

Adolescent Girls' Safety In and Out of School: Evidence on Physical and Sexual Violence from across Sub-Saharan Africa

David K. Evans, Susannah Hares, Peter Holland, and Amina Mendez Acosta

Abstract

Media coverage and country-level studies have highlighted violence—including sexual and physical abuse—against girls in schools as an important problem in need of immediate attention. This study characterizes rates of physical and sexual violence against adolescent girls and compares rates of violence against girls who are enrolled versus unenrolled in school, across countries that together represent 80 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's girls aged 15–19. This study uses Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which capture basic data on physical and sexual violence, together with data from the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS) in 6 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which capture a wider array of sexual abuses and the location where the violence took place. The analysis shows high rates of violence overall: 28.8 percent report having experienced physical or sexual violence. However, in none of the twenty countries do adolescent girls enrolled in school report a statistically significantly higher likelihood of having been sexually assaulted than girls not enrolled in schools. This pattern of results is robust to analyzing data over differing timeframes, to the inclusion of a range of control variables, and to analysis using different sub-groups. Girls face significant rates of physical and sexual violence whether they are enrolled in school or not. These findings underline the importance of confronting violence against girls both in school and in the community, with tailored programs appropriate to each setting.

Keywords: gender-based violence; education; girls' education

JEL codes: I10; I20; J16; O10

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Introduction

The benefits of educating girls both to girls themselves—through higher earnings (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018), delayed fertility (Duflo et al., 2021), and reduced adolescent marriages (Boahen & Yamauchi, 2018; Masuda & Yamauchi, 2020)—and to the people around them—with better outcomes for their children (Akresh et al., 2021)—are clear, compelling, and persistent. While much attention around girls’ education has focused on improving access, boosting learning (Evans & Yuan, 2021), and preparing girls for a school-to-work transition (Rose, 2021), recent studies in individual countries have documented sexual abuse of girls in school as an important issue (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Nlewem & Amodu, 2017; Steiner et al., 2021). News articles have likewise documented many cases of sexual abuse of girls by teachers across countries (All Africa, 2021; Amakali & Siririka, 2021; Juma, 2021). Sexual abuse in schools is both an inherent abuse of human rights that no individual should have to experience, and it is also an instrumental problem in that it can reduce the willingness of girls and their families to invest in their education (Bisika et al., 2009; Borker, 2020). Physical violence—including corporal punishment—is also associated with worse development outcomes (Cuartas, 2021).

However, sexual abuse is not unique to schools, and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the risk that girls face in their homes and communities (UN Women, 2021). The relationship between violence against girls and schooling may be complicated. On the one hand, school attendance exposes girls to potential threats from teachers, school staff, and even peers, both at school and during the commute. Alternatively, not attending school means that girls may marry or enter the workforce younger, with the risk of intimate partner violence in the former case and violence from bosses and coworkers in the latter. Furthermore, education may affect the longer term trajectory of violence; one study in Uganda found that higher grade attainment reduced women’s lifetime experience of sexual violence (Behrman et al., 2017). Understanding the relative risks across school and non-school settings can inform the types of policies and programs that can contribute to that goal.

In this study, we use data from multiple sources to characterize the prevalence of sexual and physical violence against adolescent girls both in and out of school across several low- and middle-income countries. Our findings demonstrate the need for concerted effort both in and out of schools to keep adolescent girls safe. Specifically, we present evidence from two collections of nationally representative surveys—the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS)—to document violence against adolescent girls (age 15 to 19), both enrolled and unenrolled in school. For girls who are enrolled in school and report having experienced violence, we present evidence on where they report having experienced violence. We use Demographic and Health Surveys from the 20 most populous African countries—representing 81 percent of the population of 15–19 year old girls on the continent. The challenge of violence against adolescent girls is not unique to African countries, but we focus on Sub-Saharan Africa for two other reasons. First, there is a high concentration of violence against women in Africa: recent numbers from the World Health Organization place Sub-Saharan Africa first in intimate partner violence over

the last twelve months, and a close second to South Asia in lifetime intimate partner violence (WHO, on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence Against Women Estimation and Data (VAW-IAWGED), 2021). Second, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been dramatically expanding access to secondary education (Evans & Mendez Acosta, 2021), with more planned in the coming years, so understanding the dynamics of violence both in and out of school is crucial.

Across these countries, 28.8 percent of girls in that age group report having experienced physical or sexual violence previously. Once one adjusts for basic differences between girls who are enrolled in school and those who are not enrolled in school (i.e., rurality, age, parental education, and household assets), enrolled girls are slightly less likely (1.1 percentage points) to report having experienced violence. That difference is driven by differences in reported sexual violence. Country-by-country, girls enrolled in school are only more likely than unenrolled girls to report ever having experienced physical or sexual violence in one out of the twenty countries. That number remains the same if one restricts to violence in the last twelve months. In both cases, the difference is driven entirely by differences in reporting physical violence, not sexual violence. This pattern of results is consistent—with almost no exceptions—if we restrict the analysis to violence that has occurred in the last 12 months, if we focus on the accumulated risk of violence measured against total years of schooling, if we focus on slightly older girls, or if we restrict the sample only to girls who have never been married. While the DHS have the advantage of being available for a wide range of countries, they have limitations for this question. They use a relatively narrow definition of sexual violence, they do not identify where the violence took place, and they do not identify whether the girl was enrolled at the time that the violence took place.

We next examine the VACS, which report the proportion of girls who experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. We focus on girls aged 15–19 to enhance comparability with our DHS analysis. On average across the six countries, 17 percent of girls report at least one incident of sexual violence in the past year. This number is unsurprisingly lower than the number in the DHS, since it is restricted to sexual violence and to incidents in the past year. Among those who report having experienced sexual violence, on average 10 percent of incidents took place at school, ranging from 2 percent in Zimbabwe to 18 percent in Kenya. We discuss limitations to our approach—including the fact that these numbers are likely underestimates overall, given hesitation to report violence in surveys, and potentially omitted factors that affect both education and the risk of violence—in our methods section.

These results demonstrate that violence against adolescent girls is a pressing problem both in school and in the community. In the discussion section of the paper, we lay out potential courses of action to reduce violence in both contexts. While this study focuses on low- and middle-income countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, this problem is not unique to those contexts. Previous analysis demonstrates, for example, that overall rates of sexual violence against minors are uncorrelated with the income level of the country (Crawford & Hares, 2020).

This study adds to previous cross-country analysis on this topic. A recent systematic review estimated that one billion children (age 2–17) had likely experienced violence over the course of a single year (Hillis et al., 2016). A previous analysis of VACS from six countries found that the risk of violence against girls increased with age in five countries (Palermo et al., 2019). A study in Ghana, Kenya, and Mozambique shows the wide range of types of violence that students experience in school—ranging from whipping and beating to peeping and sex in exchange for goods—and that most *sexual* violence at schools is perpetrated by peers, with less (but still some) perpetrated by teachers (Parkes & Heslop, 2011). A meta-analysis covering 171 countries, mostly focused on physical and emotional violence, reported limited data on violence perpetrated by teachers (Devries et al., 2018). This study contributes by combining data from a wide range of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, two data sources, and demonstrating rates of violence both in schools and outside of schools (in communities, at home, and in the workplace), both to highlight relative risks of schooling and the potential importance of understanding and intervening against violence on both fronts.

