

East and Southern Africa Regional Symposium on Male Child and Adolescent Survivors of Gender-based Violence: *Service Delivery and Prevention Perspectives*

26 September 2023



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, due to gender inequalities and social norms that condone men's use of violence as a form of discipline and control, reinforce gender inequality, and perpetuate gender-based violence¹. Sexual violence often peaks when people are displaced by disasters (natural or man-made), and negative coping strategies, including transactional sex and trafficking, increase as people are left poorer and more vulnerable to exploitation because of humanitarian crises². In addition, displaced persons, particularly those living in temporary shelters are vulnerable to sexual violence by both strangers and people from the community. Transactional / survival sex is also a direct effect of food insecurity caused by disasters.

Men and boys can be subjected to different types of gender-based violence and particularly to sexual violence, and risk factors can be exacerbated during humanitarian crises. Male children and adolescent survivors have specific health, psychosocial, legal, and safety needs, but often face difficulties in discussing their experience and accessing the specialized support they need³. The associated lack of awareness continues to hinder prevention efforts around the world.

Global estimates show that approximately one billion children under the age of 18 experienced violence (either physical, emotional, or sexual) each year⁴. UNICEF estimates that some 15 million adolescent girls aged 15–19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime⁵.

In Kenya, the 2019 Violence against Children (VACS) survey showed that both boys and girls have poor access to post-violence services following experiences of sexual violence. Fewer boys and girls sought or received specialized services post-violence; only 13% of females and 3% of males who ever experienced sexual violence sought help for any incident of sexual violence. Of those who sought help, only 11% females and 3% males received help⁶.

In East Africa, according to the 2022 Uganda Humanitarian Violence Against Children Survey (HVACS), 10% of males aged 18-24 years experienced sexual violence prior to age 18 (childhood sexual violence) while 7% of males aged 13-17 years experienced sexual violence within the past

¹ See <https://www.unicef.org/protection/gender-based-violence-in-emergencies>

² IFRC (2015). Unseen, unheard: Gender-based violence in disasters Global study, available on: [Unseen, unheard: Gender-based violence in disasters – Global study \(ifrc.org\)](https://www.ifrc.org/publications/unseen-unheard-gender-based-violence-in-disasters-global-study)

³ Caring for boys affected by sexual abuse. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/caring-for-boys-affected-by-sexual-violence-eng.pdf/>

⁴ Hillis S, Mercy J, Amobi A, Kress H. Global Prevalence of Past-year Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review and Minimum Estimates. *Pediatrics*. 2016;137(3):e20154079. doi:10.1542/peds.2015-4079

⁵ UNICEF. Violence against children. Published September 24, 2020. Accessed May 16, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/violence-against-children>

⁶ Kenya Violence Against Children Survey Report (2019) [https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/1516/file/2019%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20Survey%20\(VACS\)%20.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/1516/file/2019%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20Survey%20(VACS)%20.pdf)

12 months (Uganda HVACS, 2022)⁷. A screening study designed to identify and respond to child survivors of sexual violence in Kenyan primary schools found that 53% of the 173 boys who were screened disclosed ever having experienced some form of sexual violence⁸. It is worth noting that similar results have been shown in the VACS survey in the Philippines⁹ and in studies in other contexts.¹⁰

In June 2022, the intersectionality pillar¹¹ organized a one-day regional symposium event on gender transformative approaches to engaging men and boys in GBV prevention and response in humanitarian settings, where several topics including challenges, gaps, and barriers to male survivor's access to services were discussed. The event brought together GBV practitioners, researchers, donors, and policy makers who are working on these issues in the region and beyond.

The 2023 symposium will focus on male child and adolescent survivors from both prevention and service delivery perspectives. This builds on the 2022 symposium and 2021 Barriers Analysis study for adolescent survivors' access to multi-sectoral services in response to gender-based violence conducted by LVCT Health and supported by The Child and Adolescent Survivors Initiative (CASI) with funding from SDC. This year's event will enable in-depth and more comprehensive discussions on the topics, based on feedback from last year's event.

INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SURVIVORS

Specific risk and protective factors and marginalization of children and young people highlight that both vulnerabilities, response needs, and service seeking are dependent on their intersecting identities including but not limited to race, religion, gender, sexual identity, geography, and physical ability¹². For instance, boys with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse in residential care because they are dependent on others for their care, often unable to report the abuse, and rarely believed when they report experiencing violence¹³. Boys associated with armed

⁷ [Together for Girls, Population Council, Population Council Kenya, and African Population and Health Research Center \(2023\) Violence Against Children and Youth Survey in Refugee Settings in Uganda: Factsheet](#)

⁸ Undie, C. C., & Mak'anyengo, M. (2022). If we Ask, Will they Tell? (and Then, What?): Screening for Sexual Violence against Children in Kenya. *Child Abuse Review*, 31(1), 11-26.

