
VIOLENCE AGAINST ADOLESCENT GIRLS: TRENDS AND LESSONS FOR EAST AFRICA

The Global
Women's Institute

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY





Violence against adolescent girls: *Trends and lessons for East Africa*

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Violence Against Women and Girls
in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DATA COLLECTION

Adolescence is a crucial and defining stage in a girl’s life. However, girls around the world too-often face unique risks of gender discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, human trafficking, forced marriage and sexual exploitation and abuse. This is particularly the case in humanitarian settings, where girls’ already-limited access to vital services as well as family and peer support networks are disrupted by crises and displacement. Despite this, humanitarian programmes and policies do not adequately cater for adolescent girls’ needs. Falling at the nexus of childhood and adulthood, these girls are often not able or willing to access services designed for adult women or young girls.

THE RESEARCH

This report seeks to explore the unique experience of adolescent girls by examining the types of gender-based violence affecting this group as well as drivers of this violence, within the frame of high levels of gender inequality in South Sudan. Data for this study was collected as part of the research program of the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (‘What Works’) Consortium funded by the government of the United Kingdom (UK)’s Department for International Development (DfID). Through this programme, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Global Women’s Institute (GWI) at the George Washington University and CARE International UK conducted a mixed-methods study in five locations in South Sudan. Secondary analysis of this data set focusing on the experiences violence against adolescent girls (aged 15-19) was supported by the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) consortium. Quantitative data focused on adolescent girls residing in the Juba Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites and the town of Rumbek. Qualitative data from the five study locations (Bentiu PoCs, Juba City, Juba County, Juba PoCs, Rumbek) was used to supplement the quantitative data.

KEY FINDINGS

Adolescent girls experience high levels of violence perpetrated by males in South Sudan.
Over 20% of adolescent girls (15-18 year olds) had already experienced an incident of non-partner sexual violence. In addition to non-partner sexual violence, adolescent girls are also experiencing violence perpetrated by male intimate partners with 39% of girls in the Juba PoCs and 42% of girls in Rumbek experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in the past year.¹

Exposure to armed conflict is a major driver of multiple forms of male-perpetrated violence against adolescent girls.

The primary driver of male-perpetrated violence against adolescent girls identified in this study is exposure to conflict. A girl’s odds of experiencing non-partner sexual violence were three to seven times higher if her village or community had been attacked. Conflict also contributed to the likelihood that a girl would experience intimate partner violence from a male partner.

Conflict-related sexual violence can help entrench patriarchal practices that further the cycle of violence experienced by adolescent girls.

High rates of sexual violence create a narrative that girls need “protection,” which in the context of South Sudan often manifests as controlling behaviours and gender inequitable practices. Conflict-related sexual violence also compounds pre-existing patriarchal norms and practices including discrimination against girls and child, early and forced marriage.

Adolescent girls are not accessing support services after an incident of violence.

While girls sometimes tell family members or friends about experiences of violence, they still are not accessing formal services. More than 70% of adolescent girls in the Juba PoCs and over 50% in Rumbek reported that they did not access any formal service (health, legal, police, etc.) after an incident of violence.

LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

- 1. Whilst younger girls may hold views that are more equitable and are less accepting of violence, they are coming of age in societies with strong patriarchal views. Social norms programming that targets wider norms and behaviour change in the whole community - particularly amongst those who hold power over adolescent girls (parents, husbands, etc.) - needs to be prioritized to ensure that adolescent girls are supported.**
- 2. Adolescent girls are affected by harmful traditional practices, such as bride-price payment and early marriage. Specific efforts are needed to tackle the root causes of harmful traditional gender norms and reduce practices that may be exposing adolescent girls to greater risk of experiencing IPV.**
- 3. Conflict in the community is also affecting violence in the home. Alongside the implementation of risk mitigation measures to prevent non-partner violence, there is also a need for specific efforts to prevent endemic**

violence, such as IPV, during times of conflict.

- 4. Violence against adolescent girls is often related to wider violence within and between communities. Efforts to acknowledge and address this violence need to be included in peace-building efforts.**
- 5. Programmers need to target the families of girls, particularly mothers and fathers, to change harmful attitudes and practices that further stigma and cause shame in girls who experience violence. They should utilize parents as conduits to support girls’ access to services.**
- 6. The confidentiality of GBV response services - particularly for police, medical and legal responses - needs to be improved to reduce stigma, promote access to services and improve the quality of care.**
- 7. Further synergies between child protection programming and violence against women programming are needed to ensure that the unique needs and experiences of adolescent girls are addressed.**
- 8. Funding for programming that specifically targets adolescent girls to reduce violence against this population and lower barriers to service access needs to be prioritized.**

1 Of girls who had seen their partner in the past year.



Photo: Meredith Hutchison/IRC

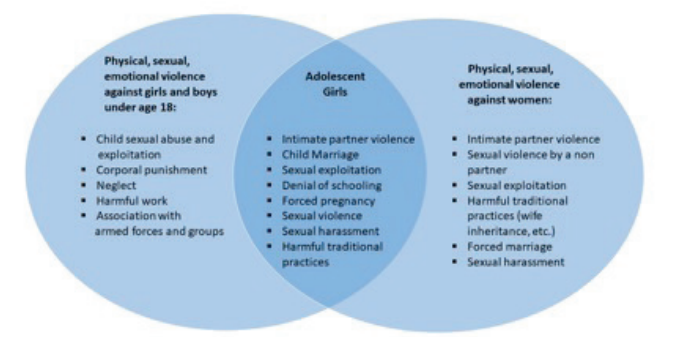
Background

BACKGROUND

Adolescence can be a particularly vulnerable time in the life of girls worldwide, who face unique risks of gender-based violence (GBV) during this period. No longer children, yet often not fully able to assert themselves as adults, adolescents occupy an often-overlooked place in both programming and research around the world. While over the past 30 years since the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 1995 fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the international community has made great strides in bringing attention to and creating legal/policy changes on violence against women and girls (VAWG), violence against adolescent girls has received less attention and improvements in children’s rights legislation have rarely successfully provided protection for adolescent girls.

Typically (though not universally) defined as young people between the ages of 10-19, adolescents fall at the nexus of childhood and adulthood. GBV against adolescent girls is rooted in systemic gender inequality which means girls have lower status and power as females and experience existing harmful social norms and practices, such as girls being sold off for bride price, married early, or considered “defiled or ruined” after rape which underpins this violence and directs it towards girls rather than boys. In addition to these and multiple other forms of gender-based violence adolescent girls may experience, they are also at risk for child marriage, forced pregnancy, and denial of schooling (See Figure 1.). Adolescent girls, therefore, face overlapping risks of violence due to their relative lack of power because of both their gender as well as their status as children or young people in a world dominated by adults.

Figure 1. Adolescent girls: The intersection between violence against children (VAC) and VAWG



While data on violence against adolescent girls is limited and primarily taken from high-income countries, there are some emerging trends. The Violence against Children Survey (VACS) has documented that the reported prevalence of sexual violence against girls prior to the age of 18 ranges from

4.4% in Cambodia to 37.6% in Swaziland (among data from seven low and middle-income countries) (Sumner, Mercy, Saul, Motsa-Nzuza, Kwesigabo, & Buluma, 2015). However, this analysis focused on sexual violence against all girls under the age of 18 and not just adolescents. UNICEF found that, of women who reported experiencing sexual violence, a majority of respondents in 15 countries (of an 18-country data set) reported that this violence first occurred when they were between the ages of 15-19 (UNICEF, 2014). This same report noted that the most likely perpetrator of sexual violence against adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 was a male intimate partner, demonstrating the considerable overlap between data of sexual violence and intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence targeting adolescent girls may be perpetrated by husbands, partners or boyfriends during a dating relationship. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that about 30% of ever-partnered girls between the ages of 15-19 have already experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a male partner (Devries, et al., 2013).

