



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

Perceptions Study on Social Norms around Violence against Women and Girls in Malawi

Abridged Report
September 2018



NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

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Study Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this study was to gather baseline information and data on social norms that hinder women and girls' rights and perpetuates gender inequality and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Malawi. The scope of the study was to collect information and data from a cross-section of key stakeholders relevant to the WEP 2018-2021, including the general public, opinion leaders, media, government, donors, and civil society staff in five districts – Dedza, Karonga, Mangochi, Mzimba and Salima. Data and findings from this study can be used to: 1) map harmful practices that communities perceive as normal and acceptable and that perpetuate VAWG, including harmful practices; 2) inform how UN Women and its partners can implement behaviour change projects aimed at promoting favourable social norms and attitudes at community levels; 3) serve as a baseline against which to measure project impact; and 4) inform public policy dialogue and to formulate key messages for communication initiatives on women's rights, gender equality, and EVAW.

Study Sites

This study does not aim to be representative or to represent the entire country, but it does cover five districts – Dedza, Karonga, Mangochi, Mzimba and Salima. The sample districts were pre-selected by UN Women because these were the programme target districts, but also considering geographic and population diversity of Malawi. At least two to three days were spent in each of the districts to meet with and collect data from key stakeholders.

Sample of Key Stakeholders

A targeted, non-random sampling framework was used to identify representatives from each of the following target groups. In each of the five districts. The goal was to sample a cross-section of key stakeholders, including:

- General public adults, male and female (age 18-49)
- Local opinion leaders
- District and field based officers (Extension workers, teachers)
- Community-based organizations
- Media representatives

Data Collection Methods and Tools

A mixed method approach was used to generate a combination of quantitative and qualitative data related to social norms, attitudes, and behaviours that hinder women and girls' rights and perpetuates gender imbalances and VAWG in Malawi. To collect quantitative data, a *Social Norms, Attitudes and Behaviours Survey* was administered to key stakeholders in each of the five districts. To collect qualitative data, one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the same respondents who completed the *Survey*.

Total Sample

A total of 692 respondents were sampled in the five districts, of which 57.8% (n=400) were district officials and 42.2% (n=292) were general public adults. The sample was equally distributed across districts, including 19.8% of respondents in Dedza, 20.1% of respondents in Karonga, 20.1% in Mangochi, 18.2% in Mzimba, and 21.8% of respondents in Salima.

In terms of sex, 57.1% of the sample was male and 40.8% were female; some respondents did not report their sex. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 66 years or more. A larger proportion of respondents were 25-34 years (24.6%), 35-44 years (32.2%), and 45-54 years (19.5%), compared to 18-24 years (11.4%) and 55-54 years (10.5%) or 66+ years (1.2%).

Social Norms and Attitudes Related to Wife Abuse

Table 1 reveals the social norms related to wife abuse. It is notable that 1 out of 4 of all respondents reported that most or all of the men in their district sometimes hit or beat their wives for disobeying their husband (30.3%), arguing with their husband (28.5%), going out without telling their husband (25.2%), and refusing sexual intercourse (25.1%). Fewer respondents reported that most or all of the men in the district sometimes hit or beat their wives for neglecting the children (17.1%).

Table 1. Social norms related to wife abuse						
In your community, how many men do you think sometimes hit or beat their wives for ...	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Disobeying their husband¹						
All of them	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.3
Most of them	29.6	41.9	28.8	20.9	31.7	25.3
About half of them	21.6	27.2	14.4	23.7	22.2	20.7
A few of them	42.6	27.9	46.0	37.4	40.5	50.0
None of them	4.2	1.5	10.1	5.0	3.2	1.3
Arguing with their husband²						
All of them	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.7
Most of them	27.9	34.3	23.7	21.6	34.4	26.5
About half of them	21.3	28.5	12.9	23.0	20.8	21.2
A few of them	44.9	35.0	52.5	47.5	39.2	49.0
None of them	4.1	0.0	10.8	5.0	2.4	2.0
Going out without telling their husband³						
All of them	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.3
Most of them	24.6	30.7	23.0	18.7	36.0	16.6
About half of them	19.8	21.9	18.7	21.6	20.0	17.2
A few of them	44.4	42.3	41.0	48.9	33.6	54.3
None of them	7.1	1.5	11.5	7.2	5.6	9.3
Neglecting the children⁴						
All of them	1.0	2.2	0.7	0.0	1.6	0.7
Most of them	16.1	17.5	17.3	15.1	22.4	9.3
About half of them	17.2	21.9	11.5	17.3	18.4	17.3
A few of them	48.8	46.7	51.1	46.0	44.0	55.3
None of them	13.8	9.5	15.8	18.0	11.2	14.0
Refusing sexual intercourse⁵						
All of them	3.8	2.9	9.4	1.4	2.4	2.6
Most of them	21.3	29.9	9.4	18.0	32.8	17.9
About half of them	20.3	21.9	26.1	23.7	18.4	11.9
A few of them	34.2	27.0	27.5	26.7	28.0	49.7
None of them	6.2	4.4	8.0	8.6	4.0	6.0

There were significant district differences on all but one of these measures (except for wife abuse for neglecting the children). Most notable is that respondents in Dedza (42.6%) were significantly more likely to report that most or all of the men in their district sometimes hit or beat their wives for disobeying their husband, compared to 33.3% of respondent in Mzimba, 28.8% in Karonga, 26.6% in Salima and 20.9% in Mangochi. Although fewer in number, a significant proportion of respondents in each of the districts reported most or all of the men in their districts sometimes hit or beat their wives for disobeying their husband.

Respondents in Mzimba (36.0%) and Dedza (35.0%) were more likely to report that most or all of the men in their districts sometimes hit or beat their wives for arguing with their husbands, compared to 27.2% of respondents in Salima, 23.7% in Karonga and 21.6% in Mangochi. In addition, respondents in Mzimba (36.8%) and Dedza (31.4%) were more likely to report that most or all of the men in their districts sometimes hit or beat their wives for going out without telling their husband, compared to respondents in Karonga (23.0%), Mangochi (18.7%), and Salima (17.9%). Similarly, respondents in Mzimba (35.2%) and Dedza (32.8%) were more likely to report that most or all of the men in their districts sometimes hit or beat their wives for refusing sexual intercourse, compared to 20.5% of respondents in Salima, 19.4% in Mangochi and 18.8% in Karonga.

Table 2 shows that as many as 69.6% of all respondents reported most people in their districts would disapprove of a man if he beats his wife for disobeying, while 9.6% of all respondents reported most people would approve of his actions and 21.9% reported most people would think it is none of their business. There were no significant differences between districts.

Table 2. Social norms supportive of wife abuse						
If a man in your community beats his wife for disobeying, do you think most people would . . .	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve of his actions	9.6	7.3	11.0	7.2	11.1	11.3
Disapprove of his actions	69.6	66.4	72.1	69.8	68.3	71.3
Think it was none of their business	18.2	21.9	14.7	20.9	19.0	14.7

Table 3 reveals the respondent's personal attitudes toward wife abuse. In particular, the social norms related to wife abuse. In particular, 39.8% of all respondents believe if a man does not beat his wife when she disobeys him, other men in the community will think less of this man. Some respondents (14.8%) also held the belief that a husband who does not hit or beat his wife spoils her. Finally, 1 out of 3 or 33.7% of all respondents held the belief that a woman should tolerate some violence in her marriage in order to keep her family together. The only significant district differences were related to the attitude that a woman should tolerate some violence in her marriage. In particular, respondents in Mzimba (44.8%) and Karonga (41.7%) were more likely to believe a woman should tolerate some violence in her marriage in order to keep her family together, compared to respondents in Mangochi (31.9%), Dedza (26.3%) and Salima (25.2%).