Methods

Analysis of the Demographic and Health Surveys

We used the most recent Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) of the twenty most populous countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with the relevant data: Angola (2015/2016), Burkina Faso (2010), Cameroon (2018/2019), Chad (2014/2015), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2014), Côte d'Ivoire (2012), Ethiopia (2015), Ghana (2008), Kenya (2014), Malawi (2011/2012), Mali (2018), Mozambique (2011), Nigeria (2018), Rwanda (2014/2015), Senegal (2019), South Africa (2016), Tanzania (2015/2016), Uganda (2016), Zambia (2019), and Zimbabwe (2015) (see Appendix Figure A1). The DHS are nationally representative household surveys that cover a wide range of development indicators, including a prevalence of domestic violence section from individual surveys conducted with women ages 15 to 49 years old. (We would include younger adolescents—ages 13 and 14—but these are not surveyed by the DHS.) For this study, we looked at the incidence of having experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by family members, friends, and figures of authority for the sample of girls ages 15 to 19 years old, separated by current attendance in school. Girls who are currently married or living with a partner, and girls who are widowed, divorced, separated or have lived with a partner before, answer additional questions on physical and sexual violence specifically perpetrated by current or former partner/husband. We report both the rates of ever having experienced violence before and rates of having experienced violence in the past 12 months across the sample. We also regress the probability of having ever experienced physical violence, sexual violence, or either on total years of schooling. (For more details on the survey years and the variables used from the DHS, see Appendix Section A.) To enhance comparability across observations, we control for girls' age as well as other demographic characteristics such as type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets. Country-level tabulations and regressions use sample weights and the pooled tabulations and regressions use denormalized weights (Ren, 2013).

Analysis of the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys

We also explored the Violence Against Children and Youth Surveys (VACS), available through the Together for Girls partnership for countries in sub-Saharan Africa with surveys in a similar time period: Kenya (2010), Malawi (2013), Nigeria (2014), Tanzania (2009), Zambia (2014), and Zimbabwe (2017) (Together for Girls, 2017) (see Appendix Figure A1). VACS are nationally representative household surveys that interview male and female participants ages 13 to 24 years old to identify prevalence and context of childhood violence including physical, emotional and sexual violence. The surveys also identify where the most recent violence has taken place (e.g., at home, in school) and if this violence happened in the past 12 months. (For more details on the survey years and the variables used, see Appendix Section B.) We use the sub-sample of girls age 15 to 19 years old to enhance comparability with our DHS analysis. Sample weights are used for all country-level and pooled tabulations and regressions.

While these two datasets have different coverage and different measures of violence, we include both because together, they provide a richer picture of violence against adolescent girls in and out of school. Each of these datasets and approaches has strengths and limitations. The DHS data have large samples for many countries, but the reports do not report the location of the experience, so these results do not indicate the relative risk of violence at school versus outside of school. The definition of sexual violence is quite narrow in the DHS data; it only includes being “forced” to engage in sexual acts (and so might exclude unwanted touching or peeping, for example). Furthermore, girls not currently enrolled in school may have experienced sexual violence when they were still attending school; indeed, a small percentage of unenrolled girls report having experienced violence from teachers, likely while previously enrolled. The VACS have data for a more selective set of countries but do ask where the violence takes place. They also include a broader definition of sexual violence, which is why we focus on sexual violence reports in our analysis of the VACS data.

Limitations of this analytical approach

Both sets of surveys are limited by the challenges inherent in collecting data about violence. Different interpretations of what constitutes violence and different social norms on what violence is “acceptable,” as well as respondents’ fears about confidentiality, make it challenging to collect accurate information from respondents about violence (Devries et al., 2016; Tanton et al., 2021). With both surveys, respondents may be more likely to underreport sexual or physical violence (e.g., from embarrassment or fear) than to overreport, so that even these striking estimates are likely underestimates of the problem. To our knowledge, there are no conclusive estimates of whether enrolled or unenrolled girls in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to report violence, or whether girls are more likely to report violence at school versus violence in other contexts. Two points merit consideration on this topic. First, previous analysis of the VACS in several countries suggest that children enrolled in school were more likely to informally disclose or to know where to seek help in the face of violence in most countries (Pereira et al., 2020). An extrapolation from that would suggest

that our reports from unenrolled girls may be more likely to be underreports. Second, both the DHS and the VACS are household surveys, so girls may be less likely to report violence by household members relative to violence that takes place at school. Both of these points would signal that, if anything, reports of violence outside of school may be more underreported than those of violence in school.

Neither data set can be used to infer causal estimates of the impact of school enrollment on violence, for multiple reasons. First, the experience of violence could and likely does affect school enrollment and participation, just as school enrollment could affect violence. Some of the evidence on this suggests that the relationships are not always straightforward (Psaki et al., 2017). Second, other factors could drive both school enrollment and the experience of violence. For example, youth from higher income households may have higher enrollment rates and also may have more resources to protect them from violence (Gentz et al., 2021). In that case, a negative association between school enrollment and violence would not reflect the impact of enrollment on violence but rather the impact of wealth on both enrollment and violence. In the absence of the combination of an experiment increasing school participation and historical data on violence in and out of schools, confidently inferring a causal impact is difficult. Our controls for type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets all help, but they cannot entirely resolve these issues simply because some differences that could drive both enrollment and violence may not be measured in cross-country household data sets.

In supplementary analysis, we examine the association (with controls) only for young women who have never been married or lived with a partner, since those who marry young may be different in many ways than those who do not. The pattern of results is similar. The reason we do remove married young women in our primary analysis is that school enrollment can delay adolescent marriage (Duflo et al., 2021; Psaki et al., 2021), so by removing young women who have married from the sample, one is potentially removing one of the protective benefits of education. This is particularly true if girls in adolescent marriages are more likely to experience violence.

Results

Demographic and Health Survey Analysis

We first report rates of physical and sexual violence against adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa's twenty most populous countries using data from the Demographic and Health Surveys. Across the countries, 28.8 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 report having experienced physical or sexual violence ever (Table 1), ranging from 14.0 percent in Ethiopia to 44.6 percent in Uganda. Once we adjust the averages for country, age, parental education, socioeconomic status, and urban/rural status, enrolled girls are 1.1 percentage points less likely to report having experienced violence. Likewise, after adjusting for covariates, only five in twenty countries report statistically significant differences between enrolled and unenrolled girls. In Chad, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, enrolled girls are less likely to

report having been victims of violence; in Nigeria, enrolled girls are more likely to report having been victims of violence. This is driven entirely by reports of physical violence, not sexual violence. To recap, in 75 percent of countries, enrollment does not predict having experienced violence: in 20 percent of countries (four countries), enrolled girls are less likely to report violence, and in 5 percent (one country), enrolled girls are more likely to report violence. While it is certainly true that enrolled and unenrolled girls vary in many respects, our controls capture some of the variation. The objective is not to provide a causal estimate of the impact of attending school, but to report risk rates for these different groups.

If we break down physical violence and sexual violence, we observe that 26.0 percent of girls report having experienced physical violence (Appendix Table A1) and 7.6 percent report having experienced sexual violence (Appendix Table A2). Adjusting for covariates, we observe no significant difference in the likelihood of experiencing physical violence between enrolled and unenrolled girls; enrolled girls are 3.3 percentage points less likely to report sexual violence than unenrolled girls (with 99 percent statistical significance). If we restrict the sample to only those girls who have never married or lived with a partner, we observe no significant difference in the likelihood of experiencing either physical violence or sexual violence—on average—between enrolled and unenrolled girls (Appendix Table A3 and Appendix Table A4). There are a couple of country exceptions: in Angola and Mozambique, once one restricts the sample to never married girls, the likelihood of sexual violence is significantly higher among those attending school. In Angola, the likelihood of physical violence is significantly higher among those attending school. As discussed in the methods section, this specification makes less sense if education plays a protective role against early marriage. Both Angola and Mozambique have high rates of child marriage (52 percent and 57 percent, respectively), albeit not the highest in our sample: Burkina Faso, Chad, and Nigeria all have higher rates (Yaya et al., 2019). These results suggest that conditional on remaining unmarried, girls in school are at no higher risk of violence on average, but with exceptions.

