevent exploitation and violence against children from occurring within the organization's “**walls**”
- Clear, comprehensive strategies to protect children

## Why is this important?

- Children in our programs and communities are vulnerable to many risks, including **exploitation** and **violence**.
- Persons who are likely to abuse children may seek positions of power and authority to gain access to vulnerable children.
- We have an **obligation** to protect the children in our programs and communities.

## Who can implement them?

- All organizations and entities that serve children in your communities

# Organizations – Child Safeguarding Policies & Procedures

## Example of Components of Child-Safeguarding Policies\*

- Assess the risks of all activities involving children and develop a plan to reduce/eliminate those risks
- **Screening and selection of employees/volunteers**
- Code of Conduct to be signed by anyone who may have direct or indirect contact with children in your programs and communities
- **Monitoring interactions between employees/volunteers and children**
- Making the physical environment safer
- **Responding to policy breaches**
- Protocol for reporting allegations or suspicions of child sexual abuse—including linkages to Child Protection Services
- **Annual education/training on the child safeguarding policy for:** employees/volunteers, caregivers, and children/youth

\*Not an exhaustive list

# Do's and Don'ts for Child Safeguarding



- ❖ Assume that everyone who works with children is safe or will do them no harm.
- ❖ Just replicate other organizations' child safeguarding policies.
- ❖ Develop a policy document that just sits in the office.
- ❖ Try to develop your safeguarding measures on your own!



- ❖ Use other organizations' child safeguarding policies to **inform** yours.
- ❖ Follow up every time someone breaches a policy.
- ❖ Ensure that all employees of the organization are trained on the policy.
- ❖ Make sure that all people are aware of potential risks, your child safeguarding policies and their obligations to follow the policies.
- ❖ Work with other organizations who can support your safeguarding measures.

# Child Safeguarding Resources

- Sample safeguarding standards including those used by groups such as Caritas, World Council of Churches, and Islamic World Relief can be found at: <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk>
- Tips for faith communities beginning or seeking to improve their child safeguarding policies and procedures can be found at: <https://www.stopitnow.org/ohc-content/safety-planning-within-faith-based-communities>
- We Will Speak Out (WWSO) is a global coalition of Christian-based NGOs, churches and organizations, supported by an alliance of technical partners committed to ending sexual violence. The website contains many materials from different faith communities on the broader response to sexual violence and can be accessed at: <https://www.wewillspeakout.org>





# **STEP 3: MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES for people to abuse children**

## **Child Safeguarding**

# **QUESTIONS?**



# **STEP 4: REACT RESPONSIBLY to Sexual Violence Against Children**

# Be Prepared

## Know the resources in your community



**Establish a relationship with them, so you are prepared in case something happens**

### **You can start with:**

- Child Helpline
- Child Protection Services (e.g., social welfare officer, social worker, child protection officer)
- Post violence care center
- Police (e.g., victim support unit, if it exists)

# Overarching Perspective

**The top priority for leaders like you dealing with sexual violence against children has to be:**

**THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE**



**CHILD**

# Recognizing Abuse

## DISCLOSURE

A child tells you, or someone in your organization or community, that they have experienced sexual violence.

## DISCOVERY

You directly witness a sexually abusive act against a child.

## SUSPICION

You've seen interactions between an adult and a child that make you think abuse could be happening.

Source: Adapted from Darkness to Light at <http://www.d2l.org/education/5-steps/>

# What to DO when abuse happens?

- Make sure the child is safe
- Call Child Helpline for advice/action
- Call Authorities (i.e. police, social services, etc.)
- Support the child and family throughout medical, social welfare, and criminal justice processes
- Seek emergency services (i.e. medical and police) **IMMEDIATELY**, if disclosure occurs within days of abuse

**Critical** things to remember when dealing with a child who has experienced violence:

- **Believe** the child
- **Protect** confidentiality--talk only to those who need to know in order to get needed services
- **Reassure** the child that he/she is not at fault

If your relationship with the child is through your organization, follow the **Child Safeguarding** Policies and Procedures of the organization.

# What to DO when abuse happens?

## **SCENARIO: A person tells you about abuse that happened a long time ago.**

**DO:** Focus on listening and letting him/her know the types of support that are available.

**DON'T:** Be dismissive or ignore the disclosure.

**DON'T:** Place blame on the person for the abuse or for the duration it took for them to disclose the abuse.

## **SCENARIO: You hear about sexual violence immediately after it happened.**

**DO:** Listen to the child and contact the child helpline or other relevant resources immediately for guidance on next steps.

**DO:** Get the child to the nearest medical facility, and report the abuse to the police.

**DON'T:** Be dismissive, ignore or place blame on the child for abuse.

**DON'T:** Try to investigate or execute justice on your own.



**STEP 5: USE YOUR LEADERSHIP to  
change the CONVERSATION about  
sexual violence against children in  
your community**



**Create an open environment where people feel free to talk about sexual violence against children, and those affected feel comfortable coming forward.**

**Dispel common myths about sexual violence against children – these get in the way of prevention, response, justice, and healing.**

**Start a discussion with the adults in your community about consent – what it is and what it isn't. This is the foundation for preventing sexual violence against children.**



# Dispelling Common Myths about Sexual Violence Against Children

# Myths about what causes Sexual Violence Against Children/Adolescents

**MYTH**

*Children/Adolescents may act or dress seductively and cause adults to be sexually aroused, or they were raped because they were drunk or walking in a secluded place.*

**FALSE**



Some children/adolescents may exhibit behaviors that appear to be 'seductive' or sexual to adults. However, this could happen if they have unmet emotional needs, have been previously sexually abused, or are merely copying something they have seen in the media. **No matter how a child/adolescent acts or dresses, the adult is responsible for their own behavior and how they react to the child.** It is criminal for an adult to abuse their power and the vulnerable position of a child/adolescent.