Table 3. Attitudes toward wife abuse						
	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
If a man does not beat his wife when she disobeys him, other men in the community will think less of this man ¹	39.8	34.3	40.3	42.0	42.1	40.4
A husband who does not hit or beat his wife spoils her ²	17.9	14.8	20.9	21.2	18.4	14.6
A woman should tolerate some violence in her marriage in order to keep her family together ³	33.7	26.3	41.7	31.9	44.8	25.2

Social Norms Related to Sexual Violence

The *Adult Gender Public Survey* and *District Officials Survey* also included a question that measured social norms related to sexual violence. Table 4 shows that 1 out of 2 or 50.2% of all respondents maintained most or all of the young men in their districts sometimes pressure or force young women to have sexual relations, and 3 out of 4 or 74.9% of all respondents maintained about half or more of the young men in their districts sometimes pressure or force young women to have sexual relations. There were significant district differences. In particular,

respondents in Dedza (59.1%), Mangochi (59.0%) and Salima (53.6%) were more likely to report that most or all of the young men sometimes pressure or force young women to have sexual relations, compared to respondents in Karonga (41.0%) and Mzimba (36.5%).

Table 4 also reveals that 47.2% of all respondents reported most or all of the people in their districts believe that a woman cannot be raped by someone she has already had sex or with whom she is married. Conversely, 60.8% of all respondents maintained that about half or more of the people in the district believe that a woman cannot be raped by someone she has already had sex with or with whom she is married. There were significant district differences. Respondents in Salima (54.6%) were more likely than respondents in Mangochi (48.2%), Karonga (47.9%), Dedza (42.3%), and Mzimba (42.0%) to maintain that most or all of the people in their districts hold this view.

Table 4. Social norms related to sexual violence						
In your community, how many young men do you think sometimes pressure or force young women to have sexual relations? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All of them	3.5	5.1	1.4	5.0	0.0	5.3
Most of them	46.7	54.0	39.6	54.0	36.5	48.3
About half of them	24.7	21.9	26.6	27.3	25.4	22.5
A few of them	19.2	16.1	23.7	10.8	27.8	18.5
None of them	2.3	0.7	2.9	1.4	4.8	2.0
In your community, how many people believe that a woman cannot be raped by someone she has already had sex with or is married to? ²						
All of them	8.8	7.3	8.0	7.2	7.9	13.3
Most of them	38.4	35.0	39.9	41.0	34.1	41.3
About half of them	13.6	19.7	13.8	13.7	12.7	8.7
A few of them	24.2	29.9	16.7	25.2	23.0	26.0
None of them	12.9	6.6	21.0	11.5	15.9	10.0

Social Norms Related to Harmful Practices

This study included a focus on traditional practices (*miyambo* in Chichewa) that are considered to be harmful practices to women and girls. The *Adult Gender Public Survey* and *District Officials Survey* included a series of questions related to the occurrence of various traditional practices in Karonga and whether respondents believe most people in the district consider them to be harmful to women and girls, and if respondents recognized the harm done to women and girls by these traditional practices. Qualitative data related to traditional practices was also collected through focus group discussions with district officials and one-on-one interviews with general public adults. Both qualitative and quantitative data related to harmful practices are presented in this section.

Frequency of Traditional Practices. Table 5 reveals that each of the different traditional practices listed occurs to varying degrees in the five districts where this study was conducted and there were significant differences in the willingness of respondents to report the occurrence of such traditional practices in their districts. The most common traditional practice that often occurs in the five districts is polygamy. In general, 68.7% of all respondents reported that polygamy ‘often’ occurs in their districts and 27.0% reported polygamy ‘sometimes’ occurs. Only 4.1% of all respondents reported polygamy ‘never’ occurs in their districts. Nearly all respondents in Karonga (89.9%) and Mangochi (84.9%) reported polygamy ‘often’ occurs in their districts; and as many as 2 out of 3 or 69.8% of respondents in Mzimba and 68.2% in Salima reported polygamy ‘often’ occurs in their districts. In comparison, only 29.1% of respondents in Dedza reported polygamy ‘often’ occurs in their district, but 61.2% reported polygamy occurs ‘sometimes’.

Another common traditional practice is labia pulling/stretching. Table 5 shows that 40.9% of all respondents reported labia pulling/stretching 'often' occurs in their districts, and 17.4% reported labia pulling/stretching occurs 'sometimes'. There were significant district differences. As many as 1 out of 2 or 59.5% of respondents in Salima and 53.0% in Dedza reported labia pulling/stretching 'often' occurs in their districts. In addition, 46.0% of respondents in Mzimba and 38.7% in Karonga reported labia pulling/stretching 'often' occurs in their districts. In comparison, only 7.2% of respondents in Mangochi reported labia pulling/stretching 'often' occurs in their district.

Table 5 shows that 1 out of 5 or 22.4% of all respondent also reported that post-initiation ceremonial dances and practices 'often' occurs in their districts, and 14.8% reported such dances and practices 'sometimes' occurs. There are significant district differences. Most notable, as many as 73.4% of respondents in Mangochi reported post-initiation ceremonial dances and practices 'often' occur in their district, and 18.0% reported they sometimes occur. Also, 20.4% of respondents in Salima reported such post-initiation ceremonial dances and practices 'often' occur and 22.4% reported they 'sometimes' occur.

Table 5. Frequency of traditional practices

In your community, how often do each of the following traditional practices occur . . .	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
Polygamy¹	%	%	%	%	%	%
Never	4.1	9.0	2.9	2.9	4.0	2.0
Sometimes	27.0	61.2	7.2	11.4	26.2	29.7
Often	68.7	29.1	89.9	84.9	69.8	68.2
Wife inheritance²						
Never	54.0	82.7	6.5	79.1	26.2	73.0
Sometimes	31.7	13.5	60.4	15.1	52.4	18.9
Often	10.4	0.0	31.7	2.2	18.3	0.7
Bonus wife³						
Never	67.5	80.9	37.7	83.9	51.2	81.8
Sometimes	18.3	10.7	39.1	7.3	29.6	6.1
Often	4.0	0.8	13.0	0.0	4.0	2.0
As payment for their debt parents offer their daughter in marriage to the creditor⁴						
Never	72.8	80.3	61.3	83.2	60.3	77.9
Sometimes	11.5	10.6	19.0	8.0	10.3	9.4
Often	4.1	0.8	8.0	1.5	8.7	2.0
Wife swapping⁵						
Never	75.2	73.1	82.0	71.7	69.6	78.7
Sometimes	12.2	16.4	2.9	15.2	15.2	12.0
Often	3.5	1.5	5.8	6.5	2.4	1.3
Removing dust⁶						
Never	71.5	75.8	85.0	45.6	71.8	78.2
Sometimes	13.7	14.4	2.2	27.9	8.9	15.0
Often	7.2	2.3	4.3	22.8	2.4	4.1
Labia pulling/stretching⁷						
Never	31.8	18.9	38.7	59.7	25.8	15.5
Sometimes	17.4	17.4	8.0	27.3	11.3	21.6
Often	40.9	53.0	38.7	7.2	46.0	59.5
Father has sexual intercourse with his daughter⁸						
Never	47.3	44.4	64.0	35.5	49.2	43.9
Sometimes	42.6	46.3	30.2	51.4	36.3	48.0
Often	5.6	5.2	4.3	10.1	4.0	4.1
Post-initiation ceremonial dances and practices⁹						
Never	57.3	71.4	90.6	8.6	67.5	50.3
Sometimes	14.8	15.0	2.2	18.0	15.9	22.4
Often	22.4	9.0	2.2	73.4	4.8	20.4
Fisi¹⁰						
Never	59.0	57.1	74.8	56.9	62.7	44.6
Sometimes	28.4	30.8	17.3	29.2	19.0	43.9
Often	3.7	4.5	2.2	4.4	4.0	3.4
When a woman's husband dies she is expected to have sexual intercourse with her husband's brother¹¹						
Never	75.0	77.3	73.4	79.9	69.0	75.0
Sometimes	10.7	6.8	14.4	7.9	11.9	12.2
Often	2.3	2.3	2.2	0.7	4.8	2.0
A man sleeps with a woman whose husband or son just died to put to rest the spirit of the deceased¹²						
Never	77.5	79.7	78.4	74.8	73.6	80.4
Sometimes	9.9	8.3	8.6	15.1	8.8	8.8
Often	2.8	2.3	6.5	0.7	3.2	1.4
Practice for girls who become pregnant before undergoing chindakula¹³						
Never	67.5	69.9	87.8	63.3	68.3	49.7
Sometimes	16.5	12.0	5.8	18.0	11.9	32.9
Often	5.4	3.8	2.2	7.2	1.6	11.4