To counter the concern that the violence may have taken place long ago, we also examine sexual or physical violence reported to have taken place in the last 12 months. 16.3 percent of girls overall report experiencing physical or sexual violence in the past year, with no statistically significant difference between enrolled girls and unenrolled girls (Appendix Table A5). In only one country (Ghana) do enrolled girls report statistically significantly higher rates of violence in the last twelve months. This is driven entirely by reports of physical violence. On average, across countries, 14.5 percent of girls report having experienced physical violence in the past year, with no significant difference between enrolled and unenrolled girls (Appendix Table A6), and 4.0 percent report having experienced recent sexual violence, with enrolled girls 2.5 percentage points less likely to report sexual violence than unenrolled girls (with 99 percent statistical significance) (Appendix Table A7). We also find that girls with more years of schooling are slightly more likely to have experienced physical violence and slightly less likely to have experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months (Appendix Table A8).

For girls who have experienced sexual violence, we report the distribution of perpetrators of the first incident of sexual violence (Table 2). Overall, the most common perpetrators are boyfriends (19.3 percent), friends (14.3 percent), strangers (13.9 percent), and family members (8.4 percent). Teachers are much less likely to be named, at 2.1 percent.¹ This evidence again suggests a broad distribution of perpetrators of violence against girls, both in and out of school, calling for action on both fronts.

While the focus of this paper is on adolescent girls, we do examine the pattern for 20–24 year old girls to ensure that we do not observe a major shift in pattern for older girls. We observe the same pattern that on average, 20–24 year old girls enrolled in school are less likely to be exposed to physical or sexual violence than girls who are not enrolled in school. This is true whether we simply compare enrolled to unenrolled girls with controls (Appendix Table A9) or if we restrict to enrolled girls who are still in secondary school compared to unenrolled girls who have not completed secondary school (Appendix Table A10).

Violence Against Children and Youth Survey Analysis

As discussed earlier, the DHS have a relatively restrictive definition of sexual violence and does not identify the location of the violence. The VACS data show much higher rates of sexual violence, likely because it includes a wider range of behaviors: unwanted touch, attempted unwanted sex, and pressured sex, as well as physically forced sex (Table 3). Across the six countries, 16.7 percent of 15–19 year old girls report at least one incident of sexual violence in the past year. The number ranges from 5.9 percent in Zimbabwe to 27.7 percent in Malawi. Across countries, unwanted touch and attempted unwanted sex are the two most common types of sexual violence, although which is most commonly reported varies across countries. Fewer girls report physically forced sex (with the max being 3.7 percent in Nigeria) or pressured sex (with the max being 2.2 in Malawi). Of those who experienced sexual violence, 10.2 percent reported having experienced that violence at school. For girls who are currently enrolled in school, that number rises to 14.4 percent (Appendix Table A11), rising as high as 28.3 percent in Kenya. Official reports of sexual violence to police or health care systems are dramatically lower even than survey reports in the DHS or in the VACS, and survey reports themselves may be underestimates (Palermo et al., 2014; Pereira et al., 2020).

Discussion

When one in four adolescent girls report having experienced violence, and one in seven report having experienced sexual violence in the previous year, that indicates a crisis. These data show us that girls are vulnerable to violence both in school and in other contexts, suggesting there is an urgent need for reforms to allow girls to study and to live their lives

¹ Evidence from another data set in another set of countries shows that in some countries—e.g., Senegal and Zambia—students report high rates of sexual harassment by teachers (Crawford & Hares, 2020).

safely. The majority of the countries in our sample have national policies in place to reduce violence against children among different fronts, but some still lack policies and most of the countries that do have them in place only have partial funding available (Appendix Table A12). Furthermore, there is no simple association between the existence of these policies and levels of violence (Appendix Table A13).² Girls need to be in school given the host of positive outcomes associated with more years of schooling. Indeed, there is cross-country evidence that increased schooling is associated with a lower tolerance for violence among both women and men (Crawford & Hares, 2020).

Beyond keeping girls in school, we propose that there is a need to know more, to do more, and to test more. First, countries need to know more about the scope of violence, both nationally and in sub-national regions. Many countries do not gather any systematic data on violence against children and youth, and fewer still gather data on violence in schools (Crawford & Hares, 2020; UNICEF, 2015). Without such data, it will be impossible to know whether the situation is improving. To support countries to be able to gather accurate data, more methodological work to examine the best way to allow respondents to safely disclose in surveys—including in cost-effective surveys that can be implemented at large scale—is needed. Second, countries need to do more. Too many countries—both rich and poor—fail to have comprehensive policies to combat violence against adolescent girls or to enforce those policies. There are tested interventions, both school-based and community-based, that have been shown to reduce violence (Kerr-Wilson et al., 2020). The lack of effective recourse may in part explain why women are often unlikely to report violence through official channels: one analysis of data from 24 countries estimates that gender-based violence is underreported in health systems data or police reports by anywhere between 11 and 128 times, depending on the country (Palermo et al., 2014). International organizations can play a supporting role (Raman et al., 2021), while being careful to avoid pushing for replication of interventions from other contexts without appropriate local adaptation (Wessells, 2021). Third, countries—with support from the international community—need to test more. Recent reviews of effective interventions to prevent violence against adolescents reveals major knowledge gaps (Crooks et al., 2019; Devries & Naker, 2021). Even as countries take action, it is worth investing in evaluation to understand which policies prove most effective.

While much of the discussion by policymakers focuses on violence toward girls, boys are often vulnerable to as much—and in some contexts, more—violence as girls (Ruto, 2009). Analysis of VACS data in four countries (Cambodia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Swaziland) suggests there is no gender difference in the overall incidence of childhood violence (Ravi & Ahluwalia, 2017). Tackling violence against boys is an urgent priority too, and better data is needed on the differential vulnerabilities and solutions to violence against boys and girls.

² This simple association should be taken as suggestive only. It does not account for the timing of when policies were implemented.

Just as girls benefit from school in many ways, boys also experience returns to education. Research further suggests that those who justify intimate partner violence are more likely to have experienced violence themselves (Ravi & Ahluwalia, 2017), and boys who have completed secondary education are less likely to be perpetrators of violence (Abramsky et al., 2011). These are correlations, but they suggest that keeping boys in school may be one tool to help reduce violence against women and girls.

None of this will come for free. The prevalence of violence in schools is far too great, and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency by education donors and policymakers. However, eliminating violence in schools alone will not make girls safe; action at both the school and community levels is essential. It will require much stronger financial and political commitment, alongside a sustained, coordinated effort to tackle the factors that make girls unsafe.