**THE PERPETRATOR IS THE CAUSE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE, NOT THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR.  
A child who is sexually abused is *NEVER* to blame.**

# Myths about what causes Sexual Violence Against Children/Adolescents

**MYTH**

*A sexually abused child/adolescent should try to forget the abuse and move forward.*

**FALSE**



Abuse can leave physical and mental scars that are not easy to overcome. Children/adolescents who are sexually abused need help to deal with the abuse, i.e. professional counselling, support of close family and friends. A professional should determine if long-term counselling is needed.

**THE PERPETRATOR IS THE CAUSE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE, NOT THE CHILD'S BEHAVIOR.  
A child who is sexually abused is *NEVER* to blame.**

# Talking about Consent:

Why it is Important?

&

How is it related to Sexual Violence Against Children?

# Why is it Important to Talk about Consent in Your Community?

**Understanding what consent is and what it is not is a critical foundation for ensuring that sexual violence does not happen.**

## **Adults need to understand consent:**

- ❖ So they don't blame victims
- ❖ So they don't perpetrate sexual violence
- ❖ So they can model good behaviors in their own relationships
- ❖ So they help protect the rights of others

## **Adolescents need to understand consent:**

- ❖ So they don't blame victims
- ❖ So they understand their own limits and respect the limits of others and don't perpetrate sexual violence, especially as they begin to have their own relationships
- ❖ So they understand their rights and can be better protected

**Source:** Adapted from Dating Matters and Safe Dates

# Understanding Consent

Young children are **not** able to consent to have sex, because they do not understand what is being asked of them. While older children may understand what is being asked of them, adults have more money, power, and authority than children. So older children may not feel that they can say no. Because of this, ***an adult having sex with a child is against the law in most countries.***

As children age into adolescence, they get closer to the age of consent and may begin to have relationships with each other. It is important to prepare them for this, including talking about **consent**.

# Understanding Consent

Remember, children below the legal age of consent can NEVER consent to sex

## The 4 “Cs” of sexual consent:

No **C**oercion or Force

**C**lear

**C**ontinuous

**C**onscious

Source: Adapted from Dating Matters and Safe Dates



# Consent is Free from **COERCION** or Force

**ANY type of pressure or coercion means that consent was NOT given.**

## Some examples of **Coercion** include:

- Wearing someone down (asking over and over or begging)
- **Threatening to use force**
- Threatening to end the relationship
- **Intimidation**
- Catching someone alone and not allowing them to leave
- **Name-calling**
- False promises and lies
- **Tricking**
- Using power over the other person (e.g. a teacher, respected leader or older relative)

**Consent has not been given if the other person is too afraid to say “no”!**

# Consent is CLEAR

Only a freely given “yes” means “yes”!

A “yes” that is coerced or made out of fear means “NO”!

- The absence of “no” does not mean “yes”.
- Silence does not mean yes.
- Maybe does not mean yes.

- The person knows exactly what sexual act he/she is giving consent to. If someone is willing to kiss, it does not mean he/she has given consent to do anything else.

**Consent must be clear at every step.**

- **Each** person in the relationship is responsible for clearly giving and receiving consent.

Source: Adapted from Dating Matters and Safe Dates

# Consent must be **CONTINUOUS**

- Healthy communication skills are important when it comes to sexual activity. **All** romantic partners need to continuously talk together and listen to each other to give or receive consent.
- Consenting at one time does not mean that the person consents to any other time. **Each** person has a right to decide if and when they will engage in a behavior.
  - A person can consent or agree to kissing on one occasion and then not consent another time.
  - A person can consent and say “**YES**”, but at anytime, **even during intimate contact**, change his/her mind and say “**NO**” – A person can change their mind at **ANYTIME!**

Source: Adapted from Dating Matters and Safe Dates

# Consent must be **CONSCIOUS**

## Conscious

- Fully Awake
- Alert
- Understand what is being asked

## Not Conscious (Consent **CANNOT** be given)

- Asleep
- Drunk or drugged
- Passed out

Consent has **not** been given if someone said yes at one time but then at a later time—even just minutes later—is asleep or passed out.

Source: Adapted from Dating Matters and Safe Dates

# Understanding Consent



**ALL 4 “C’s” MUST BE PRESENT TO HAVE**

**C O N S E N T**

**WHEN CONSENT IS MISSING, THE ANSWER IS “NO”**

Source: Adapted from Dating Matters and Safe Dates



# Talking about Consent

# QUESTIONS?



**STEP 6: USE YOUR LEADERSHIP**  
**to change the course of Sexual**  
**Violence Against Children in your**  
**community**

**Pledge to Act**



EVERYONE HAS A ROLE  
TO PLAY IN PROTECTING  
**CHILDREN**







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**Thank You!!!**

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