It is notable that although 10.4% of all respondents reported wife inheritance 'often' occurs and 31.7% reported this practice 'sometimes' occurs in their districts. Most notable is that 31.7% of respondent in Karonga reported wife inheritance 'often' occurs and 60.4% reported this practice 'sometimes' occurs in their district. Although to a lesser extent, 18.3% of respondent in Mzimba reported wife inheritance 'often' occurs and 52.4% reported this practice 'sometimes' occurs in their district. Respondents from Dedza (82.7%), Mangochi (79.1%) and Salima (73.0%) were much more likely to report that wife inheritance 'never' occurs in their districts.

Finally, although only 3.7% of all respondents reported that Fisi 'often' occurs in their districts, 28.4% reported the practice 'sometimes' occurs. Respondents in Salima (43.9%) were most likely to report that Fisi 'sometimes' occurs, compared to 30.8% of respondents in Dedza, 29.2% in Mangochi, 19.0% in Mzimba, and 17.3% in Karonga. Respondents in Karonga (74.8%) were most likely to report that Fisi 'never' occurs in their district. Tale 4.12 shows that each of the other traditional practices occurs far less frequently in each of the five districts.

Recognition of Traditional Practices as Harmful to Females. Respondents were also asked if most believe in the district (communities) believe each of the traditional practices identified in Table 5 are harmful to women and girls. Table 6 shows the proportion of respondents who felt that most people in the district believe each of these traditional practices as harmful to women and girls. Respondents who reported the traditional practices were considered good practices or did not occur in their communities are not included in Table 6. The focus is only on the social norms that recognize traditional practice as harmful practices.

Table 6. Social norms related to harmful practices						
In your community, do most people believe the following traditions and practices are harmful practices for females?	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Polygamy ¹	76.7	82.8	81.9	61.9	72.4	83.9
Wife inheritance ²	61.9	48.5	88.5	52.5	65.3	54.7
Bonus wife ³	49.0	40.5	64.0	46.8	50.4	43.2
As payment for their debt parents offer their daughter in marriage to the creditor ⁴	44.9	40.9	55.4	47.5	35.8	43.5
Wife swapping ⁵	41.8	43.9	36.7	48.5	36.1	43.2
Removing dust ⁶	45.3	43.2	29.9	55.1	38.8	48.6
Labia pulling/stretching ⁷	30.8	24.8	35.3	37.0	23.8	31.9
Father has sexual intercourse with his daughter ⁸	59.6	56.1	56.1	64.7	56.9	63.3
Post-initiation ceremonial dances and practices ⁹	34.6	32.6	34.5	42.4	27.0	35.4
Fisi ¹⁰	54.7	52.2	48.9	52.8	50.0	68.9
When a woman's husband dies she is expected to have sexual intercourse with her husband's brother ¹¹	43.1	38.6	38.8	46.4	39.5	51.0
Practice by which a man sleeps with a woman whose husband or son just died to put to rest the spirit of the deceased ¹²	43.0	38.3	37.4	45.3	40.7	52.0
Practice for girls who become pregnant before undergoing chindakula ¹³	38.6	36.7	39.6	42.3	31.7	41.8

Most notable is that as many as 76.7% of all respondents maintained that most people believe polygamy is a harmful practice for females with 61.9% reported most people believe that wife inheritance is a harmful practice for females, 59.6% reported most people believe fathers having sexual intercourse with their daughters is a harmful practice for females, and 54.7% of all respondents reported Fisi is a harmful practice for females. Respondents in Salima (83.9%), Dedza (82.8%) and Karonga (81.9%) were more likely to report that most people

in their districts recognize polygamy as a harmful practice; this is more often than district officials in Mzimba (72.4%) and Mangochi (61.9%). As it relates to wife inheritance, respondents in Karonga (88.5%) were most likely to report that most people in their district recognize wife inheritance as a harmful practice, compared to Mzimba (65.3%), Salima (54.7%), Mangochi (52.5%) and Dedza (48.5%). As it related to fathers having sexual intercourse with their daughters, respondents in Mangochi (64.7%) and Salima (63.3%) were more likely than respondents in Mzimba (56.9%), Karonga (56.1%) and Dedza (56.1%) to report that most people in their district believe the practice of fathers having sexual intercourse with their daughters is a harmful practice to females. Similarly, respondents in Salima (68.9%) were most likely to report that most people in their district believe the practice of Fisi is harmful to females, compared to respondents in Mangochi (52.8%), Dedza (52.2%), Mzimba (50.0%) and Karonga (48.9%).

Respondents were less likely to report that most people in their districts consider each of the other traditional practices listed in Table 6 as harmful to women and girls. In particular, 49.0% of reported that most people in their districts consider the practice of giving a bonus wife is a harmful practice to females. Respondents in Karonga (64.0%) were most likely to recognize the practice of bonus wives as a harmful practice, compared to respondents in Mzimba (50.4%), Mangochi (46.8%), Salima (43.2%) and Dedza (40.5%).

In addition, 45.3% of all respondents recognized removing dust as a harmful practice, 44.9% recognized parents offering their daughter in marriage to the creditor as payment for their debt as a harmful practice, 43.1% recognized the expectation that a woman having sexual intercourse with her husband's brother upon the death of her husband as a harmful practice, and 43.0% maintained most people in their districts consider the practice by which a man sleeps with a woman whose husband or son just died to put to rest the spirit of the deceased as a harmful practice.

Finally, as many as 1 out of 3 respondents recognized practices such as practices for girls who become pregnant before undergoing *chindakula* (38.6%), post-initiation ceremonial dances and practices (34.6%), and labia pulling/stretching (30.8%) as harmful practices to women and girls. There are district differences related to each of these traditional practices.

Negative Effects of Traditional Practices. In addition, as many as 87.7% of respondents recognized that women and girls face harm from the different traditional practices identified in Tables 5 and 6.

