Responding to abuse:

Children's experiences of child protection in a central district, Uganda

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Responses to violence

Comprehensive response

Child Welfare
Impacting the future of a child

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But how well do these responses work?

No data....

Overview of the Good Schools Study

- Aim: to evaluate the impact of the Good Schools Toolkit Intervention by Raising Voices
- Primary and secondary outcomes
  - Children's experience of physical violence from school staff
  - Children's mental health
  - Children's educational performance

Good Schools Toolkit

School Staff → ✗ → Violence Against Students → Poor Mental Health → Poor educational test scores

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Setting and design

- Design: Cluster-randomised controlled trial
- 42 primary schools, representing 1 district
- 3700 students and 500 staff interviewed in June 2012
- Follow-up in June 2014
- Interviewer-administered questionnaire using mobile phones
- Instruments: ICAST, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Educational tests
- Asked about violence from any person
- **Referral plan for children**

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Referral plan

- Decided in consultation with local services and study partners

✓Forced sex
✓Obvious untreated physical injuries
✓Contact sexual abuse
✓Severe physical violence

- Community Development Officers
- District Probation Officer
- Local NGO child protection officer

- Health services
- Police
- Other services

- Different time frames for response agreed depending on type of violence
- Note that all children offered counselling, regardless of what they disclosed

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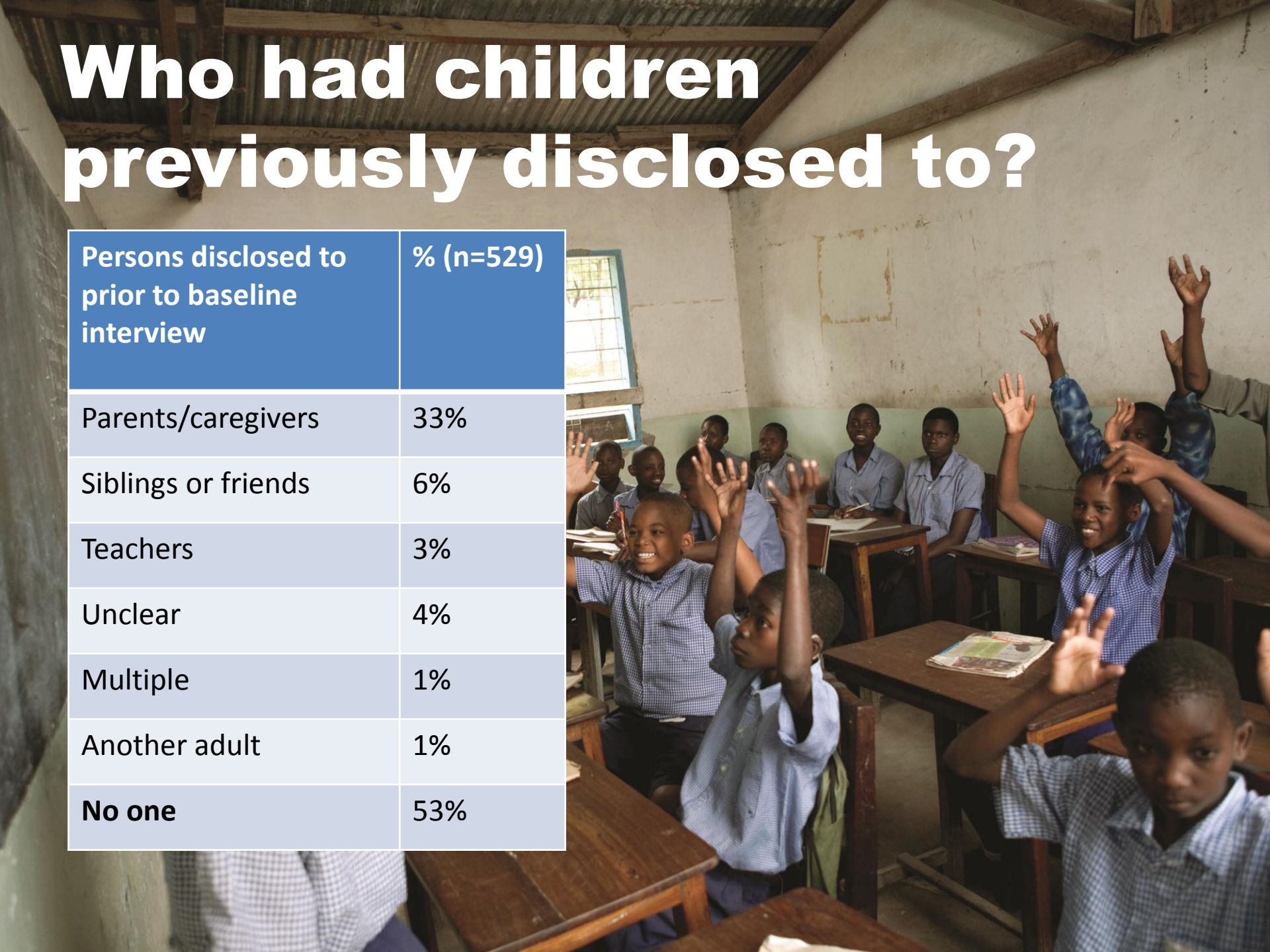
Tracking referred children

- 14.5% of the total baseline sample (n=529) children referred
- More girls referred
  - more sexual violence

Who had children previously disclosed to?

Persons disclosed to prior to baseline interview	% (n=529)
Parents/caregivers	33%
Siblings or friends	6%
Teachers	3%
Unclear	4%
Multiple	1%
Another adult	1%
No one	53%



Formal responses

- Formal community response by designated lead agency:
  - 3.8% of cases
- NGO response as agreed:
  - 48% of cases
- We hired our counsellor to come back and take care of the rest.

Children's experiences

- Mixed experiences

- "they [other people] never heard, they were chased away...she [partner NGO CP officer] was speaking at a low tone only for me to hear...we were under that mahogany tree"
- "they asked permission from teachers to take us...we were three children...and we did not know where they were taking us"
- "there is nothing better than what she did because she took her time...and came....and saw me"

- Children generally happy with response, even when standards of care not met

Conclusions

- Formal responses are inadequate
- Children report satisfaction with responses, even when responses violate standards of care
- Further research is needed to understand why, and how to improve
  - First-line response poor
  - Low competencies during responses that happened, but sometimes good principles of care applied
- Ugandan children who have experienced violence need better formal sector support

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Thank you!

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- For further information: contact karen.devries@lshtm.ac.uk

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