Related to this violence are the extremely high rates of early marriage worldwide, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimating that one in five girls overall and 40% of girls in the least developed countries are married before the age of 18 (UNFPA, 2018). Available research suggests that early marriage, particularly for those who marry at or under the age of 15, may increase the risk of experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) (International Center for Research on Women, 2018; Santhya, 2007). This increase is theorized to be the result of increased power differentials when much younger girls marry older men. These girls often complete less schooling, have poorer livelihood outcomes, and therefore leverage less power in their relationships, compared to their older male partners, leading to increased IPV for adolescent girls as well as women married as adolescent girls.

Conflict and humanitarian settings can compound these vulnerabilities and risks for adolescent girls. It is estimated that over half of the 65.6 million displaced persons globally are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017). Rates of sexual violence are often seen to increase during times of conflict. Researchers from Johns Hopkins University have estimated that 21.4% of women and girls in conflict settings have experienced sexual violence; an estimate that is more than double the global average set out by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Vu et al., 2014; World Health Organization, 2013). A limited number of other (non-population-based) studies have further demonstrated that adolescent girls are particularly at risk for sexual violence in conflict settings. Two (non-population-based) studies further corroborate this finding, with 37% of girls in International Rescue Committee (IRC) programmes in the Democratic Republic of Congo and 45% of refugee girls in IRC

programmes in Ethiopia reporting that they experienced sexual violence during their lifetime (Stark, et al., 2017).

Displacement can also affect other forms of GBV that have the potential to disproportionately affect adolescent girls. For example, forced and early marriages have been found to increase during times of conflict. One study of Syrian refugees in Jordan found that the percentage of registered marriages involving 15-17 year old girls increased from 12% to 25% in a two-year period (UNICEF, 2014). Researchers have found a number of reasons for these increases. For one, displaced families may not be able to financially support their children when in displacement (due to prohibitions on employment for refugee families, lack of assets, etc.) which can drive them to marry off girls before they reach maturity (Spencer, 2015). In some contexts, marriage can actually be an economic driver for the family with a bride price (in money or livestock) given to the family in exchange for their daughter. The breakdown in traditional support structures and increases in poverty that are associated with conflict and displacement may increase the rate of child marriage for families desperate for the financial resources associated with bride price (The Global Women’s Institute and the International Rescue Committee, 2017). Further gender inequitable practices are tied to both this issue of bride price and increased risks of sexual assault where families marry off their daughters early to ‘protect’ them. In many cultures, the idea of purity of the bride, which is rooted in these inequitable norms that prize virginity before marriage remain and girls who have been raped experience both stigma and the inability to find a husband. From the families’ perspective, given the high prevalence of sexual violence in conflict settings, marrying off their daughters early reduces their risks of having an unmarried or pregnant daughter to support or not receiving a bride price (Spencer, 2015; The Global Women’s Institute and the International Rescue Committee, 2017). However, in reality, these practices can reduce a girl’s ability to complete her education, engage in livelihoods, and otherwise lead a productive life independent of her husband.

Similarly, rates of IPV have been seen to increase during times of conflict and remain the most common form of GBV experienced by women and girls in both conflict and non-conflict settings (Ager & Stark, 2011; CPC Learning Network, 2009). The factors driving this increase of male perpetrated violence against women and girls within the home during times of conflict are beginning to be explored by researchers and often are linked to entrenched gender inequality and acceptance of male abuse and control of female partners, combined with increases in poverty, reductions in social support networks, impunity for male perpetrators and increases in stress due to displacement and experiences of conflict

(Bukuluki et al., 2013; International Rescue Committee, 2015; GWI and IRC, 2017). While there is no available data on the prevalence of IPV amongst adolescent girls in refugee settings, given the high rates of early marriage in these contexts, adolescent girls face a potential increase in risk of IPV, as well.

Given this limited evidence base, this paper seeks to further **document the unique experiences of adolescent girls** by specifically examining the **types of gender-based violence** affecting this group as well as the **drivers of this violence** within the acknowledged frame of high levels of gender inequality and the subordination of women and girls in South Sudan.

The focus of this analysis will be on violence against adolescent girls in South Sudan. However, the findings and recommendations highlight issues that are relevant to adolescent girls in other similar conflict-affected contexts. For example, the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya have similar cultural and demographic trends and recent experience of armed conflict. Due to this, the discussion and recommendations sections focus on how this analysis can be applied to improving programming and policies addressing violence against adolescent girls trends in this wider context.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The primary data was collected as part of the research programme of the *What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls* (‘What Works’) Consortium, funded by the government of the United Kingdom’s (UK) Department for International Development (DfID). Through this programme, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Global Women’s Institute (GWI) at the George Washington University and CARE International UK conducted a mixed-methods study in five locations in South Sudan. The quantitative component of the study consisted of a population-based household survey administered to a representative sample of women and adolescent girls aged 15-64 in three locations: Juba City, Rumbek Centre and the Juba Protection of Civilians (PoCs) site. The survey was based on the *WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women* and adapted for the unique context of South Sudan.

A multi-stage cluster sampling design was used to select individual households for inclusion in the cross-sectional survey. The research team randomly selected bomas (villages) or blocks in the PoC sites for inclusion in the sample frame. Each area was further subdivided into smaller clusters (approximately 100-250 households per cluster), based on geographic distribution.

A systematic sampling strategy was used for household selection with a standard interval of 5 households applied to select each subsequent house. Data collection began in June 2016, but was paused in mid-July due to a new outbreak of violence in Juba City. Data collection was completed in Rumbek by the end of July, while data collection in the Juba PoC sites was resumed and completed in November-December 2016. A total of 2,244 women and adolescent girls (aged 15-64) across three sites were interviewed, and a response rate of 89% was achieved. Verbal consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

Qualitative data were collected with community members (including women and men and female and male youths aged 18-25), key informants (e.g., non-governmental organization’s staff, government representatives, local leaders, etc.) and survivors of VAWG, utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. No adolescent girls were included in the focus groups, though some who were survivors of violence were interviewed during data collection. Data were collected in five locations in South Sudan (Juba City, Rumbek, Juba Protection of Civilian (PoC) Sites, Juba County, Bentiu Protection of Civilian Site). Analysis from each of these sites was used to inform this report. A detailed breakdown of the qualitative data collection can be found in GWI and IRC’s *No Safe Space* Report¹.

Data Analysis

This secondary analysis focused on the experiences of adolescent girls (aged 15-19) compared to women (aged 20-49). As there were very few women over the age of 49 in the overall sample, these cases were excluded to reduce the influence of outliers. In addition, for the quantitative data analysis, two sites were selected for analysis – the Juba PoC and Rumbek sites. This was due to the fact that Juba City had the smallest overall sample (as data collection stopped in June 2016 during the escalation of fighting in the city) and the smallest proportion of adolescent girls. In total, 537 (346 in the Juba PoCs and 191 in Rumbek) adolescent girls and 1,153 (587 in the Juba PoCs and 566 in Rumbek) women were included in this analysis.

Descriptive statistics as well as bivariate and multivariate statistical methods were used for analysis. Because the sites in the study were sampled separately, analysis on each site is presented individually. Bivariate and multivariate statistical

analysis was used to compare the situation of adolescent girls to women for each indicator.

Qualitative data was collected from all five sites in the study. For analysis, grounded theory was used to examine issues specifically related to adolescent girls. A combination of a priori and inductive coding was used to identify emerging themes and patterns from the transcribed notes. All data were coded using the qualitative software, OpenCode². Using these codes, analytical categories were developed and explored, allowing researchers to capture key features of the different forms of violence affecting adolescent girls and to identify patterns and typologies in the data.

