

GLOBAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH REGARD TO AIDS

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative



Multiple vulnerabilities

Girls and young women 15-24 years

2 to 1 female to male ratio

- **Biological:** immaturity of the reproductive tract
- **Cultural:** child minders, care givers, bread winners
- **Social:** cross-generational sex, power inequalities, violence
- **Economic:** transactional sex; lack of access to education, training, paid employment

Intertwined vulnerabilities

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative



HOW ?

Focus on **concrete actions**
for women and girls



The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative

PRINCIPLES

- Women are not victims
- Girls and young women at greatest risk
- Low risk → high vulnerability
- Change is possible
- HIV + women are key
- Men and boys can be positive forces for change



ACTIONS

1. **Prevent** HIV infection among girls and young women, including access to reproductive health care
2. **Reduce violence** against women (highlighting the links to HIV vulnerability)
3. **Protect** the property **ownership and inheritance rights** of women and girls
4. Ensure **equal access** by women and girls to **care and treatment**



5. Support **improved community-based care**, with special focus on women and girls
6. Promote access to **new prevention options** for women, including microbicides
7. Support on-going efforts towards **universal education for girls**



1. **Prevent** infection among women and girls



When prevention messages miss the point

Message

Reality

Abstain from sex

Rape and forced sex –
Women don't choose

Be faithful

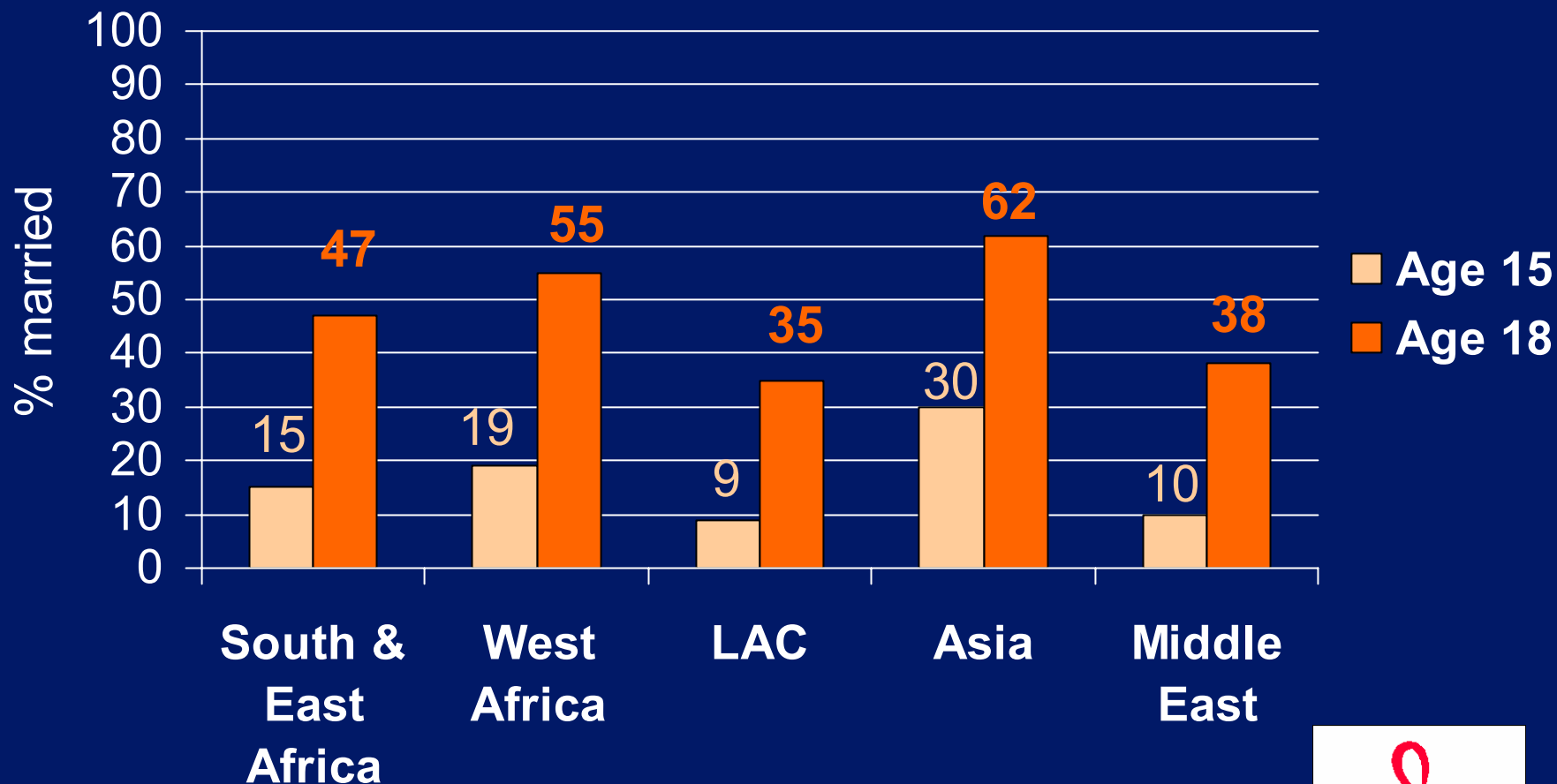
“Faithful” women infected by
their partners (**her situation
not behaviour is risky**)