Social Norms Related to Child and Early Marriage of Girls

The Adult Gender Public Survey and District Officials Survey included questions related to child and early marriage of girls. Table 7 shows that as many as 1 out of 3 or 33.8% of all respondents reported that they believe most or all of the girls in Karonga get married before 15 years of age. Moreover, 62.3% of all respondents reported about half or more of the girls in Karonga get married before 15 years of age. Respondents in Mangochi (46.8%) and Salima (39.1%) were more likely to report that most of the girls in their districts get married before 15 years of age, compared to respondents in Mzimba (30.2%), Karonga (28.8%) and Dedza (22.6%). Respondents in Dedza (43.8%) were most likely to report that only a few girls in their district get married before 15 years of age.

Table 7. Social norms related to child and early marriage of girls						
In your community, how many girls do you think get married before 15 years of age? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All of them	0.6	0.7	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.0
Most of them	33.2	22.6	28.8	44.6	30.2	39.1
About half of them	24.4	28.5	23.0	26.6	25.4	19.2
A few of them	33.5	43.8	37.4	29.4	30.2	36.4
None of them	7.5	2.9	10.8	5.8	14.3	4.6
In your community, how many girls do you think get married before 18 years of age? ²						
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All of them	2.2	1.5	5.8	1.4	0.8	1.3
Most of them	53.5	49.6	46.8	65.5	50.8	54.3
About half of them	22.7	29.9	22.3	18.0	23.8	19.9
A few of them	19.2	19.0	19.4	12.9	24.6	20.5
None of them	2.2	0.0	5.8	0.7	0.0	4.0

Table 7 also shows that as many as 1 out of 2 or 55.7% of respondents reported that most or all of the girls in their districts get married before 18 years of age, and as many as 3 out of 4 or 78.4% of respondent reported that about half or more of the girls in Karonga get married before 18 years of age. There were significant district differences. In particular, respondents from Mangochi (66.9%) were more likely to report that most or all of the girls in their districts get married before 18 years of age, compared to respondents from Salima (55.6%), Karonga (52.6%), Mzimba (51.6%), and Dedza (51.1%).

Respondents were asked what the reaction of most people in Karonga would be if parents arranged for their daughter to be married at 15 years of age. Table 8 shows that although nearly 2 out of 3 or 63.9% of respondents felt that parents in the district would disapprove of parents arranging for their daughter to be married at 15 years of age, yet nearly 1 out of 4 or 28.2% of respondents reported that most people would think it was none of their business, and 7.1% would approve of the parents' actions.

Table 8. Social norms supportive of child and early marriage						
If parents in this community arrange for their daughter to be married at 15 years of age, do you think most people would . . .	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Approve of their actions	7.1	5.8	3.6	10.8	10.3	5.3
Disapprove of their actions	63.9	68.6	63.3	54.7	61.9	70.2
Think it was none of their business	28.2	25.5	34.2	33.1	27.0	23.2

Understanding the Relationship between Child and Early Marriage and Violence. Table 9 shows that as many as 74.1% of respondents understand there is a relationship between child marriage / early marriage and violence, particularly that girls who are married before age 18 years are more likely to experience violence from their husband and his family. There are no statistically significant differences among the districts.

Table 9. Understanding the relationship between child and early marriage and violence (Karonga)

	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Girls married before age 18 are more likely to experience violence from their husband and his family	74.1	71.5	76.3	77.0	65.1	79.5

Victim-Blaming of Female Survivors of Violence

Societal attitudes that cast the blame on girls and women for causing problems in the family and justifications for the use of VAWG in the family, leads to victim-blaming from family, friends, and authorities. In Malawi, victim-blaming serves as a barrier for women and girls wanting to access protection from VAWG. In terms of victim-blaming for wife abuse, respondents were asked how many people in the community believe that when a woman is beaten by her husband that she is partly to blame or at fault, as well as how many people believe that a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to someone outside of their family about the abuse or violence in their marriage.

Table 10 shows that nearly 1 out of 3 or 31.9% of all respondent reported most or all of the community members believe that when a woman is beaten by her husband that she is partly to blame or at fault. Further, 1 out of 2 or 50.6% of all respondents maintained about half or more of community members believe when a woman is beaten by her husband that she is partly to blame or at fault. Also, 1 out of 3 or 33.4% of all respondents reported that most or all of the people in the community believe a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of their family about abuse or violence in her marriage. Additionally, more than 1 out of 2 or 58.2% of all respondents maintained about half or more of the people in the district believe a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of their family about abuse of violence in the marriage. These findings are indicative of the such social norms in each of the five districts included in this study.

The only statistically significant district differences relate to people believing a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to someone outside of their family about abuse or violence in their marriage. In particular, respondents in Salima (38.5%) and Mzimba (37.1%), Mzimba (34.3%) and Dedza (34.3%) were more likely to report that most or all of the people in their districts believe a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of their family about abuse or violence in their marriage, compared to respondents Karonga (23.1%).

Table 10. Social norms related to victim-blaming for wife abuse

In your community, how many believe when a woman is beat by her husband that she is partly to blame or at fault? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All of them	4.8	4.4	8.0	5.1	3.2	3.3
Most of them	27.1	27.7	23.2	23.9	30.2	30.5
About half of them	18.7	21.2	14.5	14.5	22.2	21.2
A few of them	44.5	44.5	50.7	47.8	40.5	39.1
None of them	3.0	1.5	0.7	5.1	2.4	5.3
In your community, how many people believe a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of their family about abuse or violence in their marriage? ²						
All of them	5.1	4.4	7.9	5.1	1.6	6.0
Most of them	28.3	29.9	15.1	29.2	35.5	32.5
About half of them	22.1	24.8	23.7	21.2	21.0	19.9
A few of them	34.3	33.6	36.7	33.6	30.6	36.4
None of them	9.0	5.8	14.4	10.2	9.7	5.3

¹ Sign = .122, Chi-square = 27.48; ² Sign = .049, Chi-square = 31.48

Table 11 shows that only 13.6% of respondents reported most or all of the people in their districts believe that when a woman is raped, she is partly to blame or is at fault. On the same note 1 out of 3 or 33.4% of respondents reported that about half of the people in the community believe that when a woman is raped she is partly to blame or at fault. There were significant district differences. In particular, respondents in Mzimba (19.8%), Dedza (14.6%) and Salima (13.3%) were more likely to report most or all of the people believe that when a woman is raped she is partly to blame or at fault, compared to respondents in Karonga (10.8%) and Mangochi (9.3%).

Table 11. Social norms related to victim-blaming for sexual violence

In your community, how many people believe that when a woman is raped she is partly to blame or at fault? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All of them	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0
Most of them	13.3	14.6	10.8	8.6	19.8	13.3
About half of them	19.8	19.0	26.6	18.7	16.7	18.0
A few of them	43.1	53.3	30.9	43.2	34.1	52.7
None of them	20.8	11.7	29.5	35.2	23.0	15.3
In your community, how many people believe a woman should be ashamed and embarrassed to talk to anyone if she is raped?						
All of them	5.8	5.1	8.6	4.3	4.8	6.0
Most of them	26.0	29.9	14.4	26.8	30.2	29.1
About half of them	16.8	17.5	12.2	18.8	17.5	17.9
A few of them	34.2	39.4	36.0	30.4	26.2	37.7
None of them	15.9	7.3	26.6	18.8	19.0	8.6

Table 11 also shows that 31.8% of respondents reported most or all of the people in their districts believe a woman should be ashamed and embarrassed to talk to anyone if she is raped, and 48.6% of respondents also reported

about half or more of the people in Karonga believe that a woman should be ashamed and embarrassed to talk to anyone if she is raped. There were significant district differences. Respondents in Salima (35.1%), Mzimba (35.0%), Dedza (35.0%) and Mangochi (31.1%) were more likely to report that most or all of the people in their districts believe a woman should be ashamed and embarrassed to talk to anyone if she is raped, compared to respondents in Karonga (23.0%).

