

ADDRESSING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN GHANA



POLICY BRIEF



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Introduction

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) has emerged as a significant and evolving threat in Ghana, exacerbated by increased access to digital platforms and mobile technologies. TFGBV refers to acts of violence committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) against individuals based on their gender. It includes cyberstalking, online harassment, image-based sexual abuse (commonly known as “revenge porn”), doxxing, deepfake pornography, digital surveillance, and digital intimate partner abuse.

While TFGBV is recognized as a growing issue worldwide, comprehensive and comparable data on its prevalence, forms, and impacts remain limited. The widespread nature and anonymity afforded by online platforms make it difficult to detect, re-report, and prosecute offenders. Globally, almost 2 in 3 women have experienced TFGBV, and 67% of young people aged 25 and under reported having personally experienced at least one form of TFGBV, compared to people over the age of 25 (57%)^[1]. ^[2] Although Ghana has made important strides in developing digital governance and security infrastructure, the country’s existing legal, policy, and institutional frameworks do not adequately address the distinct nature and impact of TFGBV.

This policy brief draws on an extensive literature review, including academic and grey reports, national legislation and key stakeholder publications. It highlights the core challenges and policy gaps and outlines evidence-based recommendations to address TFGBV as a human rights and development concern.

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UNFPA, “An Infographic Guide to Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence (TFGBV).” Accessed: May 29, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/infographic-guide-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-tfgbv>

[2] S. Dunn, T. Vaillancourt, and H. Brittain, “Supporting Safer Digital Spaces,” 2023, Accessed: May 29, 2025. [Online]. Available: www.cigionline.org

Forms of TFGBV in Ghana



Cyberstalking:

Persistent, unwanted and/or threatening surveillance, contact and/or pursuit by technological means. Cyberstalking can turn to offline stalking and vice versa.

Online harassment:

Repeated conduct that threatens, pesters, scares or abuses someone by sending degrading, offensive or insulting comments or images.

Cyberbullying:

A form of online harassment, the constant and intentional infliction of damage through digital technologies to undermine a target's self-esteem.

Image-based abuse:

The use of imagery, often sexual in nature, to objectify, exploit, humiliate, or harass. This includes the non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery. "Revenge porn" is a form of image-based abuse, but a preferred term is non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery. The commonly used term "revenge porn" suggests consent from and wrongdoing by the survivor to provoke retribution.

Digital intimate partner violence:

Sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by an (ex)-intimate partner, committed or amplified through the use of technology, often to exert coercion and control. This can include cyberstalking methods, threats or acts of image-based abuse, or forcibly limiting a partners' access to technology causing social isolation.



Impact of TFGBV

Personal Impact:

Experiences of TFGBV lead to serious psychological, emotional, social, economic, sexual and physical harm. Escalation of violence that may originate on online platforms can have severe consequences in the physical world, including job loss, loss of friends and family due to social stigma, school drop-out, rape, and suicide.

Societal Impact:

(Young) women who fulfill visible roles in public life, such as politicians, journalists and activists, are often attacked and targeted. This often causes them to withdraw from online and digital spaces, and sometimes public life all together. When their voices are silenced in this way, TFGBV poses a threat to gender equality and democracy.



The current legal framework does not clearly define digital harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, or online stalking, which limits avenues for redress and legal clarity for both survivors and law enforcers.”



Key Issues Identified

Ghana’s Cybersecurity Act (2020), the Data Protection Act (2012), the Electronic Transactions Act (2008), and the Domestic Violence Act (2007) provide broad protections for online security and personal data. However, these laws fall short of explicitly recognizing and criminalizing TFGBV. For instance, the current legal framework does not clearly define digital harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, or online stalking, which limits avenues for redress and legal clarity for both survivors and law enforcers.

Limited Law Enforcement and Judicial Capacity

Law enforcement officers, social welfare staff, and prosecutors often lack the technical capacity, digital tools, or forensic skills needed to investigate and prosecute TFGBV cases. This deficiency is worsened by insufficient budgetary allocation, minimal inter-agency collaboration, and limited access to digital evidence.

Underreporting and Social Stigma

Due to victim-blaming, reputational damage, and cultural taboos, many survivors, particularly adolescent girls, do not report TFGBV incidents. Studies show that online abuse is often normalized or trivialized, with

limited public understanding of its emotional, and psychosocial consequences.

Inadequate Survivor Support Systems

Legal aid, psychological counselling, trauma-informed care, and safe spaces for survivors of TFGBV remain limited. Where services exist, they are fragmented, underfunded, or not youth-friendly, further discouraging reporting and recovery.

Weak Regulation of Online Platforms

Popular platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp are often misused to disseminate harmful content, including sexualized deepfakes, blackmail material, or exploitative images. Enforcement of platform community standards remains weak, and national regulatory oversight lacks teeth to compel global tech companies to act swiftly and responsibly.

