



**Together for girls**  
We can end sexual violence





# A GLOBAL INJUSTICE

Sexual violence against girls is a global human rights violation of vast proportions with severe health and social consequences. It can take different forms, including sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual exploitation. This scourge is not unique to one country or continent. Rich and poor nations, urban and rural populations, and women and men are all affected by the devastating impacts and long-term consequences to girls who have experienced sexual violence. The data is stark. In 2002, the World Health Organization estimated that 150 million girls under the age of 18 had experienced some form of sexual violence. Studies also indicate that as many as six out of 10 sexual assaults are committed against girls ages 15 and younger. As shocking as these numbers seem, they are likely underestimates because most cases of sexual violence are never reported to the authorities due to fear, stigma and discrimination. Millions of girls are also exploited in prostitution and pornography every year, often lured or forced into these situations through false promises and limited knowledge about the risks.

All of these acts violate the fundamental human rights and dignity of all children. Yet in too many countries, society turns a blind eye to these crimes, allowing perpetrators to go unpunished.

The consequences are profound, with immense health and emotional effects on the individual as well as broader social and economic impacts to the community. Girls who experience sexual violence are three times more likely to have an unwanted pregnancy, and girls under 15 who are pregnant are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women ages 20 to 24. Girls who experience sexual violence

are also at increased risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Sexual violence alters the life path of many girls, leading them down a road of depression, substance abuse and high-risk behaviors. Although less common, boys also experience sexual violence with similar long-term consequences. WHO estimated that 73 million boys experienced some form of sexual violence in 2002.

In many places, schools are particularly unsafe for girls. The threat of sexual violence is not only a reason some families do not send their daughters to school, but it also may affect a girl's chance of receiving an education. Girls who have experienced sexual violence can find themselves pulled from school by their families and caregivers, or they choose to leave because of fear, depression and stigma. A lack of education hinders a girl's prospects of earning a sustainable income, often perpetuating and deepening the cycle of poverty for their families. Ultimately, societies pay a deep price for these outcomes because educated women are vital to the health and prosperity of countries. One study has shown that a 1 percent increase in girls attending secondary school adds 0.3 percent in economic growth in developing countries.

Ending sexual violence will allow girls worldwide to live safer and healthier lives and fulfill their right to freedom from violence, exploitation and abuse. Ending sexual violence against girls is central to achieving justice and prosperity for us all.

Photo Left

— Displaced girl, 12, raped when fetching firewood. (Sudan)

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# A MODEL FOR CHANGE

Our response is a unique partnership, called *Together for Girls*. Launched at the Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in 2009, the partnership currently brings together private sector organizations including the Nduna Foundation, BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company), the CDC Foundation and Grupo ABC, five United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UN Women and WHO and the U.S. government through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan (PEPFAR)—which includes USAID, CDC, DOD and Peace Corps—in collaboration with the Office of Global Women's Issues of the U.S. Department of State—and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Violence Prevention in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Working with national governments and civil society, *Together for Girls* partners are taking practical and effective steps to tackle sexual violence against girls. We embrace a government led, national multisector planning process that, wherever possible, builds on the work of partners on the ground to integrate the issue of sexual violence into appropriate programs. Developing and strengthening the capacity of individuals and institutions is a core principle.

Partnership efforts focus on three pillars:

- **Conduct national surveys and collect data** to document the magnitude and impact of sexual violence, particularly focused on girls, to inform government leaders, civil society and donors.
- **Support coordinated program actions at the country level** with interventions tailored to address sexual violence focused on girls. These include national policy dialogue and legal reform, improved services for survivors, and prevention using community-based approaches and communication strategies to motivate changes in societal and gender norms and behaviors.
- **Lead global advocacy and public awareness** efforts to draw attention to the problem and promote evidence-based solutions.

Experience in Swaziland demonstrates how this approach

can make a difference. Under the direction of the Government of Swaziland, accurate national data on the scale and causes of sexual violence was collected. This research indicated that one-third of girls experienced sexual violence. This alarming finding provided a catalyst for coordinated actions by the government, civil society, international agencies and other key stakeholders. Actions included a national education campaign targeting the general public to raise awareness around the issue of sexual violence and how to prevent it, strengthening the capacity of police to respond to sexual violence through training and establishing specialized units to investigate such offenses against children, and the establishment of a child-friendly court with safe spaces for children's testimony. Similar work is now underway in Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe and expansion is planned in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

These three pillars—generating data, implementing evidence-informed programs and raising awareness of the magnitude of the problem and the promise of the solutions—will form the foundation of sustainable action in countries around the world.

## JOIN US

In light of the daunting challenge, why are we so optimistic about *Together for Girls*? Because countries increasingly see first-hand that violence against girls is diminishing the lives of their populations and holding back the development of their nations. There are clear signals of a welcome shift of attitudes within societies against sexual violence. The growing desire of governments and communities, and the increasingly strong voices of women and girls around the world to confront this reality, are encouraging signs. We must seize this opportunity. We must get this right. Ending sexual violence requires the support of organizations and individuals who are deeply concerned about the injustices girls face and are committed to driving change. Together we can build societies where girls are safe and valued. The result will be a more hopeful world for girls—and for us all.