For further details on the data collection and analysis procedures see GWI and IRC’s *No Safe Space* Report³.

Ethical and Safety Considerations

The research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the George Washington University as well as the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) in South Sudan, which is an independent body of experts in VAWG research and programming in South Sudan made up of local, national and international practitioners representing both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government structures. Permission to conduct the research was secured with appropriate authorities at national and local levels. The study followed WHO’s Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies. These included developing specific procedures to ensure privacy and confidentiality, providing referral cards to services for all participants, having gender-matched and highly trained data collectors and ensuring routine monitoring for adverse events. During the household survey, adolescent girls aged 15-19 were treated as adults and were required to give informed consent (verbal) before participating in the research. See GWI and IRC’s *No Safe Space* Report for a full account of the ethical and safety procedures put in to place during primary data collection⁴.

1 The Global Women’s Institute and the International Rescue Committee. (2017) *No safe space: A lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan*. Available from: http://www2.gwu.edu/~mcs/gwi/No_Safe_Place_Full_Report.pdf
2 ICT Services and System Development and Division of Epidemiology and Global Health (2013).OpenCode 3.4. Umeå: Umeå University; 2013. Available from: <http://www.phmed.umu.se/english/units/epidemiology/research/open-code/>
3 The Global Women’s Institute and the International Rescue Committee. (2017) *No safe space: A lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan*. Available from: http://www2.gwu.edu/~mcs/gwi/No_Safe_Place_Full_Report.pdf
4 The Global Women’s Institute and the International Rescue Committee. (2017) *No safe space: A lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan*. Available from: http://www2.gwu.edu/~mcs/gwi/No_Safe_Place_Full_Report.pdf

Findings

HOME

COMMUNITY

DURING
CRISIS

GRA

Women beat
Men

Raping Women/
Girls.

Orphans have
lost their parents
and do not have
opportunity to go
to school.

Men beat
women

FINDINGS

“Girls are the family’s treasure.” — Female Focus Group - Rumbek

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall, adolescent girls reported that they were literate (though this was not verified independently) and had some education (84% in the Juba PoCs and 85% in Rumbek), although less than half had reached secondary school. About half of adolescent girls in both sites reported that they currently were students at the time of data collection. Approximately 30% of girls reported that they had a partner or were married. Marital status was associated with literacy in both sites with over 90% of unmarried women in the PoCs and Rumbek reporting that they were literate, compared to only approximately 40% of married women.

When comparing the characteristics of adolescent girls versus women, there were some differences between the two groups. In both the Juba PoCs and Rumbek, adolescent girls were more likely to be literate and have reached secondary education compared to the women. They were also more likely to be supported by their relatives (which could include parents) compared to the women, and they had somewhat higher socio-economic status (as measured through the use of charcoal rather than wood, leaves or grass) compared to the women. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Socio-demographics of adolescent girls and women, by site

	JUBA POCS		RUMBEK	
	Adolescent Girls (15-19) n=346	Adult Women (20-49) n=587	Adolescent Girls (15-19) n=191	Adult Women (20-49) n=566
	%	%	%	%
Literacy				
Not Literate	17***	52***	16***	57***
Literate	83***	48***	84***	43***
Education				
No Education	16***	46***	15***	56***
Primary Education	52***	25***	43***	19***
Secondary Education+	32***	29***	42***	25***
Work Status				
Not Working	44***	62***	22***	31***
Domestic Work (e.g. maid)	3***	10***	5***	30***
Student	51***	17***	57***	8***
Other Work	2***	12***	4***	11***
Income Status				
No Income	54***	63***	3***	6***
From Husband	7***	17***	17***	45***
From Relative	38***	15***	69***	13***
Other Income Status	2***	5***	12***	36***
Fuel Source				
Wood, Grass, Leaves	22**	31**	44**	59**
Charcoal	78**	69**	56**	41**
Marital Status				
Never Married or Partnered	73***	8***	67***	7***
Partner	11***	7***	10***	4***
Married	16***	85***	23**	89***

Village ever attacked				
No	53**	38**	71**	45**
Yes	47**	62**	39**	55**
Conflict-Related Event (e.g. injury, mutilation)				
No	85**	73**	86**	75**
Yes	15**	27**	14**	25**

Statistically significant findings⁵ at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GIRLS

“The father as the head of the family/household would always send the sons to school, especially over the daughters. The thought is that the girl is going to another family, she doesn’t belong here.” — Key Informant Juba

Discrimination against girls in South Sudan begins at an early age due to the gender and social norms that attribute girls lower positions in society and diminished power and agency. In their childhood household, the roles of girls are primarily seen as domestic. They are meant to assist their mothers with cooking, cleaning, taking care of their siblings, etc. This is considered socialisation training for their future roles as wives and mothers in their own households. One factor influencing this is the family's desire to collect a bride price upon marriage. This focus on domestic responsibilities means that some girls are not sent to school or are forced to drop out before completion.⁶

I am the mother of a girl. If you talk with your husband, and say let our daughter go to school, he will refuse. He will kill you and he will force your daughter to be married.
– Women in Bentiu PoC

There is discrimination between boys and girls, for example the girls serve the boys by cooking and washing clothes for them.
– Women in Juba

Given the limited financial resources of many South Sudanese households, when having to choose between education for girls or boys, it is boys who are prioritized. This gender bias is closely tied to the issue of the bride price - with participants noting the reason they prioritize boys’ education is that girls are “going to another family” (Woman Key Informant - Juba) and that a girl’s family would not reap any benefit from the investment in the education of the girl. Higher educational achievement for girls was generally not equated with an increased bride price. While some respondents, particularly those in the Equatorial region, noted that education could be an asset in bride price negotiation, most did not believe that the level of educational achievement would have an impact on bride price amounts, which consequently reduces parental incentives to support girls’ education.

Most of young school girls dropout because of early marriage. They are force by their parents to get married at the early age. Some of our female pupils dropout from school due to teasing, bullying, torturing by their school male pupils mates.
– Key Informant Juba County

Parents don’t support education....because the girls can cook, fetch water, firewood, take care of the baby and the boy cannot do that.
– Key informant Rumbek

These discriminatory norms and attitudes against adolescent girls can have physical manifestations within households where girls are subjected to violence perpetrated by both members of girls’ immediate (parents, brothers) and extended families (uncles, etc.) This included violence that was deemed “corrective” for when a girl did not live up to the cultural norms that value virginity before

5 Statistically significant findings indicate that the differences between the groups are likely to be reflected in the wider population of women and adolescent girls in the 2 sites of South Sudan.
6 According to UNICEF only 33% of girls in South Sudan attend school. UNICEF (2012) Basic Education and Gender Equality (<http://www.unicef.org/southsudan/Education.pdf>)

marriage, obedience towards elders, and girl’s roles in taking care of the household.

When a girl at home does something wrong, her mother needs to correct her mistake. She will fight her mother who will get annoyed because she feels disrespected and beat her daughter.
– Women Juba PoC

The sister can be beaten by or fight with her brother because girls are not allowed to walk at random. She should be at home and do all the household chores. If she fails to do that the parent may instruct the son to beat her.
– Young men in Juba

One man shot his sister in the stomach because she got pregnant and he wanted cows.
– Male Key Informant in Rumbek

In some instances, women expressed their inability to provide for their daughters’ needs out of fear that the son or husband would retaliate with violence.

If you are the mother, you struggle to get clothes or shoes or lotions for the daughter because the brothers of the girl will beat her.
– Women in Bentiu PoC site

GENDER INEQUITABLE ATTITUDES

Despite the discriminatory culture around girls, gender attitudes amongst adolescents and youth that justify violence against women and girls are beginning to change in South Sudan. Discussions with separate groups of female and male youths (18-25) show that their views of gender norms are slowly becoming more progressive.

