

POLICY BRIEF No. 2

July 14, 2026

Protecting Women and Girls Online: Strengthening Nigeria's Response to Technology-Facilitated Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

Introduction

Technology-Facilitated Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (TFSGBV) has emerged as one of the most significant threats to the safety, dignity, and participation of women and girls in Nigeria's digital ecosystem. While digital technologies have expanded opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, employment, and civic engagement, they have also created new avenues for abuse. Cyberstalking, sextortion, online sexual harassment, image-based abuse, deepfake pornography, online grooming, and technology-enabled coercive control are increasingly affecting women and girls. Nigeria's current response remains fragmented and largely reactive. This brief proposes a coordinated national framework that integrates legal reform, institutional strengthening, survivor-centred services, digital literacy, and platform accountability.

Key Facts

- 45% of women surveyed reported cyberstalking.
- 10.6% reported doxxing.
- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by online abuse.
- Existing laws provide only partial protection.
- Nigeria currently lacks a dedicated national framework on TFSGBV.

The Policy Problem

Digital violence is rapidly becoming an extension of offline violence. Women and girls are increasingly targeted through online threats, sexualized harassment, blackmail, impersonation, non-consensual sharing of intimate content and AI-generated sexual imagery. These forms of abuse often occur alongside domestic violence, sexual violence and other forms of coercive control. Despite growing prevalence, many survivors do not know where to report, how to preserve evidence or how to obtain protection.

Why This Matters

TFGBV has serious implications for human rights, gender equality, democratic participation and economic development. Survivors may experience trauma, anxiety, depression, reputational harm, educational disruption, loss of employment opportunities and withdrawal from public life. Women journalists, activists, politicians, students and professionals are particularly vulnerable. Failure to address TFSGBV risks undermining Nigeria's digital economy ambitions and broader gender equality commitments.

Current Legal and Policy Framework

Nigeria has several laws and policies that may be applied to TFGBV, including the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015 (as amended in 2024), Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 (VAPP Act), Child Rights Act, 2003 (CRA), National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy, and National Online Child Protection Policy. While these instruments provide important protections, they were not designed to address the full spectrum of emerging digital harms. As a result, gaps remain in prevention, reporting, investigation, prosecution and survivor support.

Key Gaps and Challenges

Legal Gaps: Emerging harms such as deepfake sexual abuse, coordinated online harassment and technology-enabled coercive control are not comprehensively addressed.

Institutional Gaps: Multiple institutions have overlapping mandates, resulting in fragmented responses and weak coordination.

Capacity Gaps: Limited digital forensic capabilities, inadequate training and weak evidence preservation systems hinder investigations.

Survivor Support Gaps: Existing SGBV services are primarily designed for offline violence and often lack digital safety planning and online evidence support.

Social Norms: Misogyny, victim-blaming and harmful gender stereotypes continue to normalize online abuse.

Platform Accountability: Delays in content removal and limited cooperation from technology companies often impede justice.

Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthen and Harmonise Legal and Policy Frameworks

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence should be explicitly recognised and criminalised within federal and state gender-responsive legislation, including the VAPP Act/Laws, Child Rights legislation, and other relevant criminal laws. While the Cybercrimes Act provides important protections, TFSGBV should not be treated solely as a

cybercrime issue because it is fundamentally a form of gender-based violence.

Federal and state governments should review and harmonise existing laws to address emerging forms of digital abuse, including:

- Sextortion
- Image-based sexual abuse
- Deepfake pornography
- Doxxing
- Technology-enabled coercive control
- Online stalking and harassment

The Federal Ministry of Justice should develop model legislative provisions to support state-level reforms and promote consistency across jurisdictions.

2. Strengthen Institutional Capacity for Investigation and Prosecution

Law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, judges, and frontline responders require specialised training to investigate and prosecute TFSGBV effectively.

Priority investments should include:

- Digital forensics capacity.
- Evidence preservation systems.
- Specialized training for investigators and prosecutors.
- Standard operating procedures for handling digital evidence.
- Enhanced cooperation mechanisms between justice institutions and technology companies.

Particular attention should be paid to addressing the investigative challenges arising from Nigeria's limited IPv4 address allocation and the widespread use of shared public IP addresses, which significantly complicates offender identification and attribution.

3. Establish Accessible Reporting and Survivor Support Mechanisms

Survivors require clear, confidential, and survivor-centred pathways for reporting technology-facilitated abuse.

Government and service providers should establish integrated support mechanisms that provide:

- Crisis counselling.
- Legal assistance.
- Digital safety planning.
- Evidence preservation guidance.
- Referrals to law enforcement and psychosocial services.

Existing SGBV referral pathways should be updated to incorporate technology-facilitated violence.

4. Strengthen Platform Accountability and Cooperation

Technology companies play a critical role in preventing and responding to TFSGBV.

The Federal Government should establish formal engagement mechanisms with social media and technology platforms to facilitate:

- Timely content removal.
- Evidence preservation.
- Cooperation with lawful investigations.
- Transparent reporting processes.
- User safety protections.

Given that major social media platforms operating in Nigeria are foreign-owned, stronger bilateral and regulatory mechanisms are needed to ensure cooperation with Nigerian authorities while respecting human rights and privacy standards.

5. Promote Digital Literacy and Online Safety

Digital literacy should be recognised as a protection tool.

Government, schools, civil society organisations, and technology companies should collaborate to improve public awareness and equip women, girls, parents, teachers, and young people with practical skills to:

- Recognise online grooming.
- Identify sextortion attempts.
- Protect personal information.
- Report online abuse.
- Preserve digital evidence.

6. Address Harmful Social Norms and Online Misogyny

TFSGBV is driven not only by technology but also by entrenched gender inequalities and harmful social norms.

- National awareness campaigns should challenge victim-blaming attitudes, promote respectful online behaviour, and reinforce the message that online violence is violence.
- Public education initiatives should also emphasize that sharing, reposting, forwarding, or amplifying abusive content contributes to harm and may constitute a criminal offence.
- Men and boys should be actively engaged as allies in promoting respectful digital behaviour and challenging online misogyny.

7. Integrate TFSGBV into Existing SGBV Programmes

Rather than creating standalone interventions, technology-facilitated violence should be mainstreamed across all SGBV prevention and response initiatives.

This includes integrating TFSGBV into:

- National and state SGBV action plans.
- School-based prevention programmes.
- Community awareness campaigns.
- Survivor support services.

- Justice sector reforms.
- Data collection and monitoring systems.

This approach is more sustainable, cost-effective, and responsive to the reality that online and offline violence frequently overlap.

8. Develop a National Framework on Technology-Facilitated Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

The Federal Government should develop a dedicated national framework that defines TFSGBV, clarifies institutional mandates, establishes referral pathways, promotes coordination, and provides guidance for prevention, protection, investigation, prosecution, and survivor support.

Conclusion

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is no longer a niche cybercrime issue. It is a gender equality, human rights and development challenge. Nigeria has an opportunity to become a regional leader by adopting a coordinated, survivor-centred and future-focused response. Protecting women and girls online is essential to ensuring that all Nigerians can participate safely and meaningfully in the digital age.