Victim-blaming attitudes of this kind marginalize women and girls who experience violence and make it hard for them to come forward and report the violence/abuse in their lives and families. If victims know that society or a frontline service provider will blame them for the violence/abuse, she will not feel safe or comfortable coming forward and talking about or reporting it. Victim-blaming attitudes also reinforce what the abuser has been saying all along, that it is the victim's fault that the violence/abuse happens. By engaging in victim-blaming attitudes, society allows the abuser to commit acts of violence/abuse, including sexual assault/rape, while avoiding accountability for their actions.

Public Responses to VAWG

The *Adult Gender Public Survey* and *District Officials Survey* included several questions that measured individual responses to VAWG, particular what respondents would do if they witnessed a woman being beaten by her husband and if they saw or heard a woman being sexually assault/raped by a man. Respondents were asked to report all responses they would take in such situations, so they could identify more than one response; therefore, column percentages will not total 100.0%.

Table 12. Public responses to wife abuse						
What would you do if you witnessed a woman being beaten by her husband?	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would walk away and not intervene ¹	7.7	10.9	4.3	9.4	4.8	8.6
I would stand and watch, but not intervene ²	2.3	2.9	0.7	2.9	1.6	3.3
I would intervene and try to help the woman ³	74.3	73.0	84.9	64.7	78.6	70.9
I would report the incident to the police ⁴	51.4	49.6	37.4	59.7	57.1	53.6
I would not report the incident to anyone ⁵	5.6	7.3	7.9	3.6	3.2	6.0

Table 12 shows that 74.3% of all respondent reported they would interview and try to help a woman if they witnessed her being beaten by her husband, and 1 out of 2 or 51.4% reported they would report the incident to the police. Respondents in Karonga (84.9%) and Mzimba (78.6%) were more likely to report they would intervene and try to help a woman if they witnessed her being beaten by her husband, compared to respondents in Dedza (73.0%), Salima (70.9%), and Mangochi (64.7%). Respondents in Mangochi (59.7%), Mzimba (57.1%) and Salima (53.6%) were also more likely to report that they would report the incident to the police, compared to respondents in Dedza (49.6%) and Karonga (37.4%).

Respondents were also asked what they would do if they witnessed a young woman being beaten by her boyfriend (dating violence). Table 13 shows that 3 out of 4 or 75.7% of respondents reported they would intervene and try to help the young woman that was being beaten by their boyfriend, and 44.7% maintained they would report the incident to the police. There were a few significant differences between districts, except as it relates to reporting the incident to the police. Respondent in Mzimba (57.9%) and Mangochi (55.4%) were more likely than respondents in Salima (40.4%), Dedza (37.2%) and Karonga (33.8%) to maintain they would report the incident of dating violence to the police.

Table 13. Public responses to dating violence						
What would you do if you witnessed a young woman being beaten by her boyfriend?	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would walk away and not intervene ¹	6.8	10.2	5.0	7.9	4.0	6.6
I would stand and watch, but not intervene ²	1.7	0.7	1.4	1.4	2.4	2.6
I would intervene and try to help the woman ³	75.7	78.1	79.1	67.6	77.8	76.2
I would report the incident to the police ⁴	44.7	37.2	33.8	55.4	57.9	40.4
I would not report the incident to anyone ⁵	5.3	7.3	6.5	5.0	3.2	4.6

What would respondents do if they saw or heard of a young woman being sexually assaulted or raped by a man, Table 14 shows that 73.8% of respondents reported that they would intervene and try to help a woman who they saw or heard been a young woman being sexually assaulted or raped by a man. Interestingly, 61.2% of respondents reported they would report the incident to the police. There were a couple of district differences. In particular, respondents in Karonga (84.9%), Dedza (75.2%) and Mzimba (72.0%) were more likely to report they would intervene and try to help if they saw or heard a young woman being sexually assaulted/raped by a man, compared to respondents in Salima (68.9%) and Mangochi (68.1%). Respondents in Salima (69.5%) and Mzimba (66.4%) were more likely to report they would report the incident of sexual violence to the police, compared to respondents in Mangochi (60.9%), Dedza (55.5%) and Karonga (53.2%).

Table 14. Public responses to sexual violence						
What would you do if you saw or heard a young woman being sexually assaulted/raped by a man?	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I would walk away and not intervene ¹	4.1	5.8	2.9	2.9	4.0	4.6
I would stand and watch, but not intervene ²	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.8	1.3
I would intervene and try to help the woman ³	73.8	75.2	84.9	68.1	72.0	68.9
I would report the incident to the police ⁴	61.2	55.5	53.2	60.9	66.4	69.5
I would not report the incident to anyone ⁵	3.5	7.3	3.6	1.4	0.8	4.0

¹ Sign = .695, Chi-square = 2.22; ² Sign = .776, Chi-square = 1.78; ³ Sign = .022, Chi-square = 11.45; ⁴ Sign = .034, Chi-square = 10.44

Help-Seeking Behaviours of Female Survivors of Violence

Respondents were asked about the help-seeking behaviours of women and girls who experience violence. Table 15 shows that 2 out of 3 or 68.0% of all respondents reported they thought that women/girls in their districts who experience violence would be 'very likely' to seek medical care and tell the doctor or nurse about the violence. Similarly, 70.4% reported that they thought that women/girls in their districts who experience violence would be 'very likely' to report the incident to traditional leaders/chiefs.

There are significant district differences. Table 15 reveals respondents in Dedza (76.5%), Karonga (73.4%) and Salima (70.5%) were more likely to maintain women/girls who experience violence are 'very likely' to seek medical care and tell the medical workers about the violence, compared to 60.8% of respondents in Mzimba and 58.3% in Mangochi. Similarly, respondents in Karonga (80.6%), Dedza (75.0%) and Salima (71.3%) were more likely to maintain women/girls who experience violence would be 'very likely' to report the incident to traditional leaders/chiefs.

Table 15. Help-seeking behaviours of female survivors of violence

In your community, if a woman/girl experiences violence how likely would they be to . . .	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Seek medical care and tell the doctor/nurse about the violence ¹						
Not likely	12.4	10.3	10.8	18.0	15.2	8.1
Somewhat likely	19.2	13.2	15.8	23.0	22.4	21.5
Very likely	68.0	76.5	73.4	58.3	60.8	70.5
Report the incident to traditional leaders/chiefs ²						
Not likely	11.0	11.0	7.2	15.1	15.1	7.3
Somewhat likely	18.0	14.0	11.5	22.3	22.2	20.0
Very likely	70.4	75.0	80.6	62.6	61.9	71.3

Respondents were also asked what advice they would give to a family member who experienced wife abuse or was raped, and how confident they were the police would register and investigate the complaint. Table 16 shows that as many as 90.4% of respondents reported that if their sister was beaten by her husband and physically injured that they would be 'very likely' to encourage her to report the incident to the police. In addition, 79.4% of respondents reported they would be 'very confident' that the police would register and investigate their sister's complaint of wife abuse. There were no statistically significant district differences.