A girl will not be happy if she marries her rapist because he is not her choice. She should not get married, she should continue with her education.
– Female Youth in Juba County

Fighting also occurs in polygamous families because woman may jealously think that the other wives are more cared for than her. Through the process of marrying more than one wife, a man may waste a lot of thing. Children in that polygamy family have no food and school fees are not paid. Mothers are also suffering because they may not have other paying job to do.
– Male Youth in Juba County

Overall, adolescent girls held more gender equitable views compared to the women, including being less likely to believe that, “It is a wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband whenever he wants it,” and “A wife should obey her husband even if she disagrees.” In addition, they were less accepting of violence, including being less likely to agree that, “Violence between husband and wife is a private matter and others should not intervene,” and “If a woman is raped, she has usually done something careless to put herself in that situation (e.g., dress inappropriately).”

Adolescent girls were also less accepting of traditional solutions for rape (marrying the girl to the perpetrator) compared to the women. In general, girls from the Juba PoCs had more accepting views of gender equitable attitudes and less acceptance of violence compared to girls in Rumbek. These differences between sites could be because of differences in cultural practices of the tribes in each location or due to urban/rural divides between sites.

Table 2. Gender inequitable attitudes of adolescents and women, by site

	🏠 JUBA POCS		🏠 RUMBEK	
	Adolescent Girls (n=346)	Adult Women (n=587)	Adolescent Girls (n=191)	Adult Women (n=566)
	%/Mean	%/Mean	%/Mean	%/Mean
Overall agreement with inequitable attitudes (mean scores on a 1-6 scale)	2.16***	3.11***	4.23***	4.56***
It is the wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband whenever he wants it	19***	42***	63***	80***
A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home, cook for her family and take care of the children	42***	62***	92	93
It is natural (God intended) that men should be the head of the family	81	85	95	92
A wife should obey her husband even if she disagrees	55***	72***	82*	90*
A woman should be able to spend her own money according to her own will	26**	35**	85	84
Violence between husband and wife is a private matter and others should not intervene	32***	49***	80*	89*
A woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together	60*	69*	78	84
If a woman is raped, she has usually done something careless to put herself in that situation (e.g., dress inappropriately)	15***	33***	34*	44*
If a girl child experiences rape, she should marry the man who raped her	8***	16***	27**	40**

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

“*The marriage must go according to the will of the parents and not the will of girl.*
– Key Informant, Rumbek

Despite more progressive views amongst female and male youth, early marriage (before the age of 18) remains common in both South Sudan and the wider East Africa region. Typically these marriages are considered “forced” as the girls do not decide they want to get married nor are they able to give input into the choice of their perspective spouse.

Women and girls have no voice; their uncles and fathers manage the dowry. 14-15 year old girls can be married off to 60 year old men. The girl has no choice and the mother has no right to refuse either.
– Key Informant, Rumbek

Overall, age of marriage is getting older over time, with the median age of marriage amongst 19-24 year-olds being 18 years old in both sites. However, the rates of forced marriage were generally static over time as the differences between age groups were not statistically significant.

Table 3. Marital status and circumstances of marriage

	Age 15-18	Age 19-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-49
	%/Median	%/Median	%/Median	%/Median
POC Sites (n=933)				
Ever Married*	12	65	92	100
Median Age at Marriage *	---	18	17	17
Marriage was Forced±	17	23	18	24
Bride price Paid± *	67	77	87	93
Rumbek (n-757)				
Ever Married *	18	71	90	98
Median Age at Marriage*	--	18	18	20
Marriage was Forced±	23	26	26	30
Bride price Paid± *	70	89	90	90

±NOTE: These analyses are limited to married women (n=575 in the PoC sites and n=568 in Rumbek); Sample size was too small to calculate median age of marriage in the 15-18 age group. Asterisks indicate statistically significant findings

As a traditional practice that is seen as part of the culture, early marriage is an entrenched patriarchal norm and practice both within economic systems and patrilineal family cultural relations. In South Sudan, menarche commonly marks the transition into adulthood from a girl to a woman; once this occurs, it is considered acceptable for a girl to be married. Respondents often noted how the practice of early marriage was the right of the parents.

It is not poverty that forces the girls to get married because even the rich people force their children to get married. Instead it is our culture that are misleading people.
– Juba Women

We have nothing to solve in forced marriage because in our customary norm, a parent has a right to choose a husband or wife for their daughter or son. So we don’t consider such as a [GBV] case here in Rumbek.
– Key Informant in Rumbek

For adolescent girls, there also may be pressure from the social expectations of friends and family that young girls should be married. This may influence them to agree to marriage at a young age.

The force for marriage is the influence of friends, as ladies you will feel that you also should get married as her friends are also married.
– Young Women in Juba

The issue of early marriage is also linked with issues of bride price and economic conditions. Traditionally, in many tribes in East Africa, families receive a bride price (typically of cattle or money or a combination of both). This can happen to very young girls who are married off to much older, wealthy men in order for the family to receive the bride price.

These can happen when a man has a lot of cattle, the parents of the girl can force their daughter to marry an old man who has a lot of cattle. The reason is that the parents of the girl need to get more dowry.
– Key informant, Juba

Small girls are married to old men. For example, 14-year-old girls are married off to 60-year-old men and this is in most cases caused by poverty because the girl’s family wants to get wealth.
– Key informant, Rumbek

Respondents noted that families living in impoverished conditions might be more likely to seek early marriage for their daughters. Poverty, when combined with existing high levels of gender inequality and child marriage, may increase the necessity of the family seeking a bride price in order to meet the basic needs of the wider family.

So many girls are being forced to get married as a result of poverty. The situation in their home is that the parents may force their daughter to get married to men who have wealth – for example men who have a lot of cattle.
– Young Women in Juba

Loss of property can force the parents to marry off their daughter in order to get wealth.
– Key informant, Rumbek

Early marriage can also expose girls to physical conflict within the household as polygamy is a common practice for many tribes. Respondents noted that fighting amongst co-wives often occurs.

Fighting also occurs in the polygamous family because women may get jealous and think he cares the most about the other woman.
– Male Youth in Juba

Fighting between co-wives happens when the husband favours one woman while neglecting the other
– Female Youth in Juba

On-going and entrenched conflict in South Sudan can compound these issues: increasing the financial stressors that contribute to early marriage and tensions between co-wives.

Girls are more affected because of the crisis since parents who lost their properties during the crisis now force them to get married so as to get money or wealth.
– Youths in the Juba PoCs

Due to hatred among communities, when the girl is impregnated by the boy from the different community, she may be forced to marry one of the men from her community.
– Students, Rumbek

In the results of this survey, payment of bride price has decreased among the families of younger women in the PoC sites (see Table 3) - but it is not clear if this is because the on-going economic crisis in South Sudan has reduced the ability of South Sudanese to pay this cost or if norms around this practice are changing. Qualitative data collected among residents of the PoCs suggest that poverty is the primary driver of this change.

Because of the crisis and living in the camp, youths of 18 years and above are mostly affected if they want to marry because there are no cows or money to pay as a dowry.
– Youth in the Juba PoCs

A neighbour’s boy can have a love relationship with a 14 year old daughter from another family within the same tent, but the mother of the girl will not be happy because as they continue in love the girl might get pregnant and the boy will not be able to pay the dowry.
– Women in the Juba PoCs

However, payment of bride price also went down in Rumbek (though the finding was not statistically significant) among younger women, suggesting that at least a portion of this change might not be completely related to a lack of economic resources while in displacement but instead points to wider social norms change.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

“Men think it’s their right to have with their wives even if they are not ready for it and any denial causes violence.
— Key informant, Juba

Overall, rates of IPV were high for both women and girls throughout South Sudan.

