

# Collaborating in Research to Stop Violence Against Girls in School

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# Aims

- To present background to ActionAid's initiative to Stop Violence Against Girls in School in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique
- To share research findings
- To reflect on the challenges and potential of multi-partner, multi-country research

# Background to the SVAGS project

- Stop Violence Against Girls in School in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique led by ActionAid, funded by Big Lottery Fund - £4 million over 5 years (2008-13)
- Approx. 15 primary schools in each country, located within one district (Remote rural: Northern Ghana, North Eastern Kenya, peri-urban Mozambique)
- 4 outcomes: strengthened legal and policy frameworks, reduced violence, girl-friendly schools, girls confident to challenge violence.
- 7 different national partner organisations (advocacy, community, research) + ActionAid country programmes + Institute of Education

# Stop Violence Against Girls in School - Ghana



# Stop Violence Against Girls in School - Kenya



# Stop Violence Against Girls in School



# Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools: Interventions

## Legal and policy frameworks

- Advocacy with policymakers; Work with media; Popular campaigns; local child protection mechanisms

## Reducing violence

- Boys' clubs; Reflect circles; Community awareness raising; Links between formal and informal protection systems

## Girl-friendly schools

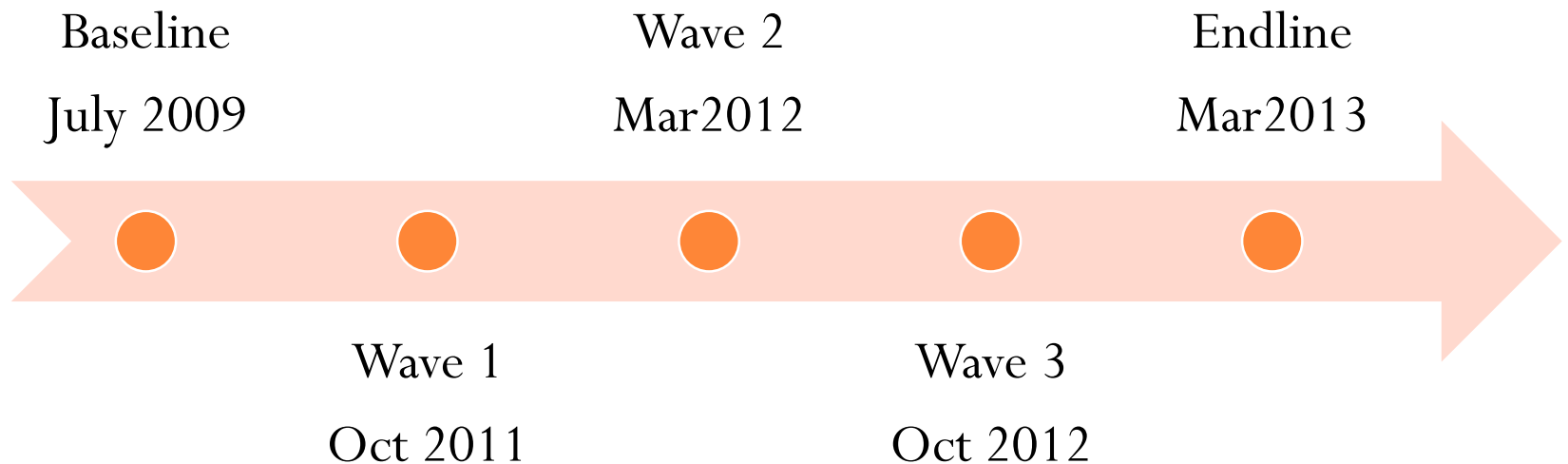
- Gender sensitive school plans/policies; In-service training on violence against girls and gender sensitive pedagogy

## Empower girls to challenge violence

- Girls' clubs; Girls' camps; Girls undertaking mobilisation and outreach to peers in school, girls out of school, others in communities