Condomize

Coercion and forced sex –
women can't negotiate



Proportion of Adolescent Girls Married by Age 15 & 18



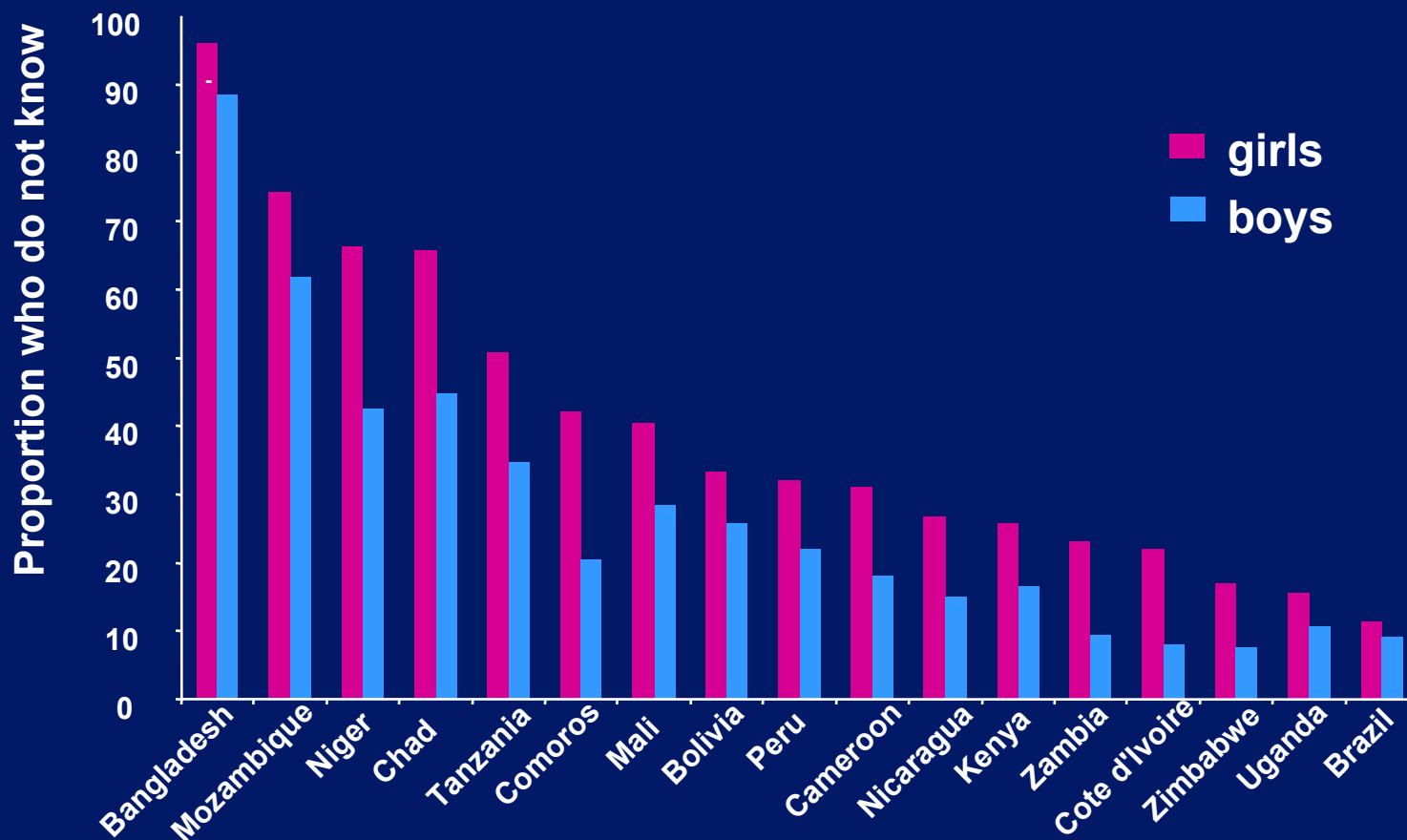
Source: DHS data

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative



Proportion of girls and boys aged 15-19 