More than 1 billion children—half of all the children in the world—are victims of violence every year.

A first step in preventing this violence, is better understanding its magnitude, nature, and consequences. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Violence against Children Surveys (VACS) measure physical, emotional, and sexual violence against girls and boys. VACS data have been released in eight countries. Data collection is ongoing in several more.

More than 1 in 4 girls experienced sexual violence in most countries surveyed.

**Percentage of individuals aged 18-24 who experienced violence prior to age 18:**

**Physical violence**
- 53% Cambodia
- 61% Haiti
- 66% Kenya
- 42% Malawi
- 50% Nigeria
- 22% Swaziland
- 55% Tanzania
- 64% Zimbabwe

**Emotional violence**
- 19% Cambodia
- 35% Haiti
- 26% Kenya
- 20% Malawi
- 17% Nigeria
- 26% Swaziland
- 24% Tanzania
- 29% Zimbabwe

* Swaziland VACS only surveyed girls
* Tanzania data may differ from the VACS final report due to different analytic approaches.

**DATA SPOTLIGHT: SWAZILAND**

Increased risk of negative health conditions and behaviors associated with exposure to childhood sexual violence

- STIs (including HIV): 3.7x
- Pregnancy Complications: 3.5x
- Alcohol Use: 3.0x
- Unwanted Pregnancy: 2.9x
- Feeling Depressed: 2.3x
- Suicidal Ideation: 2.3x
- Attempted Suicide: 2.0x
- Difficulty Sleeping: 1.8x
- Cigarette Use: 1.2x

**DATA SPOTLIGHT: ZIMBABWE**

Percentage of girls who experienced specific types of sexual violence prior to age 18

- Unwanted sexual touching: 20%
- Attempted unwanted sex: 15%
- Coerced sex: 7%
- Forced sex: 9%

* Total percentages exceed 33% reported above because girls often experience more than one type of sexual violence.

The Violence against Children Surveys (VACS) systematically measure physical, emotional, and sexual violence against girls and boys, and identify risk and protective factors and health consequences, as well as use of services and barriers to seeking help. Children who experience violence are at greater risk for common and destructive yet preventable consequences, including HIV, chronic diseases, crime and drug abuse, as well as serious mental health problems. Findings from VACS provide data that may help countries ensure that limited resources to develop, launch, and evaluate violence prevention programs and child protection systems are used most effectively. A group of policies and programs that are effective in preventing violence is outlined in the THRIVES technical package, which includes: Training in parenting; Household economic strengthening; Reduced violence through legal protection; Improved services; Values and norms that protect children; Education and life skills; and Surveillance and evaluation.

Sparked by the high rates of violence identified by VACS, the Government of Tanzania developed a multi-sector National Response Plan to prevent violence against children that focuses on education, social welfare, legal, justice, public health, and community. The plan pays particular attention to sexual violence, the vulnerability of girls, and the health consequences of violence.

To see results, Tanzania is launching several new programs and policies, including

- A new child protection training manual and trainings for government ministries on prevention of gender-based violence and survivors of violence
- Guidelines for budgeting for child protection at the local government level, including child protection guidelines for schools
- A revised national code of conduct for teachers
- A comprehensive pilot program to address child violence in three districts, focusing on school- and community-based prevention, and bringing together police, justice and social welfare for response services

In addition, CDC’s office in Tanzania has identified the “Families Matter!” program, an evidence-based intervention designed to promote positive parenting practices and effective parent-child communication about sexuality and sexual risk reduction for parents of 9-12 year olds, as a platform for preventing and responding to childhood sexual violence.

For more information on VACS, visit: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/vacs
For more information on THRIVES, visit: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/vacs/publications.html