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Tables

Table 1. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who experienced physical or sexual violence previously

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs		
Cross-country average	28.8%	21,545	30.6%	12,222	27.0%	9,268	−3.7%***	−1.1%
Angola	23.7%	1,980	22.4%	868	24.3%	1,112	1.8%	2.5%
Burkina Faso	20.6%	1,815	18.8%	1,396	25.8%	413	7.1%**	1.6%
Cameroon	31.7%	1,312	33.6%	568	30.5%	744	−3.1%	0.0%
Chad	20.5%	777	23.1%	601	15.1%	165	−7.9%**	−12.4%**
Congo Dem Rep	42.5%	1,143	46.4%	589	39.8%	544	−6.6%	−4.3%
Cote d'Ivoire	32.8%	990	33.6%	720	31.1%	254	−2.5%	−6.3%
Ethiopia	14.0%	976	17.7%	501	10.9%	475	−6.9%*	−3.7%
Ghana	35.6%	380	35.1%	194	35.8%	184	0.7%	3.0%
Kenya	34.7%	772	40.9%	287	31.8%	479	−9.1%*	−8.0%
Malawi	29.4%	1,080	33.6%	565	25.7%	515	−7.9%**	−3.6%
Mali	36.6%	635	40.5%	478	28.3%	157	−12.2%**	−10.2%
Mozambique	24.5%	1,212	24.0%	744	25.2%	468	1.2%	3.4%
Nigeria	34.4%	1,529	31.4%	880	37.7%	649	6.3%*	7.0%*
Rwanda	32.6%	378	41.2%	174	25.3%	201	−15.9%***	−11.8%**
Senegal	20.1%	364	18.4%	182	21.9%	182	3.6%	−0.6%
South Africa	14.4%	233	14.3%	76	14.5%	157	0.2%	0.1%
Tanzania	27.3%	1,533	31.2%	1,005	19.7%	527	−11.4%***	−6.1%*
Uganda	44.6%	1,638	47.5%	935	41.6%	703	−6.0%*	−1.5%
Zambia	23.9%	1,612	26.9%	847	21.2%	765	−5.7%**	−2.9%
Zimbabwe	31.3%	1,186	38.0%	612	25.4%	574	−12.6%***	−9.9%**

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse and forced unwanted sexual acts by partners or others. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Table 2. Distribution of perpetrators of first sexual violence among girls ages 15–19 years old who report having experienced sexual violence previously

	Total	Did not attend school the past year	Attended school the past year
Observations	1666	1142	516
former or current husband	4.1%	6.0%	3.3%
former or current boyfriend	19.3%	16.1%	21.8%
family members	8.4%	6.0%	14.5%
friends	14.3%	9.6%	22.5%
teacher	2.1%	1.4%	2.0%
employer	0.8%	1.0%	0.3%
stranger	13.9%	8.3%	23.3%
others	5.8%	6.2%	6.3%
did not report perpetrator	31.3%	45.4%	5.9%

Note: We use the DHS surveys for the same set of countries in Table 1. We use denormalized weights for this tabulation. The sum of the observations for those who did not attend school (1142) and those who attended school (516) are not equal to the total observations (1,666) because some of the observations do not have school attendance recorded.

Table 3. Proportion of 15–19 year old girls who experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months

Country	Year of survey	Obs	At least one incident of sexual violence	Types of sexual violence				% of incidents that happened in school (among those who experienced violence)
				Unwanted touch	Attempted unwanted sex	Physically forced sex	Pressured sex	
Cross-country average			16.7%	9.0%	9.3%	2.1%	1.7%	10.2%
Kenya	2010	462	13.6%	10.4%	3.8%	0.9%	1.8%	18.1%
Malawi	2013	401	27.7%	11.9%	17.6%	1.9%	2.2%	9.7%
Nigeria	2014	665	20.8%	12.7%	12.7%	3.7%	1.7%	13.7%
Tanzania	2009	882	15.7%	7.5%	7.3%	2.2%	2.0%	10.6%
Zambia	2014	348	16.7%	9.2%	11.0%	2.4%	1.6%	7.1%
Zimbabwe	2017	3486	5.9%	2.1%	3.2%	1.6%	0.9%	1.7%

Note: We used the most recent publicly available Violence Against Children Survey from Together for Girls partnership. The survey asks where the incident of sexual violence occurred, and respondents may say school regardless of enrollment status. Each country tabulation uses sample weights. The cross-country average is the simple average of the countries in the table.

Appendix

Appendix Section A: Detail on the data used from the DHS

This study uses the DHS survey rounds listed in the table below. The DHS domestic violence module includes data on women's experience of physical and sexual violence in the past and in the last 12 months preceding the survey. We follow the DHS guidelines in constructing the variables that report any form of sexual violence and physical violence from spouses and other potential abusers (Croft et al., 2018). In particular, we consider a respondent as having experienced sexual violence previously if the respondent answered yes to one of the following: (i) ever forced to perform unwanted sexual acts (d125), and if currently or previously married or living with a husband, (ii) ever been physically forced into unwanted sex by husband/partner (d105h), (iii) ever been forced into other unwanted sexual acts by husband/partner (d105i), (iv) ever been physically forced to perform sexual acts respondent didn't want to by husband/partner (d105k), (v) ever been physically forced to have sex or to perform sexual acts by previous husband/s (d130b), or (vi) ever forced to have sex by anyone other than husband/partner in last 12 months (d124). The survey then follows up with a question the frequency of the abuse in the last 12 months. The equivalent structure is followed for the construction of the physical violence indicators.

Not all DHS survey rounds contain the domestic violence module. For example, Ghana's 2014 survey does not have a domestic violence section, but its 2008 survey round does and is therefore the survey round used in the analysis. Benin, Guinea, Madagascar, Niger, Somalia and Sudan were all originally included in the top twenty most populous countries in the region but have been omitted because their survey rounds lacked the domestic violence module.

All averages are simple arithmetic averages with weights. All country-level tabulations and regressions use DHS-provided sample weights (d005) to adjust for differences in probability of selection due to the sampling strategy and to correct for differential response rates (Croft et al., 2018). Tabulations and regression across all countries use de-normalized weights calculated by dividing the sample weight by the survey sampling fraction which is the ratio of the number of respondents in the survey divided by the total number of women aged 15–49 years old in the country at the time of the survey.

In addition to reporting simple difference in the experience of violence between enrolled and unenrolled girls, we also adjust for various types of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference (Table 1 and Appendix Tables A1 to A7).

Finally, we use all the observations in the sample selected and interviewed for the domestic violence module including non-responses as the denominator following DHS guidelines in constructing domestic violence statistics (Croft et al., 2018).

Appendix Table Section A: DHS survey rounds used in this study

Country	Year of survey	Survey N	Population during year of survey (Female, 15–49 yo)	Household survey sampling fraction
Angola	2015/2016	14,379	6,349,429	0.00226461
Burkina Faso	2010	17,087	3,579,389	0.00477372
Cameroon	2018/2019	14,677	6,082,956	0.00241281
Chad	2014/2015	17,719	2,988,648	0.00592877
Congo Dem Rep	2013/2014	18,827	15,801,739	0.00119145
Cote d'Ivoire	2011/2012	10,060	4,858,181	0.00207073
Ethiopia	2015	15,683	24,084,768	0.00065116
Ghana	2008	4,916	5,862,384	0.00083857
Kenya	2014	31,079	11,735,855	0.00264821
Malawi	2011/2012	10,060	3,462,900	0.00290508
Mali	2018	10,519	4,237,622	0.00248229
Mozambique	2011	13,745	5,677,551	0.00242094
Nigeria	2018	41,821	44,911,148	0.00093119
Rwanda	2014/2015	13,497	2,774,530	0.00486461
Senegal	2019	8,649	4,001,600	0.00216139
South Africa	2016	8,514	15,360,524	0.00055428
Tanzania	2015/2016	13,266	11,999,275	0.00110557
Uganda	2016	18,506	9,267,071	0.00199696
Zambia	2019	8,649	4,349,192	0.00198865
Zimbabwe	2015	9,555	3,593,163	0.00265922

Appendix Section B: Detail on the data used from the VACS

We use the Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (VACS) datasets from the Together for Girls partnership, a global consortium of national governments, UN agencies and private actors to end violence against girls especially sexual violence. The datasets for Kenya (2010), Malawi (2013), Nigeria (2014), Tanzania (2009), Zambia (2014), and Zimbabwe (2017) are available by request and all country reports can be downloaded through their website (Together for Girls, 2017).