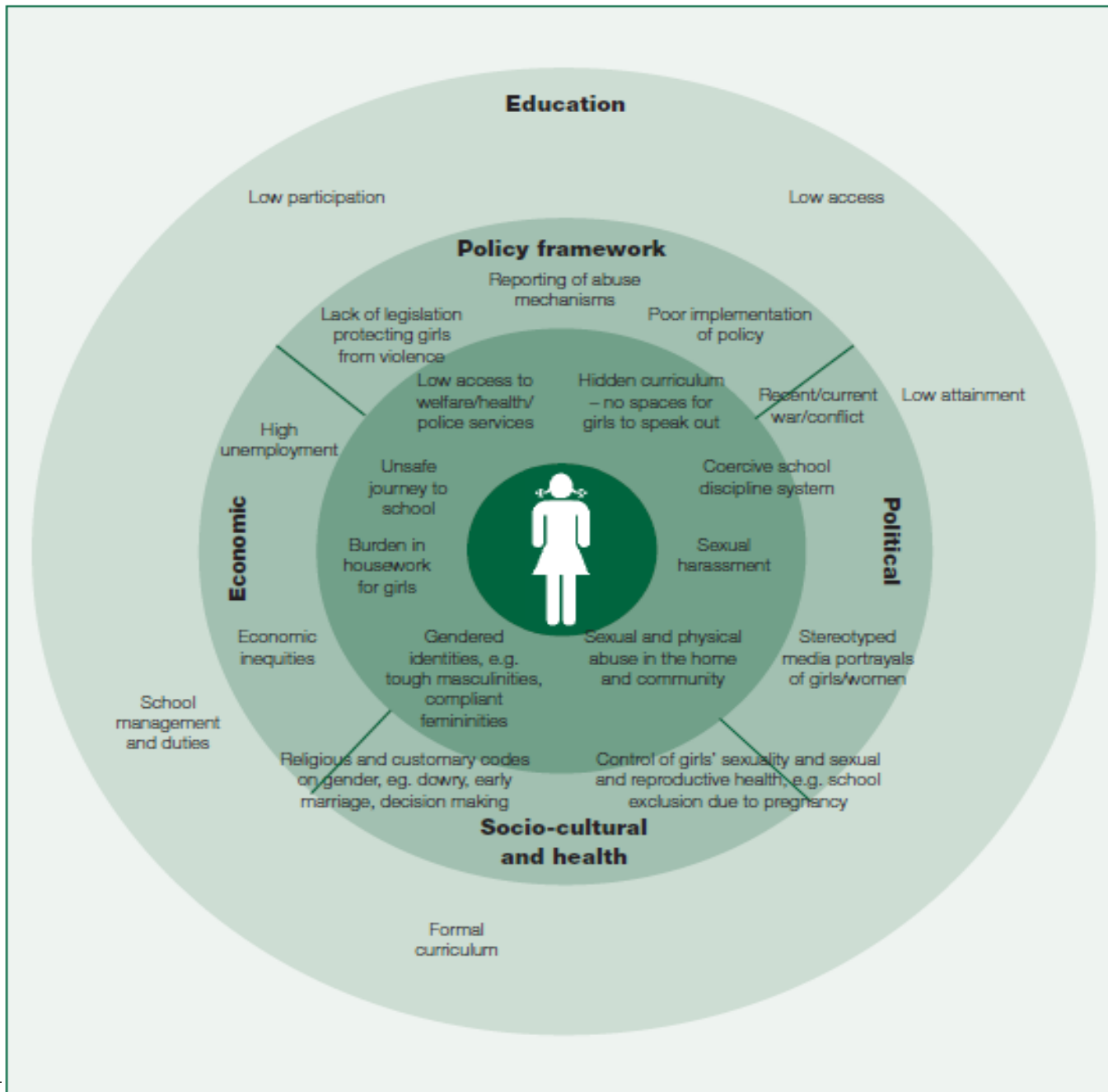
## SVAGS Research

- Mixed method baseline and endline studies
- Qualitative longitudinal studies exploring how girls' capacities to challenge violence and gender inequalities change over the course of the project
- Monitoring and Evaluation system to gather and analyse data on indicators annually and feed into programming
- Endline: 2, 739 respondents: girls and boys, teachers, school records, headteachers, parents, SMC members, community and women's group leaders, religious leaders, district education officers, police, district health officials