Domestic violence does happen in the community. This is because when a husband comes home drunk, he beats up his wife.
– Male Youth, Juba

There is fighting between husbands and wives because of money. A wife needs money for food and a husband has nothing....
This money issue will cause arguments and fighting.
– Female Youth, Juba

When examining lifetime rates of IPV, women reported experiencing more violence compared to adolescents in both sites, an expected finding as women have been partnered for longer than adolescent girls and therefore have been more exposed to the possible violence from a partner.

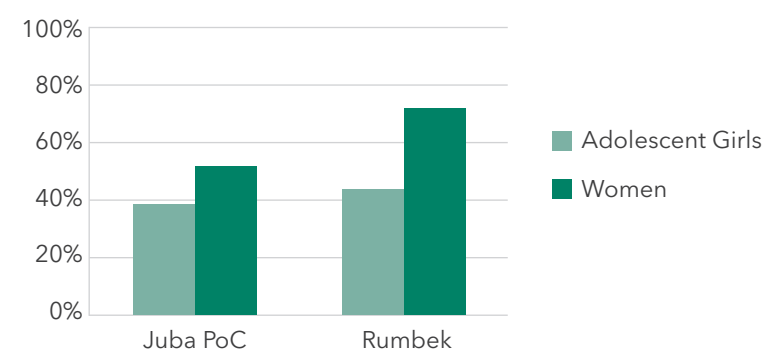
Table 4. Physical and sexual IPV in the past 12 months, amongst women and girls who have seen their partners in the past 12 months

	JUBA POCS		RUMBEK	
	Adolescent Girls n=73	Adult Women n=287	Adolescent Girls n=42	Adult Women n=289
	%	%	%	%
Physical IPV	21**	39**	42*	64*
Sexual IPV	32	41	26*	50*
Physical or Sexual IPV	39	52	42**	71**

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

Rates of violence in the past 12 months were also extremely high amongst both adolescent girls as well as women. Because there is considerable displacement amongst the populations in South Sudan, prevalence of physical and/or sexual IPV in the past 12 months was only calculated for women and girls who reported to have seen their partner at least one time in the past year.

Figure 2. Experienced Physical or Sexual IPV in the Past 12 Months



For adolescent girls in both sites, approximately 40% of partnered girls experienced physical or sexual IPV in the past 12 months, amongst respondents who had seen their partner in the last year. In the Juba PoCs, more girls reported experiences of sexual, rather than physical IPV; while in Rumbek, they more often reported physical violence.

These forms of violence are worse during the crisis than before the crisis and women are more affected than men because men are mostly on the frontline.
– Focus Group – Men, Juba PoC

While women in general experienced more violence in the past 12 months, the small sample size of partnered adolescent girls does not allow for firm conclusions on this comparison. Clearly, both adolescent girls and women are experiencing extreme rates of IPV.

Table 5. Lifetime physical and sexual IPV amongst ever-partnered women and girls - adolescents compared to women

	JUBA POCS		RUMBEK	
	Adolescent Girls n=139	Adult Women n=540	Adolescent Girls n=87	Adult Women n=526
	%	%	%	%
Any Physical IPV	9***	44***	18***	70***
Any Sexual IPV	13***	41***	13***	56***
Physical or Sexual IPV	15***	51***	19***	76***

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

While the formal concept of a “boyfriend” is not culturally common in South Sudan, some respondents did note that girls could be raped by their boyfriends.

The rape cases are common among the young men. The girls are raped by their boyfriends....
– Men in Juba

Amongst married women, there were also linkages between polygamy and IPV. Often, adolescent girls were much younger wives to men in polygamous relationships and these circumstances caused considerable stress and tension both between the husband and his wives as well as between the co-wives themselves. When asked if an older wife would intervene to help a younger co-wife if their husband was beating her, a key informant in Juba said, “No, she cannot do that,” and “If a wife has done something wrong that results in a beating, the elder wife will tell her not to do it again.”

The risk factors for women and girls reporting IPV by male partners in the past 12 months were examined in both the Juba PoCs (table 6) and Rumbek (table 7). After controlling for various demographic factors, having a conflict-related experience was the most salient and strongest risk for experiencing past-year IPV, increasing a girl’s odds by almost 4 times. Whilst girls who internalize gender inequitable attitudes also had an over 3-fold increase in odds of reporting past year IPV. In addition, engaging in domestic work (e.g. as a cleaner) and using a lower cost or free cooking fuel source (e.g. wood, grass or leaves) also increased the odds that girls reported experiencing IPV in the past year.

Table 6. Risk factors experienced by women and adolescent girls reporting violence by male intimate partners in the past 12 months - Juba PoCs, n = 360

	Crude OR	Adjusted OR
Age		
Adolescent Girls	1.00	1.00
Women	1.69 (.97-2.95)	1.48 (.78-2.81)
Work Status		
Not Working	1.00	1.00
Domestic Work (e.g. as a cleaner)	3.56** (1.57-8.10)	2.92* (1.0-8.39)
Student	1.22 (.51 – 2.89)	1.75(.73-4.20)
Other Work	1.64 (.81-3.31)	2.17(.83-5.71)
Fuel Source		
Wood, Grass, Leaves	1.00	1.00
Charcoal	.48* (.25-.90)	.47* (.26-.85)
Gender and Violence Attitude		
Agree with gender inequitable norms	3.61* (1.12-11.63)	3.29*(1.13-9.58)
Village Ever Attacked		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	2.35** (1.2-4.5)	1.92 (.95-3.91)
Conflict-Related Event (e.g. injury, mutilation)		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	3.42*** (1.75-6.66)	3.89*** (1.93-7.87)

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

In Rumbek, women were more likely to have experienced IPV in the last 12 months compared to adolescents. No other indicator was a significant driver of violence in the multivariate model, perhaps due to the high prevalence of IPV amongst the entire population in Rumbek.

Table 7. Risk factors experienced by women and adolescent girls reporting violence by male intimate partners in the past 12 months - n = 331 - Rumbek



	Crude OR	Adjusted OR
Age		
Adolescent Girls	1.00	1.00
Women	3.33** (1.5-7.48)	2.68 * (1.13 – 6.05)
Work Status		
Not Working	1.00	1.00
Domestic Work	2.12 (.96 -4.67)	1.57 (.72-3.44)
Student	.60 (.23-1.54)	.61 (.22-1.67)
Other Work	1.76 (.80-3.90)	1.34(.66-2.74)
Fuel Source		
Wood, Grass, Leaves	1.00	1.00
Charcoal	1.47 (.86-2.53)	1.68 (.96-2.92)
Gender and Violence Attitude		
Agree with gender inequitable norms	.65 (.13-3.32)	.56 (.10-3.23)
Village Ever Attacked		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	1.57 (.87-2.89)	1.38 (.75-2.53)

Conflict-Related Event (e.g. injury, mutilation)		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	1.55 (.69-3.5)	1.46 (.60 – 3.51)

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

After an experience of IPV occurred, most adolescent girls either told no one at all or confided in their parents or the parents of their partners (e.g., their mothers-in-law). Fewer (5%) confided in peers or friends. In the Juba PoCs, respondents primarily did not tell anyone outside their home or immediate family. In Rumbek, however, they also commonly sought out friends (33%) or neighbours (11%) as well as extended family such as male relatives.

Table 8. Most common people adolescent girl survivors told about experiences of IPV*

	 JUBA POCS	 RUMBЕК
	N = 30	N= 17
	Adolescents Girls %	Adolescent Girls %
No one	63	40
Respondent’s parents	17	49
Partner’s parents	12	24
Friends	5	33
Male Relatives	0	13
Neighbours	0	11
Local leaders	0	5

* Multiple responses were possible.

Girls are also not seeking formal support services when an incident of IPV occurs. Sixty to 73% have never sought formal support services for this violence. Qualitative data indicates that there is a lack of services available to support women experiencing IPV and that the available services are not helpful.

