



# **Navigating the Intersection between Gender and Adolescent Mental Health**

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# Objectives

- To understand the relationship between gender and adolescent mental health
- To discuss priorities for research and action to improve adolescent mental health by focusing on gender



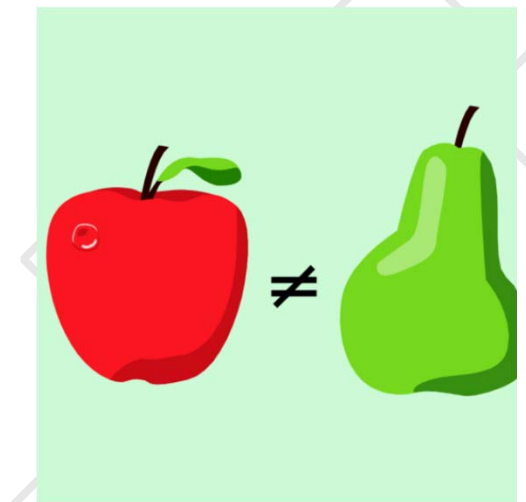
# Sex or Gender?

## Sex

- Biologically determined
- Chromosomes: Male and Female
- Internal and external organs

## Gender

- Social construct
- Behaviors, roles and expectations of society
- Femininity and Masculinity



# Gender Exists Along a Continuum

**Biological Sex**  
(anatomy, chromosomes, hormones)

Male

Intersex

Female

**Gender Identity**  
(psychological sense of self)

Man

Third Gender

Woman

**Gender Expression**  
(communication of gender)

Masculine

Androgynous

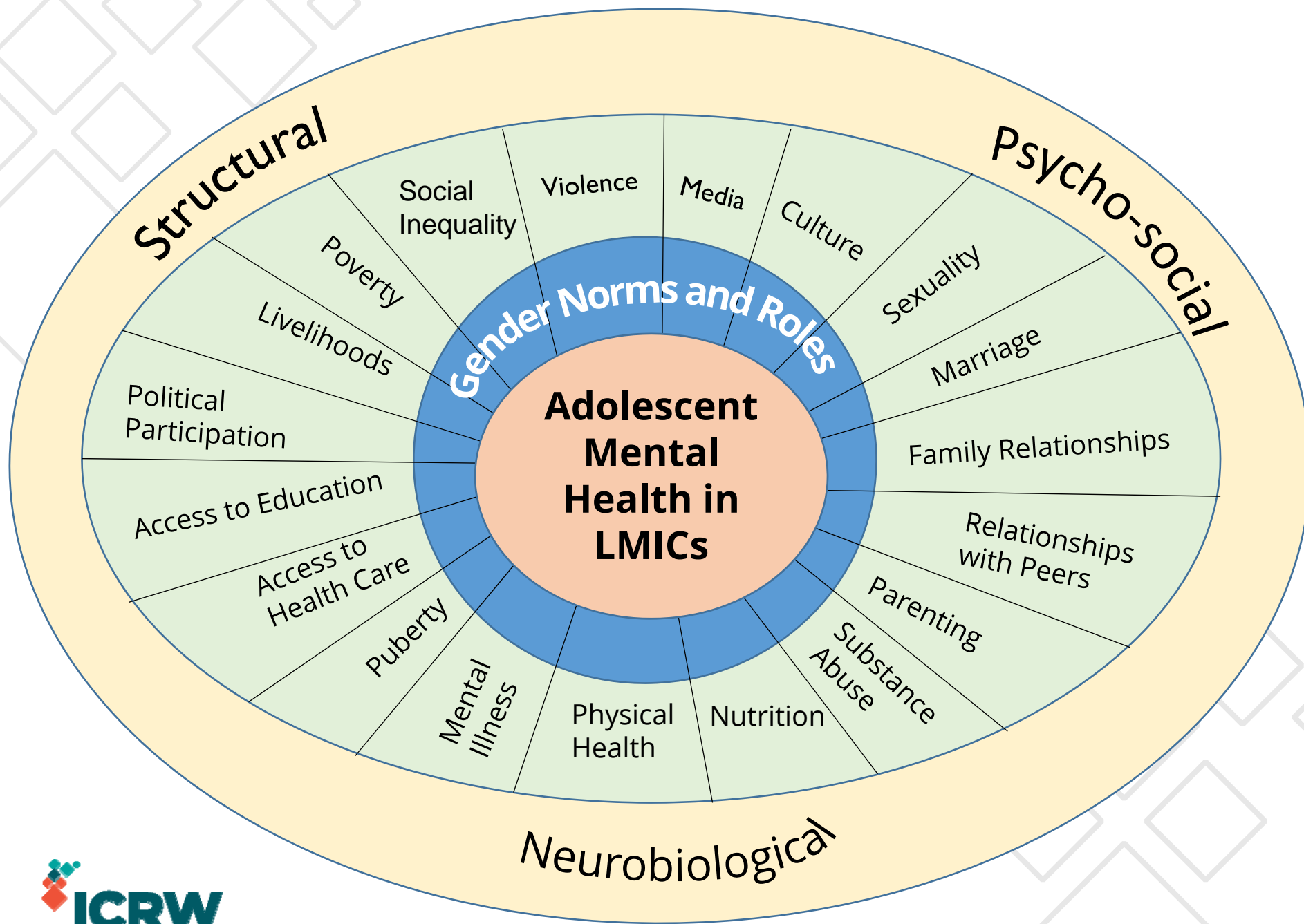
Feminine

# Gender & Mental Health

“Gender is a critical determinant of mental health and mental illness. It determines the differential power and control men and women have over the socioeconomic determinants of their mental health and lives, their social position, status and treatment in society, and their susceptibility and exposure to specific mental health risks .”