years who do not know how to protect themselves from HIV

Surveys in selected countries, 1994-1998



Source: Demographic and Health Surveys, Macro International, USA, and UNICEF

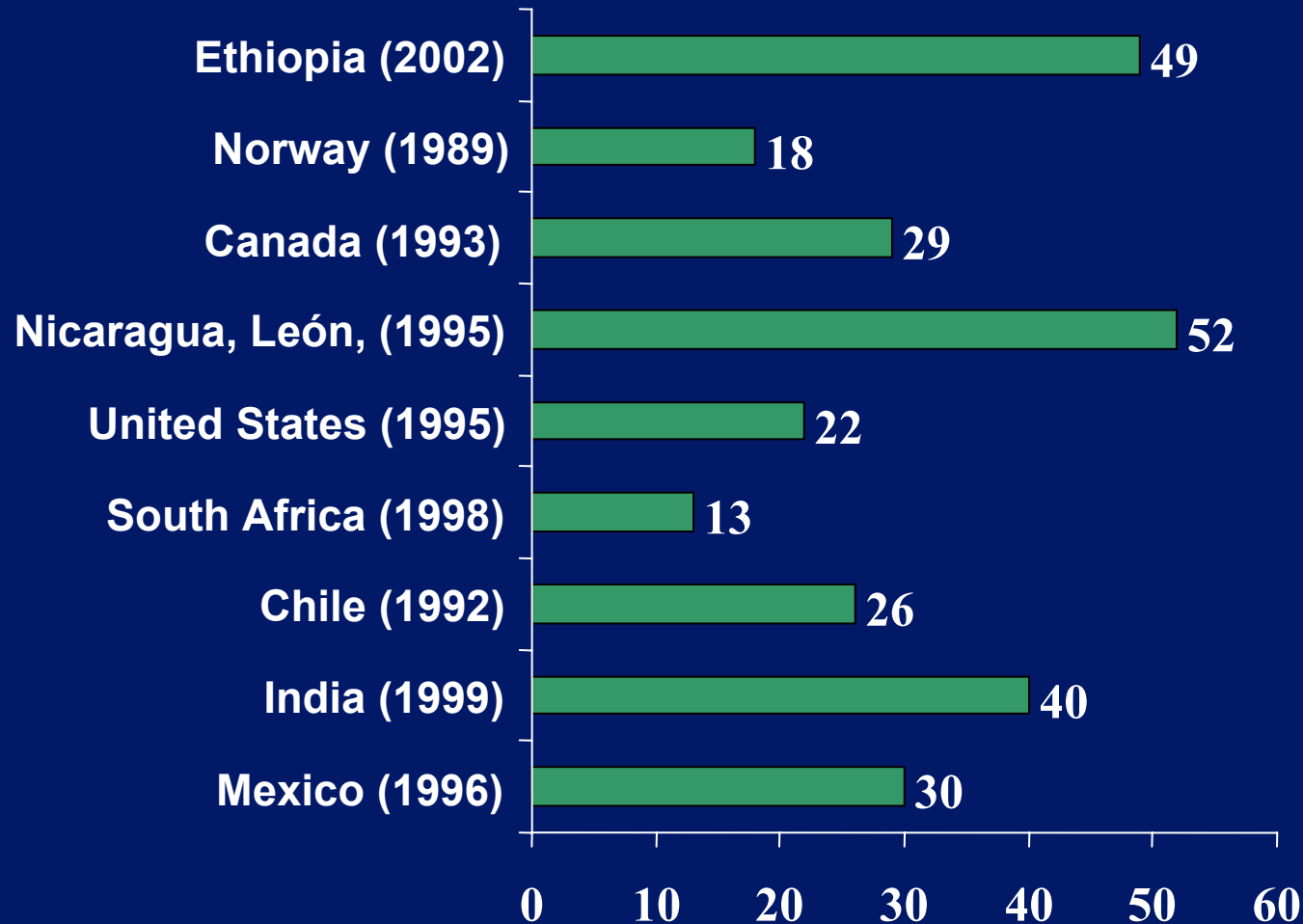
The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative



2. **Reduce violence** against women,
making the links to
vulnerability to HIV/AIDS



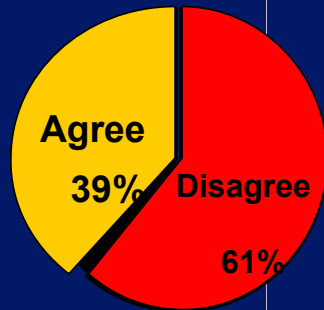
Prevalence of intimate partner violence



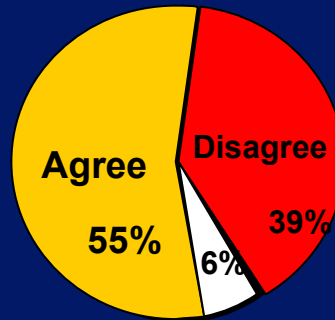
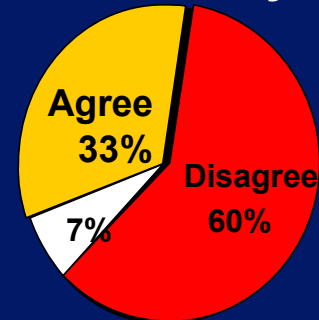
The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative

Percentage of sexually experienced girls in South Africa who say ...

“I have been forced to have sex.”



“I am afraid of saying no to sex.”



“There are times I don't want to have sex but I do because my boyfriend insists on having sex.”

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/KLA (2000) South African National Youth Survey



The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative

3. Protect the property
ownership and inheritance rights
of women and girls



Heightened importance of women's property and inheritance rights in the context of HIV/AIDS

Ownership and tenure security:

- **reduce vulnerability** to HIV risk factors
- provide **economic resources** to HIV-affected households
- **ensure future provision** of care and adequate resources for **children**



Denial of women's property and inheritance rights has consequences

A study of widows in Namibia found:

- 44% of widows **lost cattle**
- 28% lost small **livestock**
- 41% lost **farm equipment** in disputes with in-laws

A pilot study of 29 widows living with HIV/AIDS in Uganda:

- 90% had **property wrangles** with in-laws
- 88% of those in rural areas lacked adequate **land** for households needs



4. Ensure **equal access**
by women and girls
to **care and treatment**



Equal access by women and girls to care and treatment

- Set targets
- Track uptake of antiretroviral therapy by gender and age
- Proactively seek out women in need
- Assess barriers for women and girls to HIV testing
- Support/facilitate women's adherence to medications



5. Support **improved community-based care**, with a special focus on women and girls



The impact of HIV/AIDS on the care economy

In all cultures, women assume primary responsibility for:

- domestic work within the household
- provision of care to family members

AIDS affects negatively women's ability to:

- participate in income generation
- undertake household tasks
- secure and prepare food



Women's impaired ability means:

- increased poverty
- reduced food security
- reduced school enrolment
- greater gender disparities
- greater stigmatization of women
- further erosion of women's empowerment



6. Promote access to **new prevention options** for women, including microbicides and female condoms



Female condoms

- A review of 41 acceptability studies showed that the degree of acceptance varied from **41 percent to 95 percent**.
- In Zimbabwe, a survey of 1,600 people at retail outlets for female condoms concluded that **single women and men with partners outside of marriage** benefited most from introduction of the female condom.