⁹ [https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/491/file/National%20Baseline%20Study%20on%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20in%20the%20Philippines:%20Results%20\(executive%20summary\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/491/file/National%20Baseline%20Study%20on%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20in%20the%20Philippines:%20Results%20(executive%20summary).pdf)

¹⁰ <https://ecpat.org/global-boys-initiative/>

¹¹ The Regional GBV Working Group for East and Southern Africa brings together non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and other actors working on GBV in humanitarian emergencies in the region. It coordinates and provides regional level guidance and technical support on the implementation of standards, guidelines and policies on GBV in emergencies. The group is chaired and co-chaired by the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility – East and Southern Africa (GBV AoR-hosted by UNFPA) and CARE International. Members work collectively to improve the effectiveness of gender-based violence response, prevention and risk mitigation, information management and preparedness. The Group has four pillars, namely: advocacy, information management, emerging crises, and the preparedness and risk mitigation. Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/GbvAorESAR>.

¹² Hoban A, Bowie J, Aspinall L, Litster R, Proefke R. Shifting Power to Young People in Humanitarian Action.; 2019

¹³ Family for Every Child (2018): Caring for Boys Affected by Sexual Violence. Available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/caring-boys-affected-sexual-violence/>

actors and those in detention centres may be subject to rape, sexual torture, genital mutilation, sexual humiliation, sexual enslavement, and forced incest¹⁴. Therefore, male children and adolescents' needs must be considered through an intersectional lens. This includes engaging with male children and adolescents to understand how sexual violence affects them and identifying the entry points and approaches of service delivery that are safe and responsive to their needs. Understanding availability of services and barriers to access to such services will help inform prevention and response strategies, including the ability to support male child and adolescent survivors in a timely manner. This is all in addition to considering the specific rights and needs, and the dynamics with perpetrators, reporting and justice that are unique to children and adolescents in general; the discrimination and lack of power that children face because of their age.

WHY FOCUS ON MALE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT SURVIVORS? BARRIERS TO REPORTING AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

Generally, the rates of reporting, help seeking behaviour and utilization of services are low among children and adolescents who have experienced sexual violence. This is especially true for male child and adolescent survivors who may face even greater challenges in seeking help and accessing GBV services. According to 2022 Ugandan HVACS, less than 1% of females and males aged 13-17 years who have experienced physical violence in the past one year sought and received help. The limited access to response and support services denies survivors the opportunity to heal, recover, and reintegrate into society.

A 2018 scoping study into sexual violence affecting boys, conducted by Family for Every Child¹⁵ highlighted the persistence of gender stereotypes that assume boys are less vulnerable than girls. As a result, boys who urgently need it are hindered from receiving necessary help. Gendered social norms often discourage boys from reporting sexual abuse. In many cultures, boys are not permitted to show vulnerability or emotion as they are viewed as signs of cowardice or weakness. Reporting is often discouraged due to the likelihood of stigmatization or because social norms dictate that boys should exhibit self-reliance, endurance, and psychological resilience. Those who report often face stigmatization from their communities and are rejected from their families. Gendered social norms and notions of masculinity contribute to weak responses from service providers who fail to listen to or believe boys affected by sexual abuse. Furthermore, in many countries, the taboo or illegality surrounding homosexuality presents a major challenge in delivering services to boys who experience sexual violence. In some contexts, sexual abuse of boys is downplayed and under-reported due to negative social attitudes towards homosexuality,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Family for Every Child (2018): Caring for Boys Affected by Sexual Violence. Available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/caring-boys-affected-sexual-violence/>

and laws that do not recognize sexual abuse of males as an offence. Parents may deny that their son has been sexually abused, fearing that it would bring shame upon the family, and boys, in turn may not report out of fear that their sexual orientation would be misunderstood. Boys may also be considered complicit in a criminal offense where homosexuality is illegal or taboo, leading to their removal from their family and placed in juvenile detention centres. Additionally, boys reported being discouraged from seeking services after experiencing sexual violence because these services were primarily described as being for females.

Understanding disclosure patterns, help-seeking behaviours, and barriers to accessing available services is important for informing the development of comprehensive, responsive, and effective interventions that address the needs of diverse male children and adolescent survivors of violence. Such interventions will provide them with appropriate, timely, friendly and gender-sensitive care and services that address their safety, health, social needs, and justice needs.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The symposium aims to bring together practitioners in the field of GBV and Child Protection, including those organizations focused on children and adolescents, researchers, academicians, programme implementers and policy makers. These individuals are at the forefront of leading, researching, engaging with and/or implementing programs that provide response and prevention services to male child and adolescent survivors of gender-based violence. The purpose is to facilitate the exchange and share knowledge, experiences, and learnings, and collectively identify concrete actions to enhance response and prevention efforts.