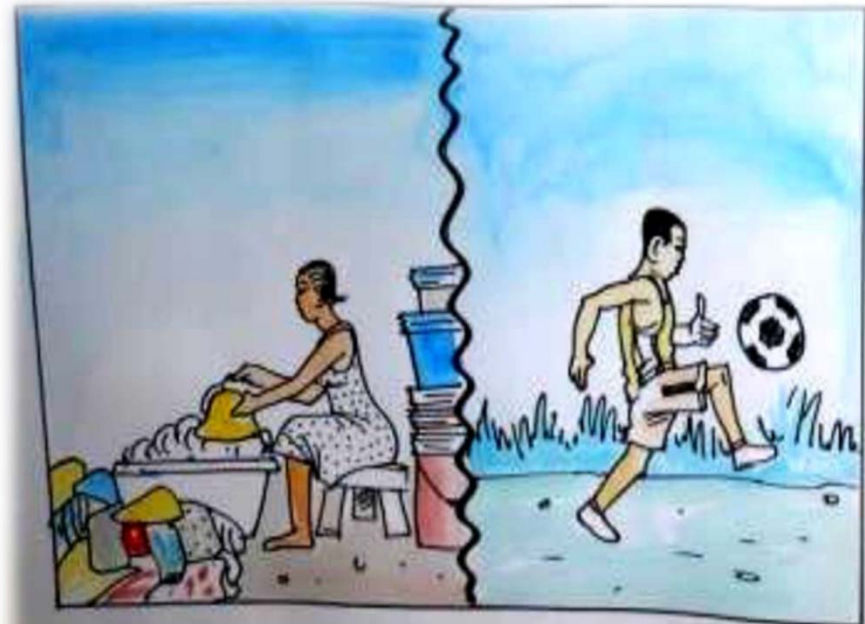
(WHO, 2014)





# Gender & Mental Health

- Gender role differentiation
- Gender intensification
- Gender role conflict



# Deaths in 15-19 year olds

(1990, 2005, 2013)

## Male

Road injuries 17.5% (16.1-19.5)	Road injuries 19.6% (18.0-21.4)	Road injuries 18.7% (16.8-20.8)
Self-harm 7.3% (6.0-8.6)	Self-harm 7.9% (6.0-9.4)	Interpersonal violence 7.8% (5.3-9.3)
Drowning 7.2% (5.7-8.7)	Interpersonal violence 7.6% (5.3-9.3)	Self-harm 7.4% (5.7-9.4)
Interpersonal violence 6.8% (4.9-8.6)	Drowning 6.3% (5.2-7.9)	Drowning 5.9% (4.7-7.9)
Tuberculosis 4.6% (3.8-5.4)	Intestinal infectious diseases 3.2% (1.6-5.6)	HIV/AIDS 5.4% (4.6-6.2)

## Female

Self-harm 8.8% (7.5-10.1)	Self-harm 9.9% (7.5-12.9)	Self-harm 9.8% (7.1-12.9)
Tuberculosis 6.8% (5.7-8.2)	Road injuries 8.0% (6.8-9.0)	Road injuries 7.6% (6.3-8.8)
Road injuries 6.6% (5.9-7.8)	Tuberculosis 5.6% (4.2-6.7)	HIV/AIDS 7.5% (6.4-8.7)
Fire, heat, and hot substances 5.6% (4.1-7.6)	Diarrhoeal diseases 4.2% (3.3-5.4)	Tuberculosis 4.4% (3.3-5.6)
Diarrhoeal diseases 5.2% (4.3-6.3)	Fire, heat, and hot substances 4.0% (2.7-6.1)	Fire, heat, and hot substances 3.9% (2.5-6.1)



# Violence Against Children Survey

Distribution (%) of suicidal thoughts in adolescents ages 13-19

VACS* Country (survey year)	Females	Males	Difference (Females-Males)
Cambodia (2013)	5.41%	1.28%	<b>4.13%</b>
Haiti (2012)	23.41%	6.27%	<b>17.14%</b>
Kenya (2010)	13.44%	6.29%	<b>7.15%</b>
Malawi (2013)	4.43%	2.50%	<b>1.93%</b>
Tanzania (2009)	7.30%	5.51%	<b>1.79%</b>
Swaziland (2007)*	14.00%	N/A	N/A
<b>Average</b>	11.33%	4.37%	6.43%