Microbicide

What is it?

Gel, cream, suppository, film, lubricant, sponge or vaginal ring (slowly releasing active ingredient) that reduces sexually transmitted disease transmission

How does it work?

- kills or inactivates pathogens
- creates a physical barrier
- strengthens body's normal defences
- stops viral entry into cells
- inhibits viral replication

Need for both non-contraceptive and dual-action microbicides

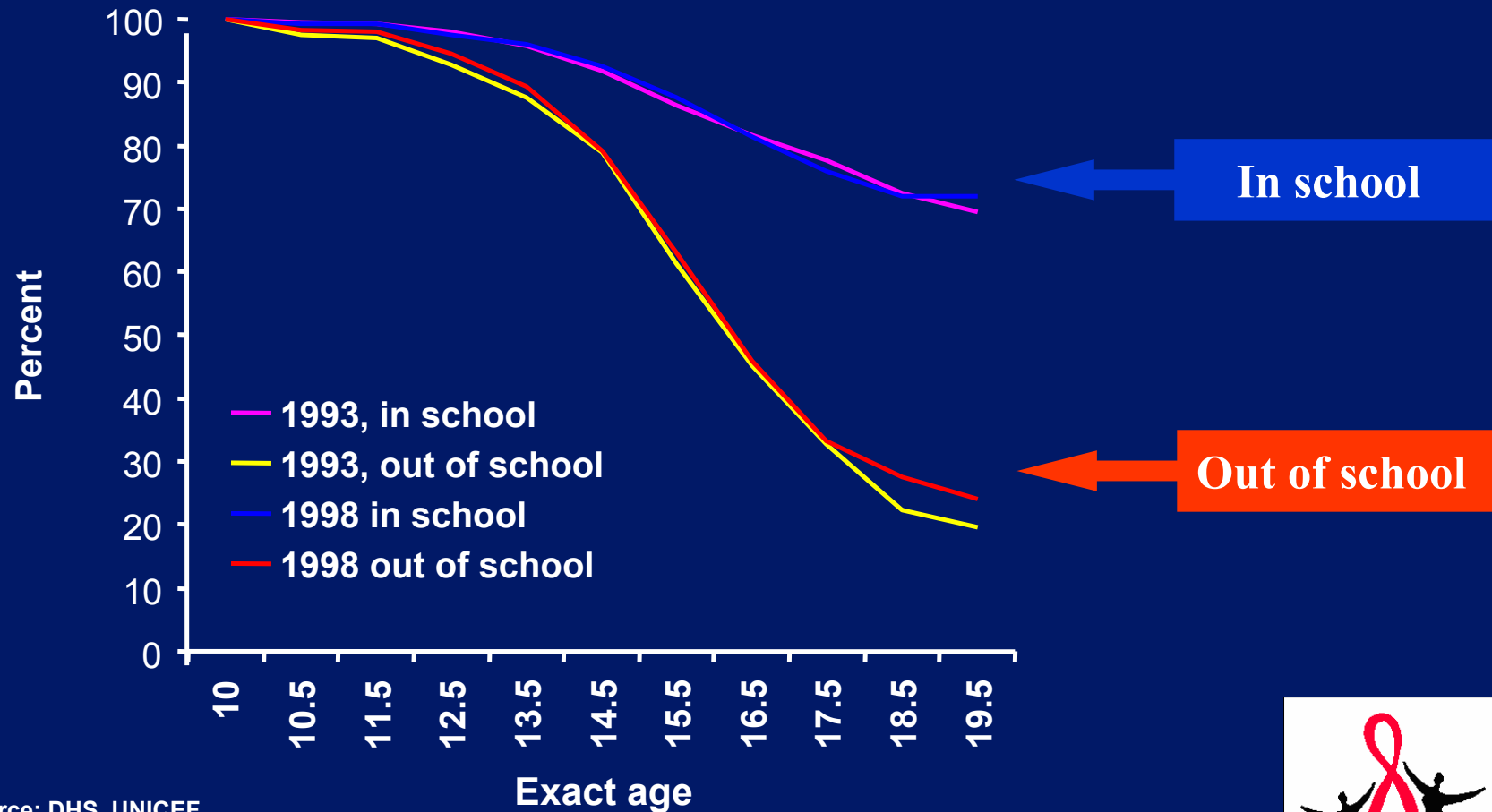


7. Support on-going efforts
towards **universal education for
girls**



School is a protective factor

% of girls who were *not yet sexually active* at various ages, by schooling status, Kenya 1993 and 1998

