



# ISSUE BRIEF

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## Legislative Strategies for Combating Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria: Strengthening Enforcement, Protection, and Support Systems

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### Summary:

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a critical issue in Nigeria, with alarming statistics reported between 2023 and early 2025. In September 2023, the Minister for Women Affairs, Mrs. Uju Kennedy-Ohanenye, announced that 24,720 GBV cases were documented nationwide within a month<sup>1</sup>. Subsequently, in November 2024, her successor, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, revealed that 30% of Nigerian women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical or sexual violence<sup>2</sup>. The trend continued into 2025, with reports indicating a 240% increase in femicide cases in January compared to the previous year<sup>3</sup>. This brief is therefore to highlight the alarming rise in GBV cases in Nigeria, examine the underlying factors contributing to the crisis, and propose legislative recommendations for the National Assembly to strengthen legal frameworks, enhance enforcement mechanisms, and support survivors.

### Background

Gender-Based Violence encompasses various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, and emotional harm, predominantly affecting women and girls. In Nigeria, GBV transcends ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic boundaries, impacting individuals across the nation. Despite legislative efforts, such as the domestication of the Child Rights Act in all 36 states and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act in 35 states<sup>4</sup>, enforcement remains a significant challenge<sup>5</sup>. Thus, this brief looks at the challenges inhibiting the effective implementation of GBV and VAP laws leading to unabating gender-based violence in Nigeria with a view to making recommendations that will reduce GBV and strengthen the implementation of relevant laws.

<sup>1</sup> <https://dailypost.ng/2023/10/03/24720-gender-based-violence-cases-reported-nationwide-in-one-month-minister/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/11/30-of-nigerian-women-experience-gender-based-violence-minister-of-women-affairs/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/25/activists-call-state-emergency-gender-based-violence-nigeria>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.channelstv.com/2024/09/13/malala-fund-hamzat-lawal-others-urge-nigerian-government-to-protect-vapp-act/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/11/30-of-nigerian-women-experience-gender-based-violence-minister-of-women-affairs/>



## Issue

The rising cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria are deeply alarming, with data from 2023 to 2025 revealing a disturbing trend. Thousands of cases have been reported, significantly affecting women and girls across the country. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria recorded 27,698 GBV cases between 2020 and 2023<sup>6</sup>, resulting in 1,145 fatalities and only 393 convictions<sup>7</sup>. In 2024, the Nigeria Police Force reported handling at least 17,415 cases of gender and domestic-based violence<sup>8</sup>, a figure nearly matching the total recorded over the previous three years. Reports further indicate that in January 2025, GBV cases surged by 240% compared to the same period in the previous year<sup>9</sup>.

Beyond statistics, recent cases show the severity of the crisis. In Edo State, a man allegedly killed his 38-year-old pregnant wife just eight months after their wedding<sup>10</sup>. Another tragic incident involved a man who fatally struck his wife on the head with a hammer after accusing her of making video calls with other men<sup>11</sup>. In Lagos, a 23-year-old man was reported to have murdered his 25-year-old girlfriend<sup>12</sup>. Most recently, in Oron L.G.A, Akwa Ibom State, a 42-year-old pastor allegedly butchered his wife, Victoria Okoh, in a gruesome act of domestic violence<sup>13</sup>.

Several factors contribute to this alarming increase in GBV, including weak enforcement of existing laws, deep-rooted cultural norms that tolerate violence, and widespread underreporting due to stigma and fear. The persistently low conviction rates further exacerbate the crisis, emboldening perpetrators and weakening deterrence efforts<sup>14</sup>. Without urgent intervention, the situation is likely to worsen, posing a significant threat to the safety and well-being of women and girl children across Nigeria.

## Rationale

Addressing GBV is imperative for Nigeria's social and economic development. The pervasive nature of GBV hampers women's and girls' ability to contribute fully to society, thereby hindering national progress. High rates of violence also strain healthcare systems, burden the justice system, and perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. Furthermore, the international community closely monitors countries' commitments to human rights, and sustained GBV issues can affect Nigeria's global standing and relations.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/press-releases/16-days-activism-against-gender-based-violence-government-nigeria-unicef-and>

<sup>7</sup> <https://thesun.ng/nigeria-records-27698-sgbv-cases-human-rights-commission/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://punchng.com/17415-gender-violence-cases-reported-in-2024-police/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/25/activists-call-state-emergency-gender-based-violence-nigeria>

<sup>10</sup> <https://dailypost.ng/2025/03/03/benin-women-protest-over-murder-of-pregnant-housewife-by-husband/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://festactown.com.ng/2025/02/12/man-kills-wife-with-hammer-over-video-calls-with-other-men/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://punchng.com/man-arrested-for-beating-girlfriend-to-death-in-lagos/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://punchng.com/police-arrest-man-for-allegedly-killing-wife-in-aibom/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://punchng.com/17415-gender-violence-cases-reported-in-2024-police/>



## Recommendations to the National Assembly for Legislative Actions

To effectively address the escalating cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria, the National Assembly should consider the following legislative actions:

1. **Amend the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, 2015** – Update and strengthen the Act to mandate full compliance and domestication across all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, ensuring uniform implementation and enforcement.
2. **Establish Specialised GBV Courts** – Set up dedicated courts to handle GBV cases promptly, ensuring swift justice delivery, reducing case backlogs, and protecting survivors from prolonged legal battles.
3. **Training for Law Enforcement and Judicial Officers** – Call on the Ministry of Women Affairs, in collaboration with relevant agencies, to provide specialised training for police officers, prosecutors, and judges on handling GBV cases with sensitivity and professionalism.
4. **Mandate Nationwide Awareness Campaigns** – Urge the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to conduct quarterly public awareness campaigns on the legal, social, and economic consequences of GBV, promoting cultural shifts towards zero tolerance for violence.
5. **Strengthen Victim Support Systems** – Legislate the establishment of more shelters, crisis centres, and psychological support services for GBV survivors, ensuring access to protection, medical care, and legal aid.

## Conclusion

The persistence of GBV in Nigeria is a pressing issue that requires immediate and comprehensive action. While legislative frameworks exist, their enforcement is lacking. The National Assembly plays a crucial role in enacting laws that address the root causes of GBV, ensuring justice for survivors, and encouraging a societal shift towards equality and respect. Only through concerted legislative and societal efforts can Nigeria hope to reduce and eventually eliminate GBV, paving the way for a more just and equitable society.

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