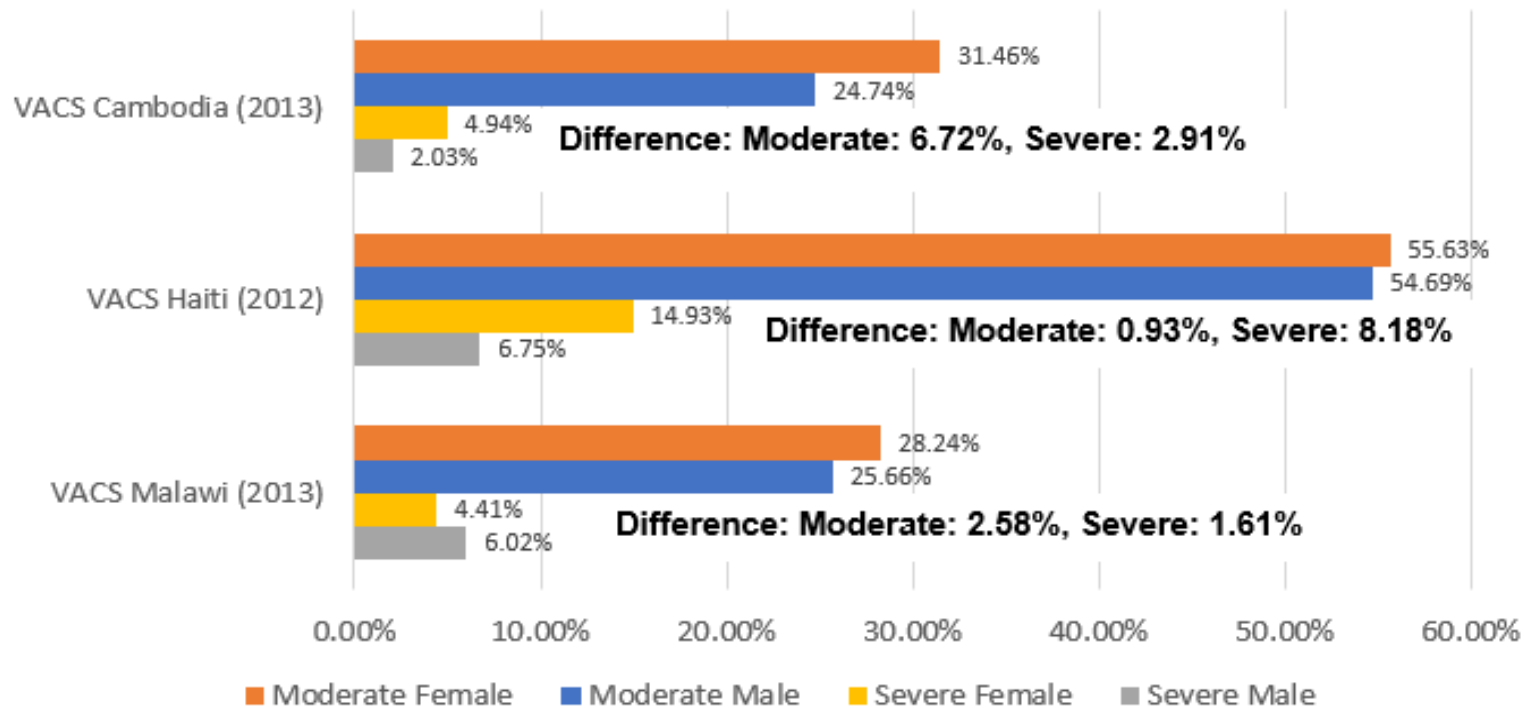
% = adjusted; accounted for complex survey design within each dataset

\* = Violence Against Children Survey

\*\* = females surveyed only

# Violence Against Children Survey

Distribution of mental distress (%) by level of severity among adolescents using K6 scale for Adolescents ages 13-19 Years



# Our Preliminary Haiti Analyses

## Adolescent girls have a higher odds of experiencing mental distress in the past 30 days:

- if they've ever worked
- are wealthier
- or have experienced multiple forms of violence (sexual, physical, emotional) in the last 12 months.

## Strong evidence of association between:

- suicidal ideation
- mental distress
- risk-taking behaviors (e.g. ever having sex)
- having experienced multiple different forms of violence in the last 12 months

# Opportunities for Action

## Research

- Systematic Review
- Programmatic Review
- Secondary data analyses
- Scale development
- Qualitative and
- Quantitative Research
- Pilot test interventions

## Program

- Integrate gender in adolescent friendly services
- Adapt materials and curriculum
- Train frontline professionals on gender-specific risk factors

# Opportunities for Action

## Donor

- Invest in rigorous evaluations
- Fund the development, implementation and scaling up of effective strategies

## Policy

- Strengthen the health sector's response
- Policy review and change
- Action plans
- National guidelines, standards, and supporting tools

# More to Life International



# Together for Girls



# International Medical Corps





Questions?