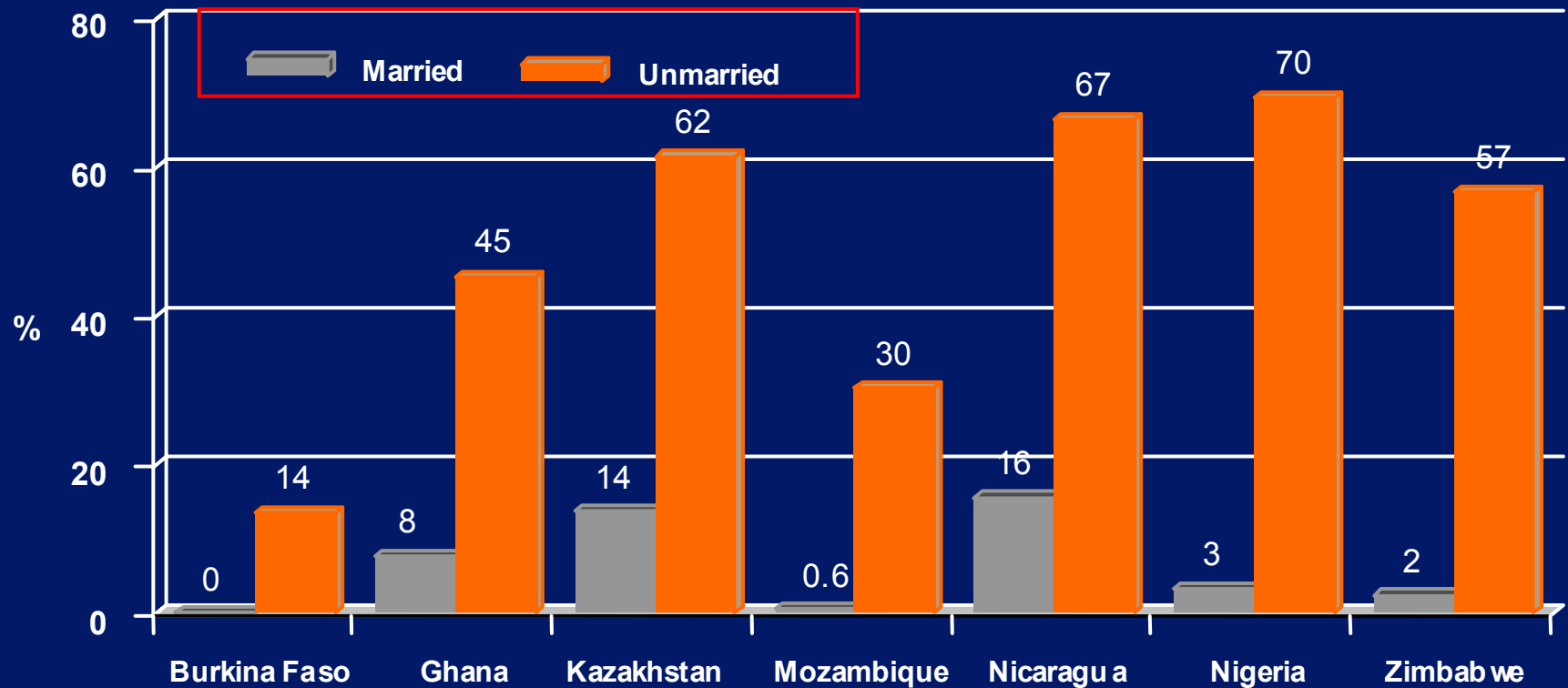


Source: DHS, UNICEF

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative



Percentage of 15 to 19 year old girls (who are not mothers) enrolled in school by marital status



Judith Bruce and Shelley Clarke, Dec 2003.

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS
A UNAIDS Initiative



The Way Forward

- Global Steering Committee
- Convening agencies
- Normative guidance/key messages