Table 16. Advice to wife abuse victims and confidence in the police response to wife abuse

If your sister was beaten by her husband and physically injured how likely would you be to encourage her to report the incident to the police? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not likely	2.2	1.5	0.7	3.6	3.2	2.0
Somewhat likely	7.1	6.6	3.6	8.7	6.4	10.0
Very likely	90.4	91.2	95.7	87.7	89.6	88.0
How confident are you that the police would register and investigate your sister's complaint? ²						
Not confident	3.8	2.2	5.8	5.8	5.6	0.0
Somewhat confident	16.1	15.4	10.1	18.1	16.8	19.7
Very confident	79.4	81.6	83.3	75.4	76.8	79.6

¹ Sign = .425, Chi-square = 12.26; ² Sign = .197, Chi-square = 15.88

Table 17 shows that as many as 96.7% of respondents reported that if their daughter were the victim of rape that they would be 'very likely' to report the crime to the police, and 85.5% of respondents reported they would be 'very confident' that the police would register and investigate their daughter's complaint of rape. There were no significant differences between general public adults and district officials. There were no statistically significant district differences.

Table 17. Advice to rape victims and confident in the police response to wife abuse

If your daughter were the victim of rape, how likely would you be to report the crime to the police? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not likely	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0
Somewhat likely	2.8	3.6	2.9	0.7	4.8	2.0
Very likely	96.7	95.6	97.1	99.3	92.9	98.0
How confident are you that the police would register and investigate your daughter's complaint? ²						
Not confident	2.0	2.9	2.2	2.2	3.2	0.0
Somewhat confident	12.0	9.5	6.5	13.8	11.9	18.0
Very confident	85.5	87.6	89.9	83.3	84.9	82.0

Perceived Seriousness of VAWG

Respondents were asked to rate how serious a problem is family/marital violence and sexual assault/rape of women. Table 18 shows that 47.1% of respondents identified family/marital violence as a 'serious problem' in the five districts included in this study, 27.1% identified family/marital violence as a 'moderate problem', and 20.7% identified family/marital violence as a 'minor problem'. Far fewer respondents identified family/marital violence as 'not a problem' (4.9%). There are no statistically significant district differences.

Table 18. Perceived seriousness of family/marital violence

In your community, how serious a problem is family/marital violence?	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not a problem	4.9	1.5	8.6	7.2	4.8	2.6
Minor problem	20.7	18.2	24.5	20.9	22.6	17.9
Moderate problem	27.1	32.8	25.2	24.5	23.4	29.1
Serious problem	47.1	47.3	41.7	47.5	48.4	50.3

Table 19 shows that only 23.7% of respondents identified sexual assault/rape of women and girls as a 'serious problem' in the five districts and 21.8% identified sexual assault/rape of women and girls as a 'moderate problem'. It is notable that 39.7% of respondents identified sexual assault/rape as a 'minor problem' in the districts, and 13.8% of respondents maintained sexual assault/rape of women and girls is 'not a problem' in the districts. There were significant district differences. In particular, respondents in Mangochi (18.7%) were least likely to identify sexual assault/rape of women and girls as a 'serious problem' compared to respondents in the other districts. At the same time, respondents in Mangochi (44.6%) were most likely to identify sexual assault/rape of women and girls as a 'minor problem' in their district, compared to respondents in the other districts. It is also notable that respondents in Karonga (23.0%) were most likely to report sexual assault/rape of women and girls is 'not a problem' in their district.

Table 19. Perceived seriousness of sexual assault/rape (Karonga)

In your community , how serious a problem is sexual assault/rape of women and girls?	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not a problem	13.8	8.8	23.0	12.9	18.4	6.8
Minor problem	39.7	38.7	38.1	44.6	37.6	39.5
Moderate problem	21.8	27.7	12.2	23.7	21.6	23.8
Serious problem	23.7	24.8	23.7	18.7	21.6	29.3

Social Norms Related to Government Responsibility to Protect Women and Girls from Violence

The *Adult Gender Public Survey* and *District Officials Survey* was designed to measure social norms related to government responsibility to protect women and girls from violence in the home and family, and in the community by non-family members. Table 20 shows that the majority of respondents reported that most or all of the people in Karonga think the government has a responsibility to protect women and girls from violence in the home and family, and in the community by non-family members, and to protect girls younger than 18 years of age from marriage.

Table 20. Social norms relate to government responsibility to protect women and girls from violence

In your community, how many people think the government has a responsibility to protect . . .	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Women and girls from violence in the home / family ¹						
All of them	19.8	24.1	23.0	17.3	17.5	17.3
Most of them	47.0	41.6	50.4	45.3	49.2	48.7
About half of them	16.1	18.2	12.2	15.1	13.5	20.7
A few of them	15.8	16.1	11.5	21.6	16.7	13.3
None of them	0.7	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.8	0.0
Women and girls from violence in the community by non-family members ²						
All of them	20.4	19.0	28.8	19.4	19.0	16.0
Most of them	46.5	46.7	46.0	43.2	46.8	49.3
About half of them	15.3	16.8	10.8	15.1	16.7	17.3
A few of them	16.4	16.8	12.2	21.6	13.5	17.3
None of them	0.9	0.7	2.2	0.7	0.8	0.0
Girls younger than 18 years of age from marriage ³						
All of them	17.7	19.9	25.9	13.7	17.5	12.0
Most of them	42.5	45.6	41.7	40.3	41.3	43.3
About half of them	17.0	16.9	14.4	15.1	20.6	18.0
A few of them	21.0	16.9	15.1	28.8	17.5	26.0
None of them	1.6	0.7	2.9	2.2	1.6	0.7

Table 20 shows that 2 out of 3 or 66.8% of all respondents reported that most or all of the people in their districts think the government has a responsibility to protect women and girls from violence in the home and family. Moreover, 82.9% of respondents maintained about half or more of the people in the district hold this view. Respondents in Karonga (73.4%) were more likely than respondent in Mzimba (66.7%), Salima (66.0%), Dedza (65.7%) and Mangochi (62.6%) to maintain that most or all of the people in their district think the government has a responsibility to protect women and girls from violence in the home/family.

In addition, 2 out of 3 or 66.9% of respondents reports most or all of the people in their districts think the government has a responsibility to protect women and girls from violence in the community by non-family members, and 82.2% of respondents reported that about half of the people in the district holds this view. Respondents in Karonga (74.8%) were significantly more likely to hold this view than respondents from Mzimba (65.8%), Dedza (65.7%), Salima (65.3%) and Mangochi (62.6%).

Finally, 60.2% of respondents also reported that most or all of the people in their districts think the government has a responsibility to protect girls younger than 18 years of age from marriage, and 77.2% of respondents reported about half of them held this view. There were significant district differences. Respondents in Karonga (67.6%) and Dedza (65.5%) were more likely to believe most or all of the people in their districts think the government has a responsibility to protect girls younger than age 18 from marriage, compared to respondents in Mzimba (58.8%), Salima (55.3%) and Mangochi (54.0%).

Respondents were also asked about the importance of having laws that protect women and girls from violence. Table 21 shows that 76.3% of respondents maintained it is 'very important' to have laws in Malawi that protect women and girls from marital violence, 77.2% maintained it is 'very important' to have laws in Malawi that protect women and girls from sexual assault and rape, and 83.0% maintained it is 'very important' to have laws in Malawi that protect girls younger than age 18 from marriage. There were significant district differences only in relation to protecting girls younger than age 18 from marriage. Respondents in Salima (87.3%) and Karonga (87.0%) were most likely to believe it is 'very important' to have laws in Malawi that protect girls younger than 18 years of age from marriage, compared to respondents in Mangochi (82.0%), Dedza (81.6%) and Mzimba (76.2%). Respondents in Mzimba (4.8%) were actually more likely than respondents from the other district to maintain it is 'not important to have laws that protect girls younger than 18 years of age from marriage.