To learn more, see our website, [www.togetherforgirls.org](http://www.togetherforgirls.org) or contact [info@togetherforgirls.org](mailto:info@togetherforgirls.org)

Photo Right

— Girl, 16, raped the year before.  
(Thailand)

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# WHAT WE KNOW

## MAGNITUDE & CONTEXT

- Sexual violence is universally condemned but much more frequent than people realize. In 2002, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 had experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence.  
(Source: Andrews G et al. Child sexual abuse. In Ezzati M, Lopez AD, Rodgers A, Murray C, eds. Comparative Quantification of Health Risks: Global and Regional Burden of Disease Attributable to Selected Major Risk Factors. Vol. 1. World Health Organization. Geneva, 2004; United Nations, United Nations Study on Violence Against Children. Geneva, 2006)
- Available data show that anywhere from 36% to 62% of reported sexual assaults are committed against girls 15 years or younger.  
(Source: Heise LL, Pitanguy J, Germain A. Violence against women: The hidden health burden. World Bank Discussion Papers, No. 255. Washington, D.C., 1994)
- Sexual violence is often hidden under a veil of disbelief, fear, stigma and shame. Data suggests that only 10% to 20% of child sexual abuse cases are reported to official authorities.  
(Source: Violence Against Children: United Nations Secretary-General's Study, 2006; Save the Children, 10 Essential Learning Points: Listen and Speak out against Sexual Abuse of Girls and Boys – Global Submission by the International Save the Children Alliance to the UN Study on Violence Against Children. Oslo, 2005)
- Based on a survey conducted in Swaziland by UNICEF, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other partners in 2007, approximately one in three girls experienced some form of sexual violence and abuse. Three-quarters of the perpetrators of sexual violence against girls were men and boys from the respondent's neighborhood, boyfriends or husbands, or male relatives.  
(Source: Reza et al, Sexual violence and its health consequences for female children in Swaziland: a cluster survey study. Lancet, 2009)

## CONSEQUENCES

- Girls who experience sexual violence are at significantly greater risk for depression, post traumatic stress syndrome, suicide, unwanted pregnancy, miscarriages and other complications during pregnancy, as well as sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. They are also more likely to experience intimate partner violence or sexual violence.  
(Source: Jewkes R, Sen P, Garcia-Moreno C. Sexual violence. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. World Report on Violence and Health. World Health Organization. Geneva, 2002)
- Child sexual abuse accounts for 7% to 8% of the mental health disease burden amongst females globally.  
(Source: Andrews G et al. Child sexual abuse. In Ezzati M, Lopez AD, Rodgers A, Murray C, eds. Comparative Quantification of Health Risks: Global and Regional Burden of Disease Attributable to Selected Major Risk Factors. Vol. 1. World Health Organization. Geneva, 2004.)
- Sexual violence has been linked to various chronic diseases including cancer, heart disease and lung disease, in part through the adoption of unhealthy behaviors after experiencing sexual violence.  
(Sources: Felitti V et al. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 1998; Danese A et al. Adverse childhood experiences and adult risk factors for age-related disease. Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 2009)

## LINK WITH HIV

- Sexual violence against girls is associated with an increased risk of HIV infection, and acquiring sexually transmitted diseases.  
(Source: Jewkes R, Sen P, Garcia-Moreno C. Sexual violence. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. World Report on Violence and Health. World Health Organization. Geneva, 2002; Jewkes et al. Intimate partner violence, relationship power inequity, and incidence of HIV infection in young women in South Africa: a cohort study. Lancet, 2010)
- When they become adults, people who were sexually abused as children are more likely to engage in behaviors known to put them at risk for HIV.  
(Source: Jewkes R, Sen P, Garcia-Moreno C. Sexual violence. In: Krug E, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi AB, Lozano R, eds. World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva, 2002)
- In the nine sub-Saharan African countries most affected by HIV, on average, three young women (ages 15 to 24) are infected with HIV for every young man; in the Caribbean, HIV prevalence is especially elevated among adolescent and young women, who tend to have infection rates significantly higher than males their own age.  
(Source: UNAIDS, 2009 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic. Geneva, 2006)
- Worldwide, HIV is the leading cause of death and disease among women of reproductive age (15 to 49).  
(Source: World Health Organization, Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda. Geneva, 2009)

Photo Left

— Indigenous girl, 17, who was sexually exploited.  
(Guatemala)



TOGETHER  
 WE CAN END  
 SEXUAL VIOLENCE  
 AND BUILD A FUTURE  
 WHERE GIRLS  
 ARE SAFE, HEALTHY  
 AND VALUED.



*Photo Right*  
 — Girl, 13, raped by neighbor  
 (Sierra Leone)