The VACS datasets contain several sets of indicators for physical, emotional and sexual violence. For this study, we use indicators for having experienced unwanted sexual touch (“Has anyone ever touched you in a sexual way without your permission, but did not try and force you to have sex?”), attempted but not completed sex (“Has anyone ever tried to make you have sex against your will but did not succeed?”), forced sex (“Has anyone ever physically forced you to have sex and did succeed?”), pressured sex (“Has anyone ever pressured you to have sex, through harassment, threats or tricks and did succeed?”) and whether any of these incidents happened in the past 12 months. For each type of violence, we use a follow-up question on the location of the incident (“Where were you when this happened to you?”) to identify which violence takes place in the school versus other locations (victim’s home, perpetrator’s home, public transportation, etc.) reported in the Appendix Table A8.

(Questions cited here as examples are from the Zambia 2014 survey round (Together for Girls, 2014)). The surveys cover males and females age 13- to 24-year-old. For this, study, we use the sample of 15 to 19 years old girls for comparability with the DHS analysis.

All country-level tabulations and regressions use sample weights to adjust for differences in probability of selection due to the sampling strategy and to correct for differential response rates.

Similar to the DHS treatment of non-response, we include non-response in the denominator but not in the numerator.

Appendix tables

Appendix Table A1. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who experienced physical violence previously

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	26.0%	21,545	27.1%	12,222	24.8%	9,268	-2.3%**	-0.3%
Angola	22.2%	1,980	21.9%	868	22.3%	1,112	0.4%	0.7%
Burkina Faso	20.5%	1,815	18.7%	1,396	25.8%	413	7.1%**	1.6%
Cameroon	28.7%	1,312	30.5%	568	27.6%	744	-2.9%	0.1%
Chad	17.9%	777	19.5%	601	14.9%	165	-4.7%	-9.5%*
Congo Dem Rep	38.2%	1,143	40.5%	589	36.6%	544	-3.9%	-2.4%
Cote d'Ivoire	32.6%	990	33.2%	720	31.1%	254	-2.1%	-6.4%
Ethiopia	12.6%	976	16.2%	501	9.7%	475	-6.5%*	-4.7%
Ghana	32.3%	380	30.5%	194	33.8%	184	3.4%	5.0%
Kenya	31.6%	772	34.4%	287	30.0%	479	-4.4%	-4.4%
Malawi	23.0%	1,080	25.6%	565	20.7%	515	-4.8%	-2.7%
Mali	33.6%	635	37.4%	478	25.5%	157	-11.9%**	-11.4%*
Mozambique	22.4%	1,212	21.5%	744	23.7%	468	2.2%	6.0%*
Nigeria	31.8%	1,529	28.4%	880	35.6%	649	7.2%**	7.3%*
Rwanda	24.4%	378	29.8%	174	20.2%	201	-9.7%*	-7.2%
Senegal	19.8%	364	17.7%	182	21.9%	182	4.2%	-0.4%
South Africa	13.8%	233	14.3%	76	13.6%	157	-0.7%	-1.1%
Tanzania	21.9%	1,533	24.6%	1,005	16.5%	527	-8.2%***	-2.3%
Uganda	41.4%	1,638	43.2%	935	39.5%	703	-3.7%	-0.7%
Zambia	20.9%	1,612	23.6%	847	18.5%	765	-5.2%*	-2.4%
Zimbabwe	27.9%	1,186	33.5%	612	23.0%	574	-10.5%***	-8.6%**

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse by partners or others. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A2. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who experienced sexual violence previously

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	7.6%	21,545	9.7%	12,222	5.5%	9,268	−4.2%***	−3.3%***
Angola	5.2%	1,980	4.8%	868	5.4%	1,112	0.7%	1.0%
Burkina Faso	0.3%	1,815	0.3%	1,396	0.1%	413	−0.3%*	−0.2%
Cameroon	7.7%	1,312	10.6%	568	5.9%	744	−4.7%**	−4.4%*
Chad	5.2%	777	7.3%	601	0.3%	165	−7.1%***	−8.4%***
Congo Dem Rep	16.4%	1,143	20.2%	589	13.8%	544	−6.5%	−3.6%
Cote d'Ivoire	1.3%	990	1.9%	720	0.0%	254	−1.9%***	−1.5%**
Ethiopia	3.5%	976	6.3%	501	1.2%	475	−5.1%***	−4.0%*
Ghana	8.1%	380	10.4%	194	5.9%	184	−4.6%	−4.3%
Kenya	6.5%	772	10.4%	287	4.8%	479	−5.6%	−3.9%
Malawi	13.5%	1,080	17.4%	565	10.1%	515	−7.3%**	−5.1%
Mali	9.6%	635	11.6%	478	5.5%	157	−6.1%**	−1.9%
Mozambique	5.2%	1,212	6.5%	744	3.2%	468	−3.3%**	−3.8%**
Nigeria	7.6%	1,529	9.5%	880	5.5%	649	−4.1%***	−3.1%*
Rwanda	14.5%	378	23.3%	174	6.9%	201	−16.4%***	−12.5%***
Senegal	2.1%	364	3.2%	182	1.0%	182	−2.2%	−2.2%
South Africa	2.3%	233	1.5%	76	2.7%	157	1.2%	1.3%
Tanzania	11.2%	1,533	13.5%	1,005	6.6%	527	−6.9%***	−6.4%***
Uganda	9.9%	1,638	13.4%	935	6.3%	703	−7.1%***	−4.9%***
Zambia	6.7%	1,612	8.4%	847	5.2%	765	−3.3%**	−2.5%
Zimbabwe	9.5%	1,186	13.7%	612	5.9%	574	−7.8%***	−6.7%***

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for being forced to perform unwanted sexual acts by partners or others. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Appendix Table A3. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who have never been married or partnered and who have experienced physical violence previously

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	24.0%	14,484	23.4%	5,676	24.4%	8,788	1.0%	1.8%
Angola	19.9%	1,361	13.6%	416	21.7%	945	8.1%***	7.4%**
Burkina Faso	24.3%	1,020	23.5%	625	25.8%	392	2.3%	0.1%
Cameroon	27.0%	965	24.3%	250	27.9%	715	3.6%	3.6%
Chad	14.3%	382	15.1%	235	13.4%	147	−1.6%	−8.5%
Congo Dem Rep	34.3%	724	33.5%	207	34.7%	515	1.2%	−0.3%
Cote d'Ivoire	32.9%	678	34.3%	425	30.9%	245	−3.4%	−6.3%
Ethiopia	7.2%	675	5.8%	243	7.8%	432	2.0%	1.6%
Ghana	32.6%	322	31.0%	139	33.9%	183	2.9%	2.3%
Kenya	30.7%	619	32.0%	143	30.0%	472	−2.0%	−3.6%
Malawi	20.4%	699	20.3%	196	20.5%	503	0.2%	0.5%
Mali	31.3%	283	38.9%	160	23.7%	123	−15.2%**	−11.2%
Mozambique	19.4%	623	12.7%	203	23.3%	420	10.6%***	11.7%***
Nigeria	35.4%	1,010	34.8%	378	35.7%	632	0.9%	1.5%
Rwanda	23.1%	355	27.2%	151	20.2%	201	−7.0%	−5.0%
Senegal	21.9%	261	20.3%	85	22.7%	176	2.4%	0.6%
South Africa	12.2%	217	9.1%	60	13.6%	157	4.5%	3.7%
Tanzania	16.8%	1,067	17.1%	542	16.5%	525	−0.6%	1.9%
Uganda	39.5%	1,107	39.3%	418	39.6%	689	0.2%	3.1%
Zambia	18.7%	1,240	19.1%	485	18.4%	755	−0.7%	1.0%
Zimbabwe	24.1%	876	26.4%	315	23.0%	561	−3.4%	−3.2%

