

# POLICY BRIEF

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## A Call to Action: Deepening States' Contribution to Ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria as a Panacea for Gender Inclusion



Ending Gender-based Violence (GBV) as highlighted within SDG 5, aims to achieve gender equality and inclusion. Specifically, SDG 5.2 seeks to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation ([United Nations, 2023](#)). As a result, SDG 5 acknowledges that inclusion cannot be achieved until GBV is eliminated. In Nigeria, women have historically been the victims of various kinds of violence as a result of a patriarchal society and for them to achieve inclusion in society, we must first ensure that they are safe from violence and sexual assault.

So far, issues of GBV have only been emphasized at the federal level in Nigeria. Meanwhile, Nigeria's decentralized governance system grants state governments substantial jurisdiction, highlighting the vital importance of engaging state-level administrations in the collaborative effort to address gender-based violence (GBV). The discrete authorities possessed by state governments emphasize the necessity for a cooperative strategy to efficiently tackle gender-based violence (GBV) at the local level. Thus, in this article, necessary actions tagged 'The LRC Framework' on eradicating GBV in Nigeria are proposed, which capitalize on the role of the states.

The latest findings from recent [research](#) show that the general prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria stands at an alarming 34%, a figure that surpasses the [sub-Saharan African average of 29%](#) (Evans et al., 2023). Without accounting for the massive underreporting of the issues, the Nigerian [DHS \(2018\)](#) shows that at least 1 in 10 women aged between 15 and 49 report experiencing sexual violence. [Amnesty International](#) posits that the figures reported might triple if every woman abused in Nigeria reported the case, attributing the underreporting to societal stigma and a lack of faith in law enforcement and the legal framework. Thus, these findings underline the critical need for comprehensive and multifaceted methods for addressing this issue. Achievement of SDG 5.2 sets a notion on the path of prosperity, as violence against women and girls incurs both private and social costs to a nation, stalling productivity.

While several multilateral initiatives exist to combat GBV in Nigeria (such as the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative) in addition to the Nigeria Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015, the states' strong and active role remains critical for effectively driving these initiatives and creating a safer, more inclusive, and more equitable society.

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, a global multi-year partnership focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, presents a valuable opportunity to amplify state efforts and drive meaningful change in Nigeria. The initiative gave rise to the launch of the [National GBV Data Situation Room and Dashboard](#) in Nigeria in 2020, set up in conjunction with the Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs, to provide real-time (monthly) data on reported cases, service provision, and convictions. The goal is to coordinate and harmonize data related to GBV reporting, prevention, and support by NGOs around the country to support effective government policies and actions from foreign partners towards prevention and support ([UNDP Nigeria, 2022](#)).

However, to maximize the impact of the Spotlight Initiative, Nigerian states must prioritize three specific areas within their jurisdictions tagged the LRC- framework, which stands for legislative leadership (L), resource allocation and capacity building (R), and community engagement (C) (see Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1: The LRC-Framework on Ending GBV in Nigeria**

## 1. Legislative Leadership and Strengthening the Legal Framework

- **Prioritizing implementation of National laws on GBV:** States should actively implement existing laws, such as the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act ([VAPP](#)) [2015](#), to address marital rape, strengthen child protection measures, and prevent harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM)
- **Partnering with civil society and women's rights organizations:** Engaging these groups in legislative processes ensures laws reflect the needs and realities faced by communities. Building on the experience and expertise of organizations like the [Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative \(WRAPA\)](#), [Initiative for Equal Rights \(ISER\)](#), etc. can significantly enhance legislative outcomes.
- **Investing in legal aid and awareness campaigns:** Ensuring access to legal representation through pro bono programs, mobile legal aid units, and legal clinics empowers survivors and encourages reporting. Additionally, public awareness campaigns utilizing various media channels can significantly increase knowledge of legal protections and reporting mechanisms

## 2. Resource Allocation and Capacity Building for Effective Service Delivery

- **Earmarking and monitoring GBV-specific budgets:** States must commit allocated resources to support essential services like shelters, hotlines, and medical and psychosocial support for survivors. Utilizing transparent budget allocation and monitoring mechanisms, such as those advocated by Transparency International Nigeria, ensures resources reach their intended beneficiaries.
- **Investing in training for law enforcement, judiciary, and healthcare professionals:** Sensitization workshops and specialised training equip these essential personnel with the knowledge and skills to handle GBV cases effectively and compassionately. Programs like the Spotlight Initiative's training for police officers on gender-responsive policing can serve as valuable models
- **Building and supporting local-level service delivery:** By investing in community-based organizations and grassroots initiatives, states can extend essential services to geographically marginalized areas. Supporting organizations like the [Network of Survivors Advocating for Justice \(NSAJ\)](#) can effectively expand the reach of services and ensure their sensitivity to local contexts.

## 3. Community Engagement and Social Change

- **Spearheading public awareness campaigns:** States can utilize media, educational institutions, and community partnerships to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote respectful relationships. Collaborating with media outlets like Channels Television and partnering with educational institutions like the University of Ibadan can amplify campaigns and reach diverse audiences.
- **Engaging traditional and religious leaders:** Working with these influential figures can drive positive change within communities and address deeply ingrained cultural practices that perpetuate GBV. Collaborating with organizations like the National Council of Traditional Rulers of Nigeria (NCTRN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) can facilitate constructive dialogue and promote community-led action plans.
- **Supporting data collection and research:** investing in evidence-based research in collaboration with institutions like the [National Bureau of Statistics](#), [Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa \(CSEA\)](#), etc to help identify specific needs and prioritize interventions tailored to each state's context. Data-driven approaches can ensure resources.

## Summary of The LRC Framework - Role of State in Ending GBV in Nigeria



In a nutshell, states can enhance the efforts of the Spotlight Initiative by aggressively implementing these measures and prioritising supplemental efforts, thus positioning themselves as authentic champions in the battle against gender-based violence (GBV). This collaborative effort, involving non