Disclosure of sexual violence among girls aged 13-24 years: Results from national surveys in Nigeria and Malawi

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Prevalence of sexual violence

Sexual violence prevalence and disclosure range from country to country

- 4% among girls in Cambodia to 38% among girls in Swaziland
Health service utilization

• <10% of sexual violence survivors received health services
• Disclosure is important for recovery, social support, and medical intervention
Objective

- Assess rates of disclosure and factors associated with nondisclosure of sexual violence among girls in Nigeria and Malawi
Violence Against Children

- Multistage, cluster household surveys
- Nationally representative
- Face to face interviews were conducted with youth age 13-24

- **Nigeria**
  - 1,766 girls
  - Response rate: 93.7%

- **Malawi**
  - 1,029 girls
  - Response rate: 84.4%
Prevalence of sexual violence among girls 13-24 in Nigeria and Malawi, Violence Against Children Surveys

- Nigeria: 25.6%
- Malawi: 27.2%
Disclosure and help seeking behaviors among female victims of sexual violence

- **EVER TOLD ANYONE ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE**
  - Nigeria: 36.5%
  - Malawi: 54.6%

- **KNOWLEDGE OF A PLACE TO RECEIVE HELP**
  - Nigeria: 13.9%
  - Malawi: 22.6%

- **EVER SOUGHT HELP FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE**
  - Nigeria: 4.2%
  - Malawi: 8.7%
Person told about sexual violence*

Among girls ages 13-24 who disclosed to someone about sexual violence

- **FRIEND/NEIGHBOR**: 37.5% (Nigeria), 53.3% (Malawi)
- **PARENTS**: 31.8% (Nigeria), 9.5% (Malawi)
- **SIBLING/RELATIVE**: 13.7% (Nigeria), 28.9% (Malawi)
- **OTHER**: 10.3% (Nigeria), 6.9% (Malawi)
- **AUTHORITY FIGURE**: 4.6% (Nigeria), 9.5% (Malawi)
- **SPOUSE/ROMANTIC PARTNER**: 2.2% (Nigeria), 1.4% (Malawi)

*Among girls ages 13-24 who disclosed to someone about sexual violence*
### Top five reasons for non-disclosure of sexual violence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Nigeria (%)</th>
<th>Malawi (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not need/want to tell anyone</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid of getting into trouble</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not think it was a problem</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed for self/family</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know who to go to</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Among girls ages 13-24 who did not disclose to someone about sexual violence*
Factors associated with disclosure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close relationship with one or both parents</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very close relationship with one or both parents</td>
<td>0.05 *</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little relationship with friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close relationship with friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes statistical significance
Discussion

- Over a quarter of girls experience sexual violence in Nigeria (25.6%) and Malawi (27.2%)
- Fewer than 5% and 10% of female survivors of sexual violence in Nigeria and Malawi sought help
- Knowledge of where to get help was low (14% in Nigeria and 23% in Malawi)
- Common reasons for non-disclosure
  - Feelings of embarrassment or shame (Malawi: 29.3%, Nigeria: 10.1%)
  - Fear of getting in trouble (Nigeria: 30.3%, Malawi: 5.5%)
Discussion

Nigeria
– Girls were significantly more likely to tell their parents (31.8%) than girls in Malawi (9.5%).
– Girls with close or very close relationships with their parents were significantly more likely to disclose.

Malawi
– Girls were more likely to tell a friend or neighbor (53.3%) or a sibling or relative (28.9%) than a parent (9.5%).
– Girls with very close relationships with their parents were less likely to disclose.
Conclusions

- Social support contributes to disclosure rates of sexual violence among girls in Nigeria and Malawi.
- Need to reduce barriers to disclosure to improve the recovery process for survivors and reduce re-victimization and psychological distress.
- Ending the cycle of violence against children involves a collective effort to change cultural norms and develop strategies to respond to the needs of victims.
Thank you

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.