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse by partners or others. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A4. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who have never been married or partnered and who have experienced sexual violence previously

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	5.6%	14,484	6.3%	5,676	5.2%	8,788	−1.1%*	−0.7%
Angola	4.3%	1,361	1.5%	416	5.2%	945	3.6%***	3.8%***
Burkina Faso	0.0%	1,020	0.0%	625	0.0%	392	0.0%	0.0%
Cameroon	6.2%	965	7.7%	250	5.6%	715	−2.1%	−3.0%
Chad	1.9%	382	3.2%	235	0.2%	147	−2.9%*	−4.3%*
Congo Dem Rep	12.2%	724	12.5%	207	12.2%	515	−0.3%	−0.5%
Cote d'Ivoire	0.0%	678	0.0%	425	0.0%	245	0.0%	0.0%
Ethiopia	1.0%	675	0.6%	243	1.2%	432	0.6%	1.1%
Ghana	7.5%	322	9.6%	139	5.9%	183	−3.7%	−4.7%
Kenya	6.4%	619	11.6%	143	4.8%	472	−6.8%	−4.0%
Malawi	10.4%	699	12.3%	196	9.6%	503	−2.7%	−2.1%
Mali	4.4%	283	6.8%	160	2.1%	123	−4.8%	−5.5%
Mozambique	3.2%	623	3.8%	203	2.8%	420	−1.0%	−2.0%
Nigeria	6.5%	1,010	8.4%	378	5.4%	632	−3.0%	−2.3%
Rwanda	13.7%	355	22.3%	151	6.9%	201	−15.4%***	−11.4%**
Senegal	1.9%	261	3.6%	85	1.0%	176	−2.5%	−2.4%
South Africa	2.2%	217	1.2%	60	2.7%	157	1.5%	1.2%
Tanzania	8.9%	1,067	10.7%	542	6.6%	525	−4.1%*	−4.2%*
Uganda	5.7%	1,107	4.8%	418	6.2%	689	1.4%	1.9%
Zambia	5.4%	1,240	5.7%	485	5.2%	755	−0.4%	−0.2%
Zimbabwe	6.1%	876	7.2%	315	5.6%	561	−1.6%	−0.3%

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for being forced to perform unwanted sexual acts by partners or others. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level.

***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A5. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who experienced physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	16.3%	21,545	17.1%	12,222	15.4%	9,268	−1.7%**	−0.9%
Angola	11.6%	1,980	15.1%	868	9.9%	1,112	−5.2%**	−4.0%
Burkina Faso	9.2%	1,815	7.2%	1,396	15.0%	413	7.8%***	3.4%
Cameroon	18.5%	1,312	19.7%	568	17.7%	744	−2.1%	−1.0%
Chad	10.2%	777	11.6%	601	7.2%	165	−4.4%	−7.9%***
Congo Dem Rep	23.1%	1,143	26.2%	589	20.7%	544	−5.5%	−4.3%
Cote d'Ivoire	17.3%	990	16.4%	720	19.2%	254	2.8%	−2.1%
Ethiopia	9.6%	976	12.6%	501	7.1%	475	−5.5%	−3.7%
Ghana	20.5%	380	14.4%	194	26.2%	184	11.8%**	9.9%**
Kenya	19.4%	772	15.5%	287	20.8%	479	5.3%	1.0%
Malawi	20.0%	1,080	24.7%	565	15.7%	515	−8.9%***	−7.2%*
Mali	21.2%	635	21.9%	478	19.6%	157	−2.4%	−0.1%
Mozambique	14.7%	1,212	17.6%	744	10.4%	468	−7.2%***	−5.9%**
Nigeria	19.5%	1,529	16.9%	880	22.4%	649	5.5%**	3.7%
Rwanda	12.3%	378	15.6%	174	9.7%	201	−5.8%	−3.8%
Senegal	7.9%	364	10.3%	182	5.5%	182	−4.8%	−7.6%
South Africa	10.7%	233	9.5%	76	11.3%	157	1.8%	1.7%
Tanzania	15.6%	1,533	17.1%	1,005	12.7%	527	−4.4%*	−1.9%
Uganda	24.9%	1,638	24.0%	935	25.9%	703	1.9%	2.2%
Zambia	12.8%	1,612	16.0%	847	10.1%	765	−5.9%***	−4.8%**
Zimbabwe	18.3%	1,186	20.9%	612	16.0%	574	−5.0%*	−4.2%

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse and forced unwanted sexual acts by partners or others in the past 12 months. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Appendix Table A6. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who experienced physical violence in the last 12 months

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	14.5%	21,545	14.7%	12,222	14.3%	9,268	−0.4%	−0.2%
Angola	10.9%	1,980	14.6%	868	9.0%	1,112	−5.5%***	−4.3%*
Burkina Faso	9.2%	1,815	7.1%	1,396	15.0%	413	7.8%***	3.4%
Cameroon	17.4%	1,312	18.2%	568	16.9%	744	−1.3%	−0.9%
Chad	9.1%	777	10.1%	601	7.2%	165	−2.9%	−6.4%**
Congo Dem Rep	18.7%	1,143	21.5%	589	16.6%	544	−4.8%	−5.8%*
Cote d'Ivoire	17.2%	990	16.3%	720	19.2%	254	2.9%	−2.1%
Ethiopia	9.0%	976	11.4%	501	7.0%	475	−4.4%	−3.2%
Ghana	17.9%	380	10.9%	194	24.5%	184	13.6%***	10.5%**
Kenya	18.1%	772	13.7%	287	19.7%	479	6.0%*	−0.3%
Malawi	13.1%	1,080	15.1%	565	11.3%	515	−3.8%	−3.7%
Mali	19.2%	635	20.0%	478	17.6%	157	−2.4%	−0.8%
Mozambique	12.7%	1,212	15.6%	744	8.6%	468	−7.0%***	−4.5%*
Nigeria	18.3%	1,529	14.9%	880	21.9%	649	6.9%***	−4.7%
Rwanda	9.6%	378	11.2%	174	8.3%	201	−2.9%	−2.3%
Senegal	7.0%	364	8.5%	182	5.5%	182	−3.0%	−4.6%
South Africa	10.7%	233	9.5%	76	11.3%	157	1.8%	1.7%
Tanzania	12.7%	1,533	13.3%	1,005	11.3%	527	−2.0%	0.0%
Uganda	22.7%	1,638	20.2%	935	25.2%	703	4.9%*	4.4%
Zambia	11.5%	1,612	14.2%	847	9.2%	765	−4.9%**	−4.2%*
Zimbabwe	15.9%	1,186	17.0%	612	14.9%	574	−2.1%	−0.8%