# Stop Violence conceptual framework



# Baseline study findings

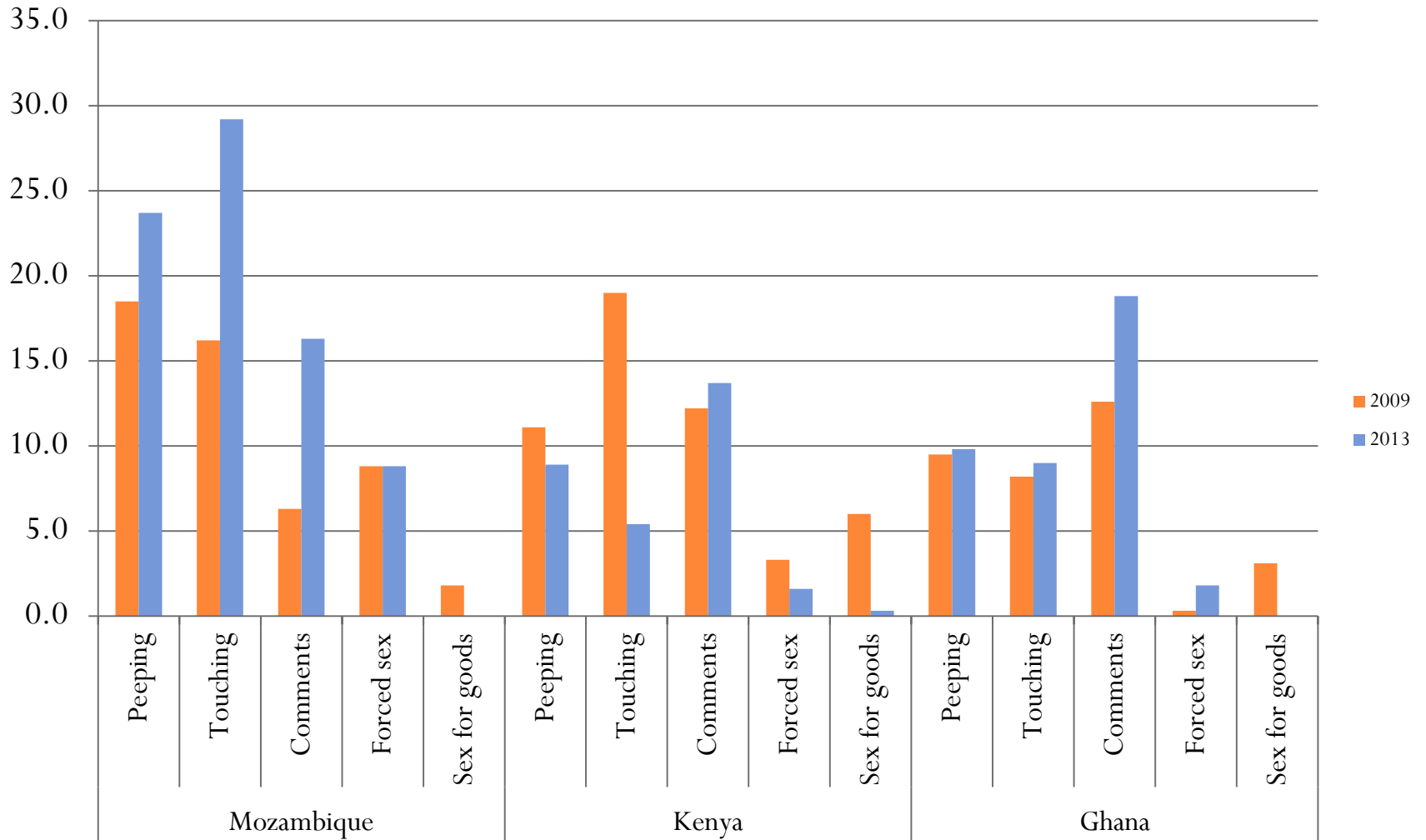
- 86% of girls in Kenya, 82% in Ghana, 66% in Mozambique experienced some form of violence in past year - Physical punishments very common at home and school;
- Past year sexual violence experienced by 30% of girls in Kenya, 29% in Mozambique, 23% in Ghana, often involving community members and boys out of school. Girls viewed both as victims and to blame.
- Girls rarely report violence; and only a tiny minority of cases are referred to police or support services. Weak services, and poor links between formal and community justice systems.
- Girls' school enrolment drops in later years, due to household chores and childcare, inability to pay school fees, child pregnancy and marriage.
- Changes in national laws and policies are feeding through in very uneven ways to local levels.