Data and Research Gaps

There is a lack of nationally representative data on TFGBV prevalence, patterns, and impacts. Existing studies are fragmented, with limited longitudinal tracking or gender-disaggregated analysis. This affects evidence-based policymaking and advocacy efforts.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks

- The Parliament of Ghana should amend the Cybersecurity Act and Domestic Violence Act to explicitly define and criminalize technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including online stalking, digital surveillance, and non-consensual image sharing.
- The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) should develop a national TFGBV policy framework recognizing TFGBV as a distinct category of gender-based violence.
- The Attorney-General's Department should issue prosecutorial guidelines specifically tailored to TFGBV cases.
- The Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation, in collaboration with the National Cybersecurity Authority, should align Ghana's cyber laws with international instruments such as the Budapest Convention and Malabo Convention.



Enhance Law Enforcement and Judicial Capacity

The Ghana Police Service and Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit should establish specialized TFGBV response desks in all regions.

The Judicial Training Institute should provide certification programs on digital evidence handling, cyber forensics, and trauma-informed prosecution for judges and prosecutors.

The Ministry of Interior should allocate funding to equip law enforcement units with the necessary digital tools and trained personnel for TFGBV investigations.





National Cybersecurity Authority and Data Protection Commission should enforce codes of conduct for digital platforms and telecom companies on user protection and content moderation.”

Improve Data Collection and Research

- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) should incorporate TFGBV indicators into national gender and ICT surveys and conduct periodic TFGBV prevalence studies.
- MoGCSP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and universities, should fund research on survivor experiences and community-based coping strategies.

Expand Survivor Support Services

- Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) should establish one-stop crisis centres that offer free legal aid, psychosocial support, and medical services for TFGBV survivors.
- Legal Aid Commission should integrate TFGBV cases into their service delivery model and increase outreach to vulnerable communities.

Regulate Technology Platforms and Promote Accountability

- National Cybersecurity Authority and Data Protection Commission should enforce codes of conduct for digital platforms and telecom companies on user protection and content moderation.
- Ministry of Communications should set up a multi-stakeholder TFGBV task force (including CSOs and youth) to monitor trends and assess digital platform compliance.

Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)



Advocacy and Legal Reform Support

- Develop and submit policy briefs and legal reform proposals to Parliament and relevant ministries.
- Build coalitions for legislative advocacy and facilitate stakeholder consultations with survivors and marginalized groups.



Training and Capacity Building

- Organize capacity-building workshops for DOVVSU, prosecutors, and court officials on TFGBV-related procedures and survivor-centered approaches.
- Provide technical assistance to regional law enforcement on digital evidence collection and community engagement.



Data and Research

- Lead community-based participatory research on TFGBV trends and survivor experiences.
- Partner with universities and think tanks to generate evidence-based insights for programming and advocacy.



Public Awareness and Engagement

- Create and disseminate educational materials on online safety and reporting mechanisms.
- Partner with faith-based institutions and traditional authorities to challenge harmful gender norms in digital spaces.



Survivor Support Services

- Establish or strengthen peer-led digital safe spaces and referral mechanisms for survivors.
- Operate hotlines and online portals for anonymous reporting and access to psychosocial support.



Monitoring Tech Accountability

- Monitor and report on tech platform compliance with national digital safety regulations.
- Advocate for greater transparency and accountability in platform policies affecting vulnerable users.



Recommendations for Youth Advocates

Legal Literacy and Advocacy

- Use social media platforms to raise awareness about gaps in current laws and call on Parliament to recognize and criminalize TFGBV.
- Organize debates (during youth parliament sittings) and forums that push for legal reforms and amplify survivor voices.

Awareness and Peer Education

- Develop and share infographics, reels, and podcasts to educate peers on TFGBV and safe online practices.
- Lead school and campus-based digital literacy campaigns on cyberbullying, consent, and privacy.

Community Mobilization

- Engage with faith-based and traditional leaders to hold intergenerational dialogues on how technology shapes gender-based violence.
- Organize peer-to-peer TFGBV sensitization workshops in schools, youth clubs, and community centres.

Accountability and Watchdog Role

- Participate in digital monitoring initiatives and call out platforms or influencers that propagate TFGBV.
- Collaborate with CSOs to track government and tech company commitments to online safety.



Conclusion

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is not merely a digital issue, it is a reflection of offline gender inequalities that are replicated and magnified online. Ghana must adopt a holistic, multi-sectoral approach that balances legal reform, survivor-centered services, platform accountability, and cultural transformation. Given the increasing digitization of society and the rise of online harms, urgent and coordinated action is necessary to protect human dignity, especially for women and girls, and to uphold the principles of gender equality and digital justice. Implementing these recommendations will help create safer digital spaces and promote gender equality in Ghana's evolving digital landscape.

Detailed reference can be made to the report:

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Ghana. NORSAAC/Rutgers.

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