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse by partners or others in the past 12 months. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Appendix Table A7. Proportion of girls ages 15–19 years old who experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced sexual violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	4.0%	21,545	5.9%	12,222	2.2%	9,268	−3.7%***	−2.5%***
Angola	1.9%	1,980	3.5%	868	1.1%	1,112	−2.3%***	−2.1%*
Burkina Faso	0.1%	1,815	0.2%	1,396	0.1%	413	−0.1%	0.0%
Cameroon	3.5%	1,312	6.4%	568	1.6%	744	−4.8%***	−4.1%**
Chad	2.8%	777	4.1%	601	0.0%	165	−4.1%***	−3.6%***
Congo Dem Rep	9.4%	1,143	12.6%	589	7.0%	544	−5.6%*	−2.2%
Cote d'Ivoire	1.1%	990	1.6%	720	0.0%	254	−1.6%***	−1.4%**
Ethiopia	2.4%	976	4.9%	501	0.2%	475	−4.8%***	−3.7%**
Ghana	4.3%	380	4.9%	194	3.7%	184	−1.1%	0.7%
Kenya	2.7%	772	3.3%	287	2.5%	479	−0.8%	−2.0%
Malawi	10.7%	1,080	14.9%	565	6.9%	515	−8.0%***	−5.3%
Mali	7.0%	635	8.3%	478	4.2%	157	−4.1%*	−1.0%
Mozambique	4.5%	1,212	5.6%	744	2.9%	468	−2.7%**	−3.2%**
Nigeria	3.0%	1,529	4.4%	880	1.5%	649	−2.9%***	−1.9%**
Rwanda	3.8%	378	6.4%	174	1.7%	201	−4.7%*	−2.9%
Senegal	1.0%	364	2.1%	182	0.0%	182	−2.1%	−3.1%
South Africa	1.3%	233	1.0%	76	1.4%	157	0.4%	0.2%
Tanzania	5.6%	1,533	7.1%	1,005	2.7%	527	−4.4%***	−3.3%**
Uganda	5.3%	1,638	8.7%	935	1.9%	703	−6.8%***	−4.5%***
Zambia	2.8%	1,612	4.4%	847	1.4%	765	−3.0%***	−2.2%**
Zimbabwe	4.7%	1,186	8.4%	612	1.5%	574	−6.9%***	−7.2%***

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for being forced to perform unwanted sexual acts by partners or others in the past 12 months. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A8. Regressing the probability of having experienced physical or sexual violence previously against the total years of education attained for girls ages 15–19 year old

	Obs	Ever experienced physical or sexual violence		Ever experienced physical violence		Ever experienced sexual violence	
		Simple difference	Adjusted difference	Simple difference	Adjusted difference	Simple difference	Adjusted difference
All countries	21,515	0.004***	0.004**	0.004***	0.004***	-0.001	-0.002**
Angola	1,978	0.006	0.005	0.004	0.004	0.003	0.001
Burkina Faso	1,811	0.015***	0.007	0.015***	0.007	0.001	0.000
Cameroon	1,309	0.008**	0.015***	0.007*	0.014***	0.001	-0.000
Chad	775	0.004	0.001	0.008	0.005	-0.004**	-0.005*
Congo Dem Rep	1,143	0.005	0.003	0.007	0.006	-0.002	0.002
Cote d'Ivoire	988	-0.003	-0.009	-0.002	-0.009	-0.002***	-0.002**
Ethiopia	976	-0.005	-0.006	-0.006	-0.008	-0.003	-0.001
Ghana	380	0.007	0.018*	0.003	0.010	0.005	0.011*
Kenya	771	-0.003	-0.003	0.007	0.013	-0.008	-0.014
Malawi	1,077	0.001	-0.006	0.007	0.001	-0.007	-0.010
Mali	634	-0.019***	-0.019**	-0.016**	-0.017**	-0.009**	-0.004
Mozambique	1,211	0.013**	0.010	0.013**	0.011*	-0.002	-0.003
Nigeria	1,528	0.015***	0.017***	0.015***	0.016***	-0.001	0.002
Rwanda	378	-0.006	-0.016	-0.000	-0.007	-0.011	-0.017
Senegal	362	0.010	0.007	0.011	0.008	-0.002	-0.002
South Africa	233	-0.055**	-0.049**	-0.051**	-0.045**	-0.012	-0.008
Tanzania	1,533	-0.015***	-0.018***	-0.012**	-0.012**	-0.010***	-0.016***
Uganda	1,637	0.009	0.001	0.011*	0.004	-0.006*	-0.012***
Zambia	1,609	-0.009*	-0.005	-0.006	-0.003	-0.007***	-0.007**
Zimbabwe	1,182	-0.024***	-0.034***	-0.015*	-0.020*	-0.019***	-0.029***

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse and forced unwanted sexual acts by partners or others. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A9. Proportion of girls ages 20–24 years old who experienced physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months

	All girls		Did not attend school the past year		Attended school the past year		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	21.3%	25,164	22.6%	22,372	12.4%	2,604	−10.2%***	−7.1%***
Angola	24.5%	2,285	26.6%	1,718	19.4%	567	−7.3%**	−5.6%
Burkina Faso	9.9%	2,315	10.2%	2,125	6.7%	166	−3.5%	−3.7%
Cameroon	17.4%	1,213	19.0%	914	13.3%	299	−5.6%*	−4.2%
Chad	19.3%	765	19.1%	691	17.6%	54	−1.5%	−3.9%
Congo Dem Rep	35.3%	1,342	37.6%	1,172	19.3%	136	−18.3%***	−18.5%***
Cote d'Ivoire	22.2%	1,220	23.5%	1,083	12.9%	104	−10.5%*	−11.9%**
Ethiopia	17.8%	1,092	19.3%	957	6.3%	135	−13.0%***	−11.1%***
Ghana	19.6%	444	19.3%	414	15.7%	17	−3.6%	−4.8%
Kenya	20.6%	999	20.8%	867	18.7%	83	−2.0%	2.6%
Malawi	23.5%	1,403	24.4%	1,338	13.4%	65	−10.9%*	−8.1%
Mali	23.6%	695	24.7%	649	13.5%	46	−11.1%**	−10.3%*
Mozambique	29.3%	1,285	29.8%	1,135	25.9%	149	−3.8%	0.5%
Nigeria	18.3%	1,714	18.4%	1,593	17.3%	121	−1.2%	3.0%
Rwanda	15.1%	485	16.2%	425	6.0%	48	−10.2%***	−5.5%
Senegal	5.8%	297	6.3%	244	4.3%	53	−2.0%	−3.5%
South Africa	9.7%	694	11.3%	505	5.0%	189	−6.3%***	−6.4%**
Tanzania	26.7%	1,742	28.5%	1,670	4.4%	70	−24.0%***	−17.4%***
Uganda	27.5%	1,975	29.0%	1,866	12.4%	109	−16.5%***	−10.0%**
Zambia	21.7%	1,908	22.6%	1,802	12.8%	106	−9.8%*	−4.6%
Zimbabwe	20.5%	1,291	21.8%	1,204	3.5%	87	−18.3%***	−16.4%***

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse and forced unwanted sexual acts by partners or others in the past 12 months. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A10. Proportion of girls ages 20–24 years old who experienced physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months according to attendance in secondary schools

