



## POLICY BRIEF NO.1

Date: June 2, 2025

# Leveraging the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (CEVAWG) to Strengthen Nigeria's Response to Gender-Based Violence

## BACKGROUND

Violence against women and girls remains a critical human rights and public health crisis across Africa. Despite the existence of regional and global instruments, systemic and widespread violations persist. Nigeria continues to experience widespread incidents of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), despite legislative and policy efforts such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act/Law (VAPP) and Child's Right Act/ Law at the Federal level and State level. These instruments, while important, face implementation challenges and gaps in scope, particularly in areas such as cyberviolence, and conflict-related abuses. Commendably, 35/36 States have adopted the VAPP Act as Law while 36/36 States have adopted the Child's Right Act as Law.

In response, the African Union (AU) adopted the Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (CEVAWG) during its 38th Ordinary Session in February 2025. This Convention provides a framework for Member States to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres, including cyberspace and during conflict and post-disaster situations. **(Click [here](#) to download Convention).**

## PURPOSE OF THE CONVENTION

CEVAWG aims to:

- Establish a unified, legally binding African framework to end all forms of violence against women and girls including older women.
- Reinforce human rights protections and close implementation gaps in existing AU and international instruments.
- Promote a victim-centered, multi-sectoral approach to prevention, protection, and accountability.

# KEY PROVISIONS

## 1. Right to Live Free from Violence (Article 2)

Every woman and girl in Africa have the right to be free from all forms of violence, without exception.

## 2. Scope (Article 3)

Applies in all contexts: public, private, cyberspace, conflict, disaster, and peacetime.

## 3. State Obligations (Articles 5–9)

Member States must:

- Enact and enforce laws prohibiting all forms of VAWG, including cyberviolence and in the work space
- Provide comprehensive support services.
- Use gender-responsive budgeting to fund anti-VAWG initiatives.
- Address interconnected vulnerabilities (disability, age, displacement, statelessness, economic status).
- Ensure safe and inclusive work environments for women and girls.

## 4. Prevention (Article 10)

States must engage media including social media platforms and, cultural institutions, judiciary, criminal justice sector, educational systems to shift harmful social norms, femicide and promote positive masculinity.

## 5. Protection and Access to Justice (Articles 11–12)

Victims must have access to:

- Free legal aid, protection orders, access to safe homes and centres, and immediate medical and psycho-social services.
- Specialized judicial processes (e.g., fast-track courts)
- Compensation, rehabilitation, and non-discriminatory evidence rules.

## 6. Multisectoral Coordination (Article 13)

Calls for active collaboration among government agencies, civil society, and private sector.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT

- Member States must report progress under Article 62 of the African Charter.
- The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) will oversee interpretation and implementation.
- The African Court may adjudicate disputes arising from the Convention.

## SIGNIFICANCE

CEVAWG fills critical gaps in existing instruments by:

Expanding the scope of violence to include cyberviolence in times of peace, armed conflict, transition, post-conflict, disaster, and post-disaster situations

Requiring gender-disaggregated data collection and evidence-based policies.

Emphasizing the role of positive masculinity and community-led change.

Mandating protections for human rights defenders and survivors' assets and property rights.

## WHY CEVAWG MATTERS FOR NIGERIA

1. Expands Legal Protection
  - Recognizes cyberviolence, femicide, and economic violence as forms of abuse.
  - Targets violence in conflict, displacement, and disaster settings critical for Nigeria given ongoing insecurity across the country
2. Integrates African Values and Positive Masculinity
  - Builds on local norms to challenge patriarchy and promote gender equality in culturally resonant ways.
3. Mandates Victim-Centered, Multi-sectoral Response
  - Strengthens coordination among justice, health, shelter, and social services, with clear standards for survivor care.

- Prioritizes Vulnerable Groups
  - Includes specific protection for women with disabilities, displaced persons, older women, and those in the informal sector

## KEY OBLIGATIONS FOR NIGERIA UNDER CEVAWG

Nigeria will be required to:

1. Enact or harmonize laws that prohibit all forms of violence against women and girls in public, private, and digital spaces.
2. Establish and fund safe homes, trauma centres, legal aid, and rehabilitation services.
3. Ensure fast-track courts and survivor-friendly justice procedures.
4. Adopt gender-responsive budgeting to finance implementation at national and sub-national levels.
5. Regularly collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data to inform policy.
6. Promote public education and positive social norms, including engagement with boys, men, faith and traditional leaders.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NIGERIA**

### **1. Strengthen Implementation of Existing Frameworks**

Integrate CEVAWG into the implementation of the VAPP Act, and state-level SGBV Laws and policies.

### **2. Invest in Survivor Services and Infrastructure**

Scale up access to shelters, psychosocial support, and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) across all states.

### **4. Build a Nationwide Data and Monitoring System**

Develop a central GBV reporting dashboard, incorporating CEVAWG indicators to guide federal and state-level interventions.

### **5. Engage Civil Society and Survivors in Implementation**

Recognize the role of NGOs, women's rights organizations, and survivor-led networks in preventing violence, providing care, and monitoring state accountability.

## **CONCLUSION**

The CEVAWG is a game-changing legal instrument to end violence against women and girls in Africa. Its full potential will only be realized through political will, sustained investment, and inclusive implementation. CEVAWG presents a strategic opportunity for Nigeria to consolidate its leadership in gender rights, strengthen its SGBV response, and meet AU and international human rights obligations.