The symposium is expected to contribute to some or all of the following specific objectives, depending on the contributions made:

- Highlight key trends on male child and adolescents' exposure to sexual violence based on available research findings;
- Understand key barriers that prevent disclosure and access to services for male child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Additionally, collectively identify mechanisms to address these barriers;
- Understand the challenges that service providers face in delivering services to male children and adolescents who are survivors of violence;
- Facilitate sharing and knowledge-exchange regarding current evidence-based approaches in working with male child and adolescent survivors, and engaging boys on GBV prevention in humanitarian settings;
- Increase awareness on inclusive programming among GBV and Child Protection actors, which acknowledges the intersectional identities of male children and adolescents who are survivors of violence to influence programming;

- Provide a platform to identify key advocacy actions that need to be taken to strengthen prevention and response to the needs of male child and adolescent survivors in the region.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The symposium aims to provide opportunities for enhancing knowledge and sharing experiences. It also seeks to foster mutual collaboration and coordination among practitioners, academicians, researchers and frontline GBV and child protection workers. The goal is to collectively advance recommendations that will improve services for male children and adolescent survivors in the region.

The symposium will include a clear articulation of help-seeking behaviours, and barriers to disclosure and access to services, for male child and adolescent survivors of violence. Additionally, it will consider barriers that service providers encounter when delivering services to these survivors. Furthermore, the symposium will prioritize action points to effectively address the identified barriers.

METHODOLOGY (VIRTUAL EVENT)

- Call for papers and presenters
- Speeches and opening remarks
- Presentation session (not more than 2 presentations)
- Panel / Round table discussion session with subject area experts (not more than 5 experts in the panel)
- Parallel sessions on key thematic areas (limited to not more than 2 sessions in parallel)

Host: Regional GBV working group for East and Southern Africa

Co-Host: Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Population Council, UNHCR, Care International, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Plan International.

PARTICIPANTS

Speakers: The symposium will bring together keynote speakers from organizations researching, advocating for, and implementing programmes targeting male child and adolescent survivors in the region and beyond, with particular attention to child and adolescent-focused organizations and networks.

Audience: Participation will be open to GBV and Child Protection practitioners, GBV and Child Protection Coordinators, frontline workers, researchers, donors, policy-makers, development partners, and other persons interested in the topics.

PROPOSED THEMATIC AREAS:

- Setting the stage: What is the data telling us? Overview of existing research on male child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence in humanitarian and development settings.

Service Delivery:

- The state of service delivery for male child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence (What services are available? Where are the gaps? Etc.).
- Help-seeking behaviours in relation to access to services among male child and adolescent survivors of sexual violence.

Barriers to Access to Services:

- Barriers to access to services by male child and adolescent survivors / their caregivers.
- Barriers service providers face in delivering services to male child and adolescent survivors.

Prevention:

- What interventions work to prevent sexual violence against male children and adolescents?
- Where are the gaps in prevention interventions in humanitarian settings in the context of sexual abuse of male children and adolescents?

Intersectionality:

- Disability inclusion of male child and adolescent survivors.
- Adolescent boys associated with armed forces and groups and boys in detention at risk of sexual violence.
- Addressing needs of adolescent boy survivors who identify as gay and bisexual.

DATES

- The symposium will take place on Tuesday **26th September 2023 from 9:00am-5:00pm East Africa time**. The Symposium will be virtual through an online platform.

LANGUAGE

- English will be the main language of engagement with potential for concurrent translation in French and Arabic.

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE SPEAKERS

Please contact Christine Apio: chapio@unfpa.org; George Odwe: godwe@popcouncil.org OR Camilla Jones: annualmeeting2023@alliancecpha.org should you have any further question or need of clarification.

Please submit your proposal by **Friday 18th August**, outlining what you plan to share in your 15–20-minute session, and how and how you meet the following criteria. Please use no more than 2 pages in 11 pt font.

Below are the criteria that shall be used by the selection committee to review, vet and select proposed presentations.

- Relevance to the meeting theme / sub-themes / additional interesting themes.
- Usefulness: GBV and Child Protection actors and wider humanitarian and development actors can benefit from the gap in knowledge that the session addresses.
- Clarity and presentation: The proposal clearly describes key messages and outcomes of the session are clearly described.
- Desirable: The proposal clearly articulates challenges and lessons learned that are frank and insightful and provide relevant learnings.
- Interactiveness: The proposal clearly describes the methodologies to make the session engaging and/or interactive.
- The proposal mentions the target audience and how to reach out to them.
- Desirable: The proposal includes/provides a strong example from a women-led, youth-led or national / local organisations.