Report to who? There is nobody.



– Key Informant, Rumbek

As long as you are married off to that man and have children you are not supposed to go to the police. Your husband will still beat you. Your husband will say, you go and marry the policeman.

– Women in Rumbek

In the Juba PoCs, those girls who did seek formal support primarily accessed medical care (15%). For girls in Rumbek, the services accessed were more varied, including working with local leaders, the courts and police as well as seeking medical care.

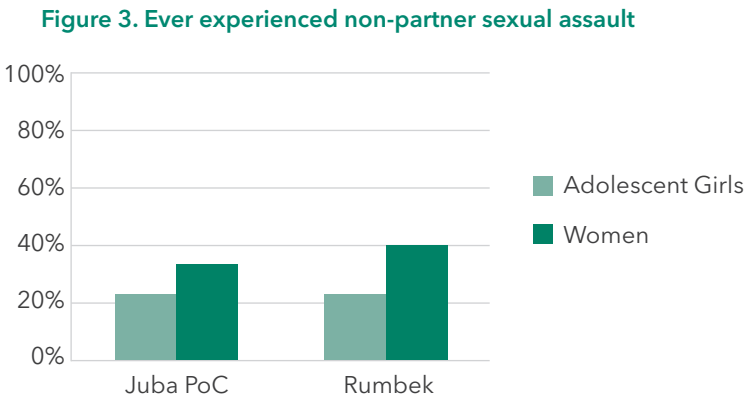
Table 9. Most common services accessed by adolescents after IPV

	 JUBA POCS	 RUMBЕК
	N = 30	N= 17
	Adolescent Girls %	Adolescent Girls %
Did not seek help/ support	73	58
Medical Assistance	15	9
Local leader /chief	8	17
Religious Leader	1	5
Women’s organization	0	5
Police	0	21
Court	0	17

NON PARTNER SEXUAL ASSAULT

“Other people spoil girls, sometimes just because they can.”
— Key informant, Rumbek

Overall rates of non-partner sexual assault were very high amongst adolescent girls and women alike. About one-fifth (22%) of adolescent girls in Rumbek and 23% in the Juba PoCs had already experienced an incident of non-partner sexual assault.



Previous analysis on the age of the first incidence of sexual violence showed that more than 50% of all women who had experienced non-partner sexual violence reported that this first occurred before their 20th birthday (The Global Women’s Institute and the International Rescue Committee, 2017).

Young girls of 13 years and above are forcibly raped by gangs in the street at night and in the community.”
– Key informant, Juba

As with lifetime IPV, lifetime experience of non-partner violence was also, as expected, higher amongst women. For violence experienced in the past 12 months, violence was greater amongst women, though this finding was only statistically significant in the Juba PoCs.

Table 10. Non-partner sexual violence

	JUBA POCS		RUMBEK	
	Adolescent Girls (n=346)	Adult Women (n=587)	Adolescent Girls (n=191)	Adult Women (n=566)
	%	%	%	%
Ever Sexual NPV	23*	32*	22**	39**
Past 12 Month Sexual NPV	5*	11*	5	11

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

High rates of sexual violence feed the patriarchal narrative that girls need protection, which typically manifests as discrimination against girls and marrying girls at young ages. This can cause families to choose to keep girls out of schools. In addition, while education can ultimately be a protective factor against violence, in this setting, it can also be seen as a risk with girls experiencing sexual violence either on the journey to school, from their teachers or from other pupils in the school itself.

Sexual abuse is very common, particularly between students and teachers. Teachers intimidate girls and there is a lot of derogation, abuse, verbal abuse.
– Juba Key Informant

When they go to school, they get spoiled and they won’t be married in a good way
– Female University Students, Rumbek

Girls are restricted from education simply because their parents think that if they are taken to school they will get spoiled and therefore will not bring the expected dowry to the family. The girls who grow up in cattle camps are expected to be married with a lot of cows.
– Key Informant, Rumbek

Some of our male teachers and male pupils elope with our female pupils. The young girls are taken by male pupils or male teachers as a wife without allowing her to complete school. Sometimes they are impregnated by the male teacher or pupil.
– Key Informant, Juba

Table 11. Most common perpetrators of Non Partner Sexual Assault in past 12 months, by age group

	JUBA POCS		RUMBEK	
	Adolescent Girls	Adult Women	Adolescent Girls	Adult Women
	%	%	%	%
Male Police	15	33	0	2
Member of Other Community/Tribe	35	27	37	25
Father/Step-Father	7	15	11	0
Male Armed Actor	8	13	0	2
Other Male Family Member	18*	1*	8	15
Male Friend/Neighbour/Classmate/Teachers	0	6	0	17
Male Complete Stranger	5	2	19	21

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

For adolescent girls in the Juba PoCs, the most common male perpetrators of sexual violence were members of another community and/or tribe, probably related to the on-going conflict in the country. Compared to women, adolescent girls were more likely to report other male family members (e.g., uncles, brothers, cousins) as perpetrators.

Small girls and women are raped by men. This sometimes can be by their own fathers, husbands, uncles, or neighbours.
– Women in Juba

In addition, male members in positions of authority (e.g., police, armed actors, etc.) were also commonly noted as perpetrators of violence in the PoCs. This could have had an impact on the low numbers of adolescent girls seeking services in these sites due to fear of being beaten or killed by the perpetrators.

When examining the drivers of violence against adolescent girls, age is no longer a significant predictor of non-partner violence when controlling for other factors, including experiences of conflict.

Table 12. Risk factors experienced by women and adolescent girls reporting sexual violence by non-partners in past 12 months (n=933) - Juba PoCs

	Crude OR (95%CI)	Adjusted OR (95%CI)
Age Group		
Adolescent	1.00	1.00
Women	2.12* (1.11 - 4.07)	1.04 (.50-2.17)
Education		
None	1.00	1.00
Primary	.55*(.32 - .94)	0.83 (.47-1.43)
Secondary or Higher	.20*** (.08 - .48)	.44* (.19-1.00)
Employment		
Not Working	1.00	1.00
Domestic (e.g. cleaner)	.55 (.13 - 2.24)	0.47 (.11-2.09)
Student	.16*** (.05-.45)	0.33 (.10 -1.12)
Other Work	.49 (.15 -1.66)	0.77 (.25-2.37)
Fuel Source		
Wood, Leaves, Grass	1.00	1.00
Charcoal	.29** (.13-.65)	0.50 (.27-1.17)
Village Ever Attacked		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	4.21*** (2.11- 8.40)	3.04** (1.43-6.45)
Other conflict exposure (injury, mutilation, etc.)		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	5.45*** (2.87-10.36)	4.04*** (1.43-6.45)

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

Experiences of conflict were significantly associated with experiences of non-partner sexual violence by women and adolescent girls in both sites. For girl residents of the Juba PoCs, the odds of experiencing non-partner sexual violence were three times higher if their village or community had been attacked; in Rumbek, they were almost seven times higher. In addition, girls in the Juba PoCs had almost four times the odds of experiencing non-partner violence if they had experienced some other form of direct conflict exposure (e.g. injury, mutilation, etc.). Also, overall years of education, which perhaps leads to greater levels of empowerment for women and girls, had a protective effect in Rumbek with girls who had reached secondary education less likely to experience non-partner sexual violence.