Table 21. Importance of laws that protect women and girls from violence						
How important is it to have laws in Malawi that protect . . .	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Women and girls from marital violence¹						
Not important	1.3	0.7	2.9	1.4	0.8	0.7
Important	22.2	25.7	23.7	23.7	19.0	18.8
Very important	76.3	73.5	13.4	74.8	79.4	80.5
Women and girls from sexual assault/rape²						
Not important	1.2	1.5	0.7	1.4	1.6	0.7
Important	21.2	16.9	23.0	25.9	23.8	16.7
Very important	77.2	81.6	76.3	72.9	73.0	82.7
Girls younger than 18 years of age from marriage³						
Not important	1.9	0.7	0.0	1.4	4.8	2.7
Important	14.7	17.6	13.0	16.5	16.7	10.0
Very important	83.0	81.6	87.0	82.0	76.2	87.3

Social Norms Supporting Punishment of Perpetrators of VAWG

The *Adult Gender Public Survey* and *District Officials Survey* was designed to measure social norms supporting the punishment of perpetrators of VAWG, including family/marital violence and sexual violence. Table 22 shows that only 46.9% of respondents maintained most or all of the women in their districts believe it is important that men who commit family/marital violence are punished by the justice system. At the same time, 1 out of 3 or 34.2% of respondents thought only a few or none of the women believe it is important that men who commit family/marital violence be punished by the justice system.

Table 22. Social norms supporting punishment of perpetrators of VAWG

In your community, how many women believe it is important that men who commit family/ marital violence are punished by the justice system? ¹	Total Sample N=692	Dedza N=137	Karonga N=139	Mangochi N=139	Mzimba N=126	Salima N=151
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All of them	12.9	10.9	17.3	12.4	12.7	11.4
Most of them	34.0	38.0	33.1	27.7	33.3	37.6
About half of them	18.2	17.5	13.7	19.0	15.9	24.2
A few of them	32.7	32.1	35.3	38.0	31.7	26.8
None of them	1.5	0.7	0.0	2.9	4.0	0.0
In your community, how many women believe it is important that men who commit acts of sexual assault/rape are punished by the justice system? ²						
All of them	15.7	15.4	18.0	10.9	18.4	16.1
Most of them	41.0	41.9	42.4	42.3	35.2	42.3
About half of them	16.9	19.1	10.8	17.5	18.4	18.8
A few of them	24.9	22.1	28.8	25.5	25.6	22.8
None of them	1.2	0.7	0.0	3.6	1.6	0.0

Respondents in Mangochi (40.9%) were most likely to report that none or a few of the women in the district believe it is important that men who commit family/marital violence are punished by the justice system. In comparison, respondents from Karonga (50.4%), Salima (49.0%) and Dedza (48.9) were more likely to report that most or all of the women in their districts believe it is important that men who commit family/marital violence are punished by the justice system, compared to respondents from Mangochi (40.1% and Mzimba (46.0%).

Similarly, 56.7% of respondents maintained most or all of the women in their districts believe it is important that men who commit acts of sexual assault/rape are punished by the justice system. At the same time, 1 out of 4 or 26.1% of respondents thought none or only a few women in their districts believe it is important that men who commit acts of sexual assault/rape are punished by the justice system. There were no significant district differences.

Attitudes toward the Treatment of VAWG Survivors. Table 23 shows that 92.7% of district officials reported it is 'very important' that VAWG survivors be treated with care and compassion by police and courts. In addition, 93.8% of respondents reported it is 'very important' that VAWG survivors be provided with legal assistance, and 95.2% report it is important that women and girls who experience violence be provided with protection and support. There were no notable district differences in district officials' attitudes.

Table 23. District officials' treatment of VAWG survivors

How important is it that women and girls who experience violence be . . .	Total Sample N=400	Dedza N=76	Karonga N=69	Mangochi N=88	Mzimba N=78	Salima N=89
Treated with care and compassion by police and courts ¹	%	%	%	%	%	%
Not important	2.0	2.6	1.4	1.1	5.1	0.0
Somewhat important	4.0	3.9	4.3	6.8	1.3	3.4
Very important	92.7	92.1	94.2	88.6	92.3	96.6
Provided with legal assistance ²						
Not important	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.1	2.6	0.0
Somewhat important	4.5	5.3	4.3	3.4	9.0	1.1
Very important	93.8	92.1	94.2	94.3	88.5	98.9
Provided with protection and support ³						
Not important	1.8	1.3	2.9	0.0	5.1	0.0
Somewhat important	3.0	2.6	0.0	6.8	3.8	1.1
Very important	95.2	96.1	97.1	93.2	91.0	98.9

Conclusions

VAWG is a pervasive violation of human rights and a global health problem. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies EAWG as a crucial priority for achieving gender equality and sustainable development.¹ EAWG is also a cross-cutting priority across the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and is vital for achieving SDGs in areas including poverty eradication, health, education, sustainable cities, and just and peaceful societies.² The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development builds on existing international frameworks that address VAWGs, particularly CEDAW, the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session, and the Africa Regional Spotlight Initiative on EAWG (2018-2023).³

Against this background, this ground-breaking study revealed perceptions of social norms around VAWG in Malawi. In particular, this study revealed how pervasive social norms are that support gender inequalities and VAWG, including harmful practices. The study focused on five districts – Dedza, Karonga, Mangochi, Mzimba and Salima – in Malawi. Findings from this study can be used to inform policy dialogue and programme development, including where and how UN Women and its partners can implement behaviour change projects aimed at promoting favourable social norms and attitudes at community levels, and to formulate key messages for communication initiatives on women's rights, gender equality and VAWG. Data and findings from this study also serve as an important baseline against which to measure project impact.

This study was designed with an understanding that VAWG is a manifestation of patterns of gender inequality and discrimination that persist worldwide, depriving women and girls of their basic rights and opportunities.⁴ VAWG remains rooted in traditional and cultural patriarchal practices, and gender stereotypes and social norms that shapes families, communities and societies.

This study revealed gender inequality and VAWG, including harmful practices (e.g., child and early marriage) are pervasive in Malawi. VAWG manifests in various forms of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence that occur in public and private spaces. VAWG undermines the mental and physical health and well-being of women and girls and has a negative impact on their long-term sense of safety, stability, and peace.⁵ VAWG also has serious implications for women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and the development and advancement of women and girls, and their contribution to the economy and national development of the country.⁶

There is no single factor that causes VAWG, rather VAWG is caused by a combination of elements operating at different levels of the 'social ecology' that perpetuates and reinforces gender discriminatory and biased attitudes, norms, and practices that contribute to the pervasive imbalance of power that exists between men and women within societies.⁷ As revealed in this study, these elements include a person's attitudes or beliefs that condone VAWG (individual factors), a person's social relationships along with harmful social and gender norms (social factors), lack of economic opportunities for women and girls and weak infrastructure to support gender equality and protect women and girls from violence (material factors), and weak and/or discriminatory legal and institutional frameworks and gender ideologies that underpin gendered differences in power and social status that affects realities at all the other levels (structural forces or macro-level factors).

VAWG is a major obstacle to women and girls' enjoyment of all human rights and their full participation in society and the economy. VAWG also "generates huge economic costs for women and families, and communities and societies."⁸ According to the United Nations, "the cost of violence against women could amount to around 2% of the global gross domestic product (GDP). This is equivalent to US\$1.5 trillion, approximately the size of the economy of Canada."⁹ As such, VAWG is a significant barrier to sustainable development for countries.