	All girls		Not currently attending school and did not finish secondary school		Currently attending secondary school		Simple difference	Adjusted difference
	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs	Experienced physical or sexual violence (%)	Obs		
All countries	24.1%	21,119	24.9%	19,591	16.3%	1,528	-8.6%***	-6.2%***
Angola	27.0%	2,020	27.5%	1,616	25.0%	404	-2.5%	-2.6%
Burkina Faso	10.0%	2,257	10.3%	2,123	7.1%	134	-3.2%	-3.1%
Cameroon	19.0%	1,009	20.2%	837	14.5%	172	-5.6%	-4.4%
Chad	19.2%	712	19.7%	678	11.7%	34	-7.9%	-9.6%
Congo Dem Rep	37.2%	1,152	38.7%	1,060	25.0%	92	-13.6%	-14.0%
Cote d'Ivoire	23.2%	1,109	23.5%	1,052	19.4%	57	-4.0%	-5.7%
Ethiopia	19.9%	901	20.8%	857	2.0%	44	-18.8%***	-15.6%***
Ghana	20.6%	329	20.6%	319	21.1%	10	0.4%	-0.9%
Kenya	26.2%	698	26.0%	667	27.8%	31	1.8%	7.6%
Malawi	26.2%	1,236	26.6%	1,186	19.9%	50	-6.7%	-6.5%
Mali	24.2%	677	25.0%	645	13.0%	32	-12.1%*	-12.2%*
Mozambique	29.8%	1,196	30.4%	1,090	23.8%	106	-6.6%	-5.9%
Nigeria	20.2%	951	19.9%	925	29.7%	26	9.8%	10.4%
Rwanda	15.6%	419	16.5%	382	8.2%	37	-8.3%*	-3.2%
Senegal	6.3%	283	6.3%	243	6.4%	40	0.1%	-1.6%
South Africa	11.9%	381	13.5%	288	6.6%	93	-6.9%*	-5.9%
Tanzania	31.9%	1,297	32.2%	1,283	10.9%	14	-21.2%**	-17.2%
Uganda	30.5%	1,759	31.4%	1,710	14.5%	49	-16.9%***	-12.3%**
Zambia	25.1%	1,560	25.9%	1,495	13.5%	65	-12.4%**	-7.8%
Zimbabwe	22.3%	1,173	23.0%	1,135	2.1%	38	-20.8%***	-21.2%***

Note: We used the most recent DHS survey for each country for which the domestic violence section is available. We used the indicators for various physical abuse and forced unwanted sexual acts by partners or others in the past 12 months. The sample is restricted to girls who are either currently attending secondary school or those who are not currently in school and have not completed secondary school. We control for the country, age, type of residence (urban/rural), parents' education, and a wealth index from household assets to report the adjusted difference. Each country tabulation uses domestic violence module sample weights. The all-country tabulation uses denormalized weights. Standard errors are clustered at the household level. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A11. Proportion of 15–19 year old girls who reported experiencing sexual violence in the past 12 months according to school attendance

Country	Year of survey	Not currently attending school		Currently attending school		Simple difference		Adjusted difference			
		Obs	At least one incident of sexual violence %	% of violence that happened at school	Obs	At least one incident of sexual violence	% of violence that happened at school	At least one incident of sexual violence	% of violence that happened at school	At least one incident of sexual violence	% of violence that happened at school
Cross-country average			15.8%	4.6%		19.3%	14.4%	3.5%	9.8%	3.5%	13.1%
Kenya	2010	166	16.5%	4.4%	284	12.2%	28.3%	-4.3%	23.9%**	-3.3%	30.1%*
Malawi	2013	181	21.5%	3.6%	208	34.8%	13.1%	13.4%	9.6%	11.3%	13.3%*
Nigeria	2014	185	20.2%	8.9%	344	27.2%	16.6%	7.0%*	7.7%	7.2%*	16.7%*
Tanzania	2009	359	13.8%	9.6%	449	19.1%	13.1%	5.3%	3.5%	5.5%	2.7%
Zambia	2014	171	15.4%	0.0%	164	17.6%	12.9%	2.2%	12.9%*	2.2%	14.0%*
Zimbabwe	2017	1656	7.3%	1.1%	1804	4.6%	2.6%	-2.7%***	1.5%	-1.5%	2.0%

Note: We use the most recent publicly available VACS surveys. We control for age when we report the adjusted difference. Country-level tabulations and regressions use sample weights. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Appendix Table A12. Existence and funding status of national policies on reducing different dimensions of violence against children

Country	Child maltreatment	Youth violence	Sexual violence	School-based violence	Gender-based violence	Other
Angola	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Burkina Faso	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cameroon	3	3	3	3	3	0
Chad	0	0	0	0	0	0
Congo Dem Rep	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Cote d'Ivoire	3	3	3	3	3	0
Ethiopia	4	0	0	0	0	0
Ghana	3	3	3	3	3	0
Kenya	3	3	3	3	3	0
Malawi	0	4	0	0	0	0
Mali	3	3	3	3	3	0
Mozambique	3	3	3	3	3	0
Nigeria	3	3	3	3	3	0
Rwanda	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Senegal	1	1	2	2	2	0
South Africa	3	3	3	3	3	0
Tanzania	3	3	3	3	3	0
Uganda	3	3	3	3	3	0
Zambia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zimbabwe	3	3	3	3	3	4

Source: Global status report on preventing violence against children 2020—Country profiles (World Health Organization, 2020).

Note: 0 – No national policy, 1 – Has a national policy but missing data on funding, 2 – Has a national policy with no funding, 3 – Has a national policy with partial funding, 4 – Has a national policy with full funding.

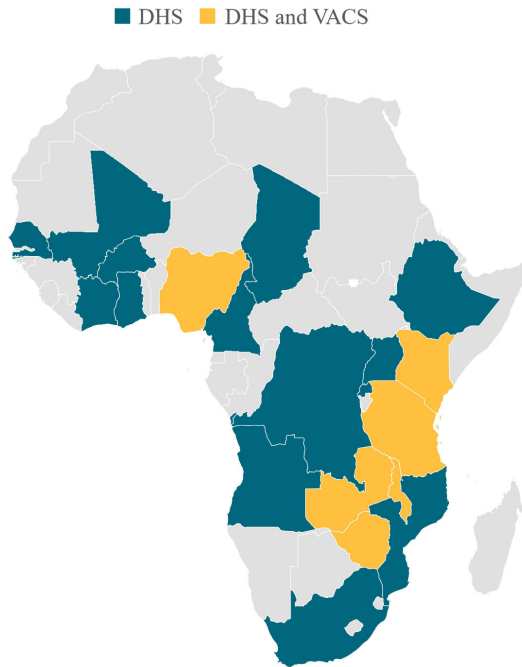
Appendix Table A13. The association between the share of girls who have experienced violence and the presence of national policies against violence

	Share of girls who experienced physical or sexual violence previously	Share of girls who experienced physical violence previously	Share of girls who experienced sexual violence previously
Has a national policy against child maltreatment policy	0.071 (0.046)	0.071 (0.042)	
Has a national policy against sexual violence			0.020 (0.023)
Has a national policy against child maltreatment policy which is partially or fully funded	0.046 (0.065)	0.038 (0.054)	
Has a national policy against sexual violence which is partially or fully funded			0.062 (0.039)

Note: Rates of violence are from the DHS surveys from 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Appendix figure

Appendix Figure A1. Countries covered by this study with either DHS data or both DHS and VACS data



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Note: DHS stands for Demographic and Health Surveys. VACS stands for Violence Against Children Surveys. See Appendix Sections A and B for a detailed discussion of the datasets employed.