# Key research challenges and achievements early in the project

- Different locations and positioning in relation to the research-practice continuum
- Varying understandings about 'research' – issues with design, time-consuming, resources
- Dynamics of power across different sites of research iteration
- Developing a conceptual map
- Baseline to action workshops – opportunities to use research findings to reflect on practice and influence intervention (though inflexible project outcomes); for advocacy and intervention partners to influence research design.

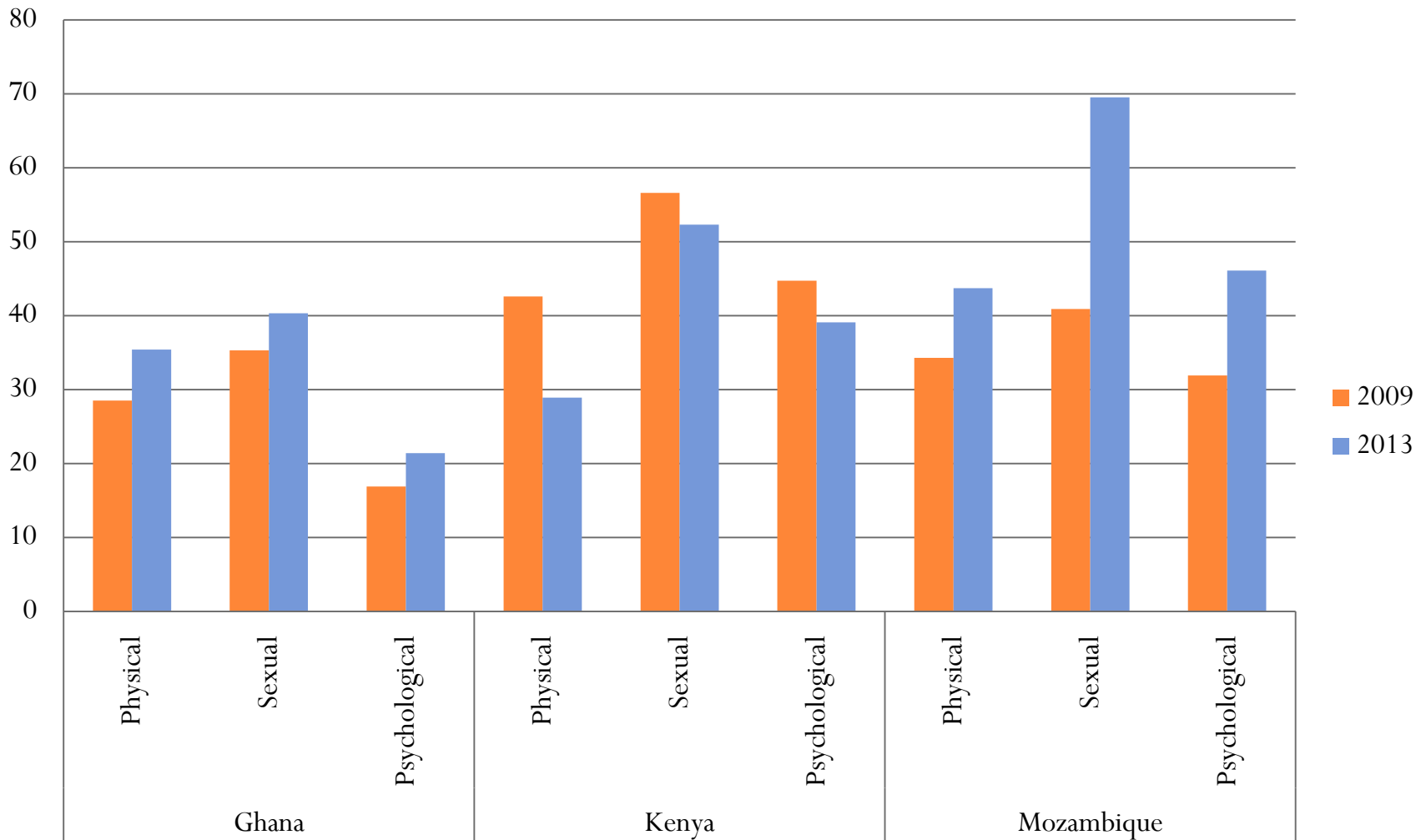
# Endline study: Sexual violence

% girls disclosing experiencing sexual violence in the past 12 months



# Reporting violence

% girls experiencing violence who told someone



# Are girls who have more knowledge more likely to report violence?

|  |       | Knowledge of local support organisations | Reporting violence index |
|--|-------|--|--------------------------|
| Knowledge of reporting mechanisms        | Moz   | <b>0.194 (0.000)**</b>                   | <b>0.135 (0.001)**</b>   |
|  | Kenya | <b>0.178 (0.000)**</b>                   | <b>0.106 (0.025)*</b>    |
|  | Ghana | <b>0.122 (0.016)*</b>                    | 0.027 (0.590)            |
| Knowledge of local support organisations | Moz   |  | <b>0.139 (0.001)**</b>   |
|  | Kenya |  | <b>0.125 (0.009)**</b>   |
|  | Ghana |  | 0.042 (0.409)            |

## Ghana: 11-13 year old girls on sexual relationships and perceived risks, such as pregnancy and HIV

### *ARE THERE ANY ACTIONS ON YOUR PART THAT MIGHT HELP THE SITUATION?*

- 2: We should tell them that education is important for them. If they don't listen, it will be difficult for them to continue their education.*
- 1: We will tell the elders to tell the parents to advise them. If the children refuse, the chief should lock them in his palace.*
- 4: We will tell them that they should stop going out at night.*
- 5: We have to tell them to stop going to dances.*

### *HAS ANYTHING BEEN DONE TO HELP THE SITUATION?*

- 6: The elders of the community. They call the girls' parents and the elders in community talk and advise them.*
- 1: Chief calls the community and told the parents that if the girls go out and are caught, they should be beaten.*
- 3: The elders gathered the community to talk to them.*
- 4: The head mistress has advised us at assembly.*
- 5: The girls' club has been told about AIDS. The mentor has talked to us.*
- 2: Chairman told parents not to let the girls go for dance.*
- 6: Action Aid has talked to our parents.*

## Mozambique: Increasing recognition on sexual violence

- Context of economic insecurity, migration, intergenerational and transactional sex:

*“In fact, some girls date much older people, and others are with big men. Those men burn coal to sell and that is why they give some money or cookies to the girls. They in exchange have sex with them.”*  
(11 years)

*“There are intergenerational relationships. I don’t know why... Some girls only want the money that men give in exchange for sex. When some refuse, there are men who beat them up.”* (16 years)

- Better access to information, communication and services

*“I like to be a Girls’ Club member because it helps me to know my rights, my duties, what to do to prevent pregnancy and how to help other people”* (Megui, 15 years).



# Girl club effect?

Knowledge and reporting of girls in and not in girls clubs

|  |       | Girls not in clubs | Girls in clubs | Significance |
|--|-------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|
| % with knowledge of laws/policies      | Ghana | 7.0                | 17.3           | *            |
|  | Kenya | 7.5                | 13.3           | *            |
|  | Moz   | 28.7               | 67.2           | **           |
| % identify formal reporting mechanisms | Ghana | 97.2               | 100.0          | *            |
|  | Kenya | 84                 | 96.9           | **           |
|  | Moz   | 81.9               | 96.9           | **           |
| % knowing local support organisation   | Ghana | 66.4               | 84.1           | **           |
|  | Kenya | 40.6               | 48.4           | *            |
|  | Moz   | 34.7               | 64.1           | **           |
| % reporting any violence to someone    | Ghana | 38.5               | 38.9           |              |
|  | Kenya | 40.6               | 48.4           |              |
|  | Moz   | 34.7               | 64.1           | **           |

# Conclusions on the findings

- The project site in Mozambique appeared to be a more enabling setting for intervening on sexual violence, with girls increasingly able to recognise and speak out against violence.
- In rural Ghana, anti-sex discourses may have acted as a barrier to girls reporting and taking action on sexual violence.
- Processes of change are embedded within highly localised contexts, leading to varying challenges for NGOs and need for sensitive and tailored interventions
- Interplay of quantitative and qualitative analysis helped to interpret puzzling findings.

# Further reflections on research relationships

- Five year collaboration established strong working relationships between research teams, and across project partnership
- Gradual alignment of research expectations over time
- Findings at each phase fed in to annual meetings, and project design adjustment
- Management of disappointment when findings did not demonstrate project fully meeting its objectives – risks in evaluative research

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