As mentioned above, VAWG is a cross-cutting priority relevant to several SDGs. For example, VAWG is prevalent among all socioeconomic groups; however, there is evidence that poverty (SDG 1) can be both a contributing factor to and consequence of VAWG. Women who live in poverty and are socially excluded are at increased risk of experiencing violence and have fewer resources to escape or avoid violence.¹⁰ Poverty can also force girls and women to migrate (SDG 10), placing them at increased risk of human trafficking and exploitation. Therefore, efforts to reduce poverty and hunger should include efforts to support safe migration to reduce women's risks of being trafficked and exploited (SDG 5).¹¹ At the same time, VAWG limits the ability of women and girls to complete their education (SDG 4) and to participate in paid labour (SDG 8), causing women to lose income which can lead to their loss of housing.¹²

VAWG also increases women's risks of physical health problems, and can lead to poor health and well-being (SDG 3). The risks to physical health for VAWG survivors include short-term injuries and long-term health problems (e.g. anxiety, depression, sleeping problems, chronic fatigue, self-harming or suicidal behaviours). There are also sexual and reproductive health risks, including unwanted and early pregnancy (either through rape or by reducing a women's ability to negotiate contraceptive use with their sexual partners), and increased risks of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.¹³ In the most extreme cases, women who experience violence are at risk of disfigurement, disability and even death.

In Malawi, VAWG in both public and private spaces is an everyday occurrence for women and girls in both urban and rural areas.¹⁴ International research reveals women and girls experience and fear various types of violence in public spaces, particularly sexual violence and harassment, as it happens in and around public transportation, schools and universities, workplaces, market places, parks, public sanitation facilities (public toilets), and water and food distribution sites.¹⁵ This impacts negatively on women and girl's health and well-being as well as sense of safety and security.

Main Indicators for Social Norms Interventions

In an effort to support UN Women's programming initiatives and social norms interventions, the following indicators are offered based upon the data collected. The *Adult Gender Public Survey* and *District Officials Survey* that were developed and used in this baseline study can be used in full or in part as the monitoring and evaluation tools to measure social norms in future projects. Use of the same data collection tools will provide UN Women and its partners with the means to assess the impact of project activities over time against this baseline study.

Below is a list of 25 main indicators and goals that UN Women and its partners can choose from as they aim to measure project impact against this baseline study.

1. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in project districts who perceive the existence of social norms that support gender equality in education, marriage and family, women's employment, and women's health care. *(Goal: An increase over time in social norms that support gender equality)*
2. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in project districts who perceive the existence of social norms related to wife abuse for various reasons, including disobeying their husband, arguing with their husband, going out without telling their husband, and refusing sexual intercourse. *(Goal: A decrease over time in social norms that support wife abuse)*
3. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in project districts who hold attitudes that do not support wife abuse or women's tolerance for violence in their marriage. *(Goal: A decrease over time in attitudes supportive of wife abuse and women's tolerance for violence in their marriage)*
4. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who disapprove of wife abuse *(Goal: An increase over time in disapproval of wife abuse)*
5. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in project districts who perceive the existence of social norms related to sexual violence against women and girls. *(Goal: A decrease over time in social norms that support sexual violence against women and girls)*
6. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who disapprove of sexual violence against women and girls *(Goal: An increase over time in disapproval of sexual violence against women and girls)*
7. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who perceive the existence of social norms related to harmful practices. *(Goal: A decrease over time in social norms that support harmful practices)*
8. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who report a decrease in the frequency of harmful practices *(Goal: A decrease over time in the frequency of harmful practices)*
9. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who are able to identify traditional practices as harmful for females *(Goal: An increase over time in the ability to identify traditional practices are harmful to women and girls)*
10. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who are able to recognize the harm done to women and girls from traditional practices *(Goal: An increase over time in the ability to recognize the harm done to women and girls from traditional practices)*
11. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who perceive the existence of social norms related to child and early marriage of girls *(Goal: An increase over time in social norms that are against child and early marriage of girls)*
12. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who disapprove of marriage of girls before 15 years of age *(Goal: An increase over time in disapproval of marriage of girls before 15 years of age)*
13. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who disapprove of marriage of girls before 18 years of age *(Goal: An increase over time in disapproval of marriage of girls before 18 years of age)*
14. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who understand the relationship between child marriage/early marriage and wife abuse. *(Goal: An increase over time in understand of the relationship between child and early marriage and wife abuse)*
15. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who perceive the existing of social norms that support victim-blaming of VAWG survivors. *(Goal: A decrease over time in social norms that support victim-blaming of VAWG survivors)*

16. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who are willing to intervene and report incidents of VAWG to the police and other district authorities. *(Goal: An increase over time in the willingness to intervene and report incidents of VAWG to the police and other district authorities)*
17. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who perceive the existence of social norms supportive of VAWG survivors reporting incidents of VAWG to district officials and formal authorities. *(Goal: An increase over time in social norms supportive of VAWG survivors reporting incidents of VAWG to district officials and formal authorities)*
18. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who perceive VAWG as a serious problem. *(Goal: An increase over time in perceptions of VAWG as a serious problem)*
19. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in project districts who perceive the existence of social norms that support government responsibility to protect women and girls from violence. *(Goal: An increase over time in social norms that support government responsibility to protect women and girls from violence)*
20. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who perceive the importance of having laws in Malawi that protect women and girls from VAWG, including child and early marriage. *(Goal: An increase over time in perceptions of the importance of laws in Malawi that protect women and girls of VAWG, including child and early marriage)*
21. Proportion of the general public and/or district officials in the project districts who the existence of social norms that support punishment of perpetrators of VAWG. *(Goal: An increase over time in social norms that support punishment of perpetrators of VAWG)*
22. Proportion of district officials in project districts who are responsible for responding to and register VAWG. *(Goal: An increase over time in district officials' responsibility to respond to and register VAWG)*
23. Proportion of agencies/organizations in project districts that have guidelines on how to provide support and referrals in VAWG cases *(Goal: An increase over time in the number of agencies/organizations that have guidelines on how to provide support and referrals in VAWG cases)*
24. Proportion of district officials in project districts who perceive the importance of providing VAWG survivors with essential services *(Goal: An increase over time in perceptions of the importance of providing VAWG survivors with essential services)*
25. Proportion of district officials in project districts who have been trained on a range of topics related to women's rights, gender equality and VAWG *(Goal: An increase over time in district officials trained on topics related to women's rights, gender equality and VAWG)*

End notes

1. UN General Assembly (2016). Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Seventy-first session, Item 27 of the provisional agenda, Advancement of Women.
2. UN General Assembly (2016). Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Seventy-first session: Item 27 of the provisional agenda Advancement of Women.
3. Ibid.
4. Available from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>
5. Alexander-Scott, M., E. Bell & J. Holden (2016). DFID Guidance Notes: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls. London: VAW Helpdesk, p. 4
6. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework – Malawi 2019-2023.
7. Alexander-Scott, Bell & Holden, 2016, p.4
8. Remarks by UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women (21 September 2016). Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women> (Retrieved on 4 April 2017).
9. Ibid.
10. Similarly, men who live in poverty and face difficult economic circumstances – such as unemployment, limited job autonomy, and blocked advancement due to lack of education – are more likely to commit acts of VAWG because they cannot find jobs or earn an income, which can lead to anger, frustration and violence.
11. Ibid.
12. Addressing violence against women and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (2005). WHO: Geneva, Switzerland. Available from <http://www.who.int/gender/documents/MDGs&VAWGSept05.pdf> (Retrieved on 4 April 2017).
13. Women with STDs have a higher risk of complications during pregnancy, including sepsis, spontaneous abortion and premature birth.
14. Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces> (Retrieved 7 April 2017).
15. Ibid.



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