Table 13. Risk factors experienced by women and adolescent girls reporting sexual violence by non-partners (n=757) in Rumbek

	Crude OR (95%CI)	Adjusted OR (95%CI)
Age Group		
Adolescent Girl	1.00	1.00
Women	2.36 (.92-6.1)	3.48* (1.00-12.12)
Education		
None	1.00	1.00
Primary	.94 (.43-2.04)	.97 (.40-2.34)
Secondary or Higher	.28*** (.14-.56)	0.22(.09-.52)**
Employment		
Not Working	1.00	1.00
Domestic (e.g. cleaner)	.50 (.21-1.20)	.36 (.15-.85)*
Student	.53 (.25-1.14)	1.80 (.62 – 5.23)
Other Work	.43* (.19 -1.00)	0.35* (.13-.94)
Fuel Source		
Wood, Leaves, Grass	1.00	1.00
Charcoal	1.23 (.54-2.81)	2.62* (1.14-6.00)
Village Ever Attacked		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	7.23*** (2.67-19.41)	6.26*** (2.21-17.72)
Other conflict exposure (injury, mutilation, etc.)		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	2.22* (1.03-4.78)	1.67 (.74-3.86)

Statistically significant findings at: * P <= .05;** P <= .01; ***P <= .001

Overall, the conflict as well as the gender and social norms of South Sudan had a considerable influence on rates of violence against adolescent girls.



If a man is killed, girls can be taken as compensation if the family is known. This is the custom in some tribes; the girl is given as compensation.
– Key Informant, Juba

The conflict was due to inter-community violence against the girls, children and women - who are always the most affected by being raped. Their property was taken away - like cows and goats - since they are helpless and vulnerable to their attackers.
– Key Informant, Rumbek

Revenge killings target, depending on who is killed, not who the killer is - i.e., if women and girls are killed, then women and girls from the opposite site are targeted. If it is someone educated, then you will kill someone on the other side who is educated.
– Key Informant, Rumbek

After an incident of non-partner sexual violence, girls were more likely to tell someone what had happened compared to incidents of IPV. A majority of girls in both sites told someone that they had experienced this violence. In both cases, girls were most likely to tell a female member, such as a mother.

Table 14. Most common people adolescent survivors told about experiences of non-partner sexual assault

	 JUBA POCS	 RUMBEK
	N=18	N = 8
	Adolescent Girls	Adolescent Girls
	%	%
No one	43	28
Female Family Member	19	14
Women’s Group/Organization	16	0

However, issues of shame and stigma affected who girls told and if they were able to access services. Even whilst girls commonly told someone about the violence they experienced, this did not necessarily translate to access to services. About half to three-quarters of all girls who had experienced non-partner violence did not receive any formal help or support.



It will be hard for her to tell the story because there will be shame.
– Youth in the Juba PoCs

Very rare for women to report as there is a lot of stigma
– Key Informant, Rumbek

Of those that did seek services, medical care was accessed by girls in both sites. In Rumbek, girls also went to the police or a support group. In the Juba PoCs, this was not the case, and girls did not say that they went to the police – perhaps linked to the higher rates of police and armed groups perpetrating this violence or concerns about confidentiality when accessing these services.

Since the case has reached the police, everyone will know about it....She will be ashamed and feel bad because everyone will laugh at her and talk about her incident. She will be distressed, depressed and even become mad.
– Women in the Juba PoCs

Table 15. Most common services accessed by adolescents after non-partner sexual violence

	 JUBA POCS	 RUMBEK
	N=18	N = 8
	Adolescent Girls	Adolescent Girls
	% (95%CI)	% (95%CI)
Did not seek help/support	77 (50-91)	50 (20 -76)
Medical Assistance	13 (4 - 37)	19 (3-60)
United Nations or NGO	4 (0 - 24)	0 (0-0)
Mental Health Counseling	5 (0 - 33)	0 (0-0)
Support Group	0 (0-0)	11 (1-56)
Police	0 (0-0)	19 (3-60)

Violence against adolescent girls in South Sudan:

*Trends and lessons
for the region*

VIOLENCE AGAINST ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN SOUTH SUDAN: TRENDS AND LESSONS FOR THE REGION

Adolescent girls experience high levels of violence perpetrated by men in South Sudan. These findings have useful learning not only for programmers and practitioners in the country but also for neighbouring countries, such as Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya, which have experienced armed conflict and unrest as well as host a considerable number of South Sudanese refugees (UNHCR, 2018; UNHCR, 2018a; UNHCR, 2018b). Data from South Sudan indicates high acceptance of inequitable attitudes and acceptance of VAWG throughout the population. These rates are similar to other East African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda where, for example, one to two thirds of the population agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one scenario (e.g. if she burns the food). In all three countries, more women than men agree that a man is justified in beating his wife, demonstrating how patriarchal norms are internalized and accepted by women and girls throughout the region (Central Statistical Agency and ICF International, 2016 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics et al 2015; Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ICF , 2018).

In South Sudan the analysis in this report suggests that agreement with inequitable gender attitudes may be beginning to change, with adolescent girls reporting more equitable beliefs on gender attitudes and less acceptance of violence compared to older women. However, these girls are being raised in a society where patriarchal practices and perspectives on violence are deeply entrenched. Particularly in Rumbek, a majority of women hold gender inequitable views on a variety of topics, from violence-acceptance to the roles of women and men in the family. Similar findings have been found in South Sudanese refugee populations in the wider region, where communities often use violence as a tool to ensure that adolescent girls live up to cultural expectations of being a girl and womanhood (Sommer, et al., 2018). These wider cultural forces may affect girls’ ability to take actions that reflect their relatively more equitable viewpoints and may help to explain low help-seeking behaviour.

The prevalence of these gender inequitable attitudes can help entrench patriarchal practices against girls in these settings, such as the payment of bride price and early marriage of girls. Marriage in South Sudan, as well as in the wider East African region, is often described as a compact between two families rather than between individuals. As such, adolescent girls are influenced not only by their own beliefs but also by the wider views of their families and communities when it comes to marital practices. These patriarchal norms can be seen in the regional data, which shows that early marriage is an

extensive problem and that girls are disproportionately affected compared to boys. For example, in Ethiopia approximately 58% of women and 9% of men were married by the age of 18 (Central Statistical Agency and ICF International, 2016). This gender disparity is also seen in Uganda, where 42% of women were married by the age of 18 compared to only 10% of men, and in Kenya, where 29% of women were married by the age of 18 compared to 4% of men (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics et al 2015; Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ICF, 2018). Social norms change targeting the whole community (and not just women and girls) is needed to begin to affect these disparities.

Marriage is also considered an economic driver for the family. The payment of the brideprice – no matter the amount – instills a sense of ownership of the husband over the wife. Likely because bride price payment was nearly a universal practice in South Sudan, it did not come out as a significant driver of violence in the quantitative data analysis. However, qualitative data consistently pointed to the issue of bride price leading to a de-valuing of women and adolescent girls who were “bought” by their husband and thus lost their rights. This finding echoes the results of other small-scale studies from the region on bride price and how it convenes a sense of “ownership” over women and girls and may contribute to rates of IPV (Kaye et al., 2005; Hague, Thiara, & Turner, 2011). These issues of bride price, poverty and early marriage are clearly interlinked and need to be holistically addressed in order to impact early marriage rates in these contexts.

Rates of physical and sexual violence against adolescent girls are also high in South Sudan. The analysis in this report suggests that girls in South Sudan may be “doubly affected” by violence: uniquely at risk because of their status as adolescent girls and affected by an on-going conflict that contributes to increased risk of multiple forms of violence. For girls who experienced acute conflict related to the ongoing 2013 crisis and resided in the PoC sites, exposure to conflict was the biggest risk factor for IPV. This could be because of increases in poverty, stress and the cramped living conditions of the PoC sites, which were reported to compound pre-existing power differentials and increase the use of violence perpetrated by husbands against their wives or partners. For girls in Rumbek, who experienced endemic inter-communal violence, exposure to conflict was not significant, perhaps because of the high rates of violence experienced by all women and girls in this site.

Most available data on violence against women and girls from other countries in the region are from overall national estimates, which are difficult to compare to data from a smaller number of conflict-affected sites in South Sudan. However, using the data from South Sudan as a rough comparison, we see that rates of violence in the past year for conflict-affected girls in South Sudan are higher than the overall rates

in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. For example, the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that 24% of girls aged 15-19 had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner in the past year (Central Statistical Agency and ICF International, 2016): markedly less than the estimated 40% of conflict-affected girls who have experienced this violence in South Sudan. For non-partner sexual violence, rates are also high. Over 20% of adolescent girls in both sites in South Sudan already have experienced sexual violence during their lifetimes. This statistic is in line with global estimates of rates of sexual violence in complex emergencies, which have been estimated at 21% of women and girls (Vu, et al., 2014). As with IPV, the primary driver of this violence appears to be exposure to conflict. Given the widely documented use of sexual violence as a tactic in the continuing civil crisis in South Sudan and as a component of wider intercommunal conflict, these correlations are not surprising and speak to the need to reduce conflict-related sexual violence as an aspect of on-going peace building strategies.

While rates of IPV and non-partner sexual assault were high amongst adolescent girls in South Sudan, overall they were higher amongst women. However, girls also experience violence from other family members, including brothers, uncles, etc. For some forms of violence, such as lifetime experience of IPV, it would be expected that women would have experienced more violence, as they have been exposed to their husband or male partner for a much longer period and thus have been at risk for experiencing IPV perpetrated by male partners for a longer time. For IPV in the past year, the exact mechanisms that led to higher rates of violence amongst women are not clear. Of note is the relatively low sample size of partnered adolescent girls, which makes wider inferences from this data difficult. For rates of non-partner sexual violence, both lifetime and past 12 months’ rates were higher amongst women compared to adolescent girls. However, when controlling for other factors, age is no longer a significant predictor of risk of IPV (in the Juba PoCs) or sexual violence (in either site), suggesting that conflict exposure is the most important risk for both adolescents and women for experiencing both forms of violence. This finding is important not only for South Sudan but, given the vast numbers of conflict-affected adolescent girls resident throughout the region, also for practitioners and policymakers in neighbouring countries who need to consider the effect of conflict on the rates and types of violence being experienced by adolescent girls.

LESSONS FOR EAST AFRICA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

Whilst the analysis for this paper was specific to the situation of girls in South Sudan, there are many trends and lessons that can be learned for the wider East African region.

1. Whilst younger girls may hold more equitable views and be less accepting of violence, they are coming of age in societies with strong patriarchal views.

Agreement with gender inequitable attitudes and promotion of patriarchal norms remain common among populations in both South Sudan and throughout the region, particularly among rural populations. Social norms programming that targets wider norms and behaviour change in the whole community – particularly amongst those who hold power over adolescent girls (parents, husbands, etc.) – needs to be prioritized to ensure that adolescent girls are supported.

2. Adolescent girls continue to be affected by harmful traditional practices, such as bride-price payment and early marriage.

The payment of bride price is a common practice in South Sudan and wider East Africa. In some settings, this practice is a real economic incentive for the family. In others, the payment may be seen as a cultural practice that shows respect for the family of the bride or raises the family’s status in the wider community. Regardless of the reason behind the bride price payment, this act can have the consequence of commodifying adolescent girls. Specific efforts are needed to tackle the root causes of harmful traditional gender norms and reduce these practices, which may be exposing adolescent girls to greater risk of IPV.

3. Conflict in the community is also affecting violence in the home.

Ethiopia and South Sudan, as well as many other countries in the East Africa region, have been affected by years of civil and inter-communal conflicts that remain active to this day. In addition, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya are all host to considerable refugee populations. This research has shown that exposure to conflict has significant effects on rates of violence within the household –including violence perpetrated by a male partner and wider family members. Alongside the implementation of risk mitigation measures to prevent non-partner violence, there is also a need for specific efforts to prevent endemic violence such as IPV during times of conflict.

4. Violence against adolescent girls is often related to wider violence within and between communities. Efforts to acknowledge and address this violence need to be included in peace-building efforts.

Conflict-related violence (abductions for marriage, rape, etc.) often specifically targets and uniquely affects adolescent girls. These incidents can also have implications for wider community

peace and stability. Peace-building efforts need to address the specific risks faced by adolescent girls and work to design empowerment-based protection-strategies: reducing these risks will also help reduce the case for patriarchal “protection” instincts that often materialize as controlling behaviours (e.g., early marriage, removal from school) - which should also be targeted directly. Those designing and implementing programmes should work with communities to design risk mitigation and protection strategies that allow girls to continue in formal or informal education, build social networks and life-skills and develop confidence.

5. Target mothers and fathers in efforts to reduce barriers to access for services for adolescent girls and ensure adolescent girl-friendly services are available for GBV survivors.

Overall, girls were not accessing services after they experienced an incident of violence. However, after some experiences of violence (such as non-partner sexual assault), girls were often telling their female relative (often their mothers) that this violence occurred. Further efforts are needed to break down barriers to service access by ensuring the existence of adolescent-friendly services as well as by specifically targeting mothers and fathers as conduits to getting girls to services. Whilst targeting mothers is important, as girls seem to often confide in them, it is also important to target fathers in highly patriarchal societies to ensure girls are able to access needed services. Particular efforts are needed to reduce the social norms that prevent girls experiencing IPV from accessing services.

6. Improve confidentiality of GBV response services to reduce stigma and promote access to services and improve the quality of care.

Adolescent girls are not often reporting experiences of violence, particularly incidents of IPV. Participants reported that the lack of confidentiality of these services acts as a considerable barrier preventing usage. For example, police often do not follow appropriate procedures to ensure confidentiality and a lack of private rooms in medical centres or police posts forces girls to report their experiences in front of others. Girls whose experience of violence becomes known are often stigmatized in the community. This is a particular issue for unmarried girls who experience non-partner sexual assault, as her loss of virginity can affect her prospects for marriage. Confidentiality of services – particularly for police, medical and legal responses – needs to be improved to reduce some of the barriers to access for adolescent girls.

7. Further synergies between programming for child protection and violence against women programming are needed to ensure that the unique needs and experiences of adolescent girls are addressed.

A gendered perspective is needed when considering child protection programmes, as girls and boys have unique experiences and programming is required that targets the specific needs and rights of adolescent girls. In addition, GBV actors need to consider age when assessing risks and vulnerabilities of women and girls. The evidence in this report, as well as in the wider No Safe Place report, demonstrates that gendered violence begins early in the lives of girls in South Sudan. Girls are discriminated against when they are not sent to school or removed before completion in order to marry. Gendered roles within the household see girls focusing on “female” activities, such as cooking, cleaning and child rearing. Girls are also exposed to physical and sexual violence from fathers, uncles, brothers and other family members from young ages. Protection programmes specific to the unique needs and experiences of girls are required to ensure that programming appropriately addresses the underlying power dynamics that affect girls even in childhood.

8. Prioritise funding for programming that specifically targets adolescent girls to reduce violence against this population and reduces barriers to service access.

This study confirms that adolescent girls are at risk of gender-based violence during times of armed conflict. It also shows that the adolescent girls are not accessing services after they experience an incident of violence. Dedicated funding specifically for adolescent girls’ protection and empowerment programming is needed to reduce the risks of violence that they experience and improve their access to services. Multi-level approaches are required to ensure that stand-alone adolescent girls programming is linked with wider GBV response system strengthening and VAWG prevention programming as adolescent girls will not see reductions in violence and improved access to services without wider social norms’ changes that promote equality and reject VAWG.

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WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES

What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls (What Works) is an international multidisciplinary partnership led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with George Washington University's Global Women's Institute (GWI) and CARE International UK (CIUK). Additional academic and research partners include the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), the Africa Population Health Research Center (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya, and Forcier Consulting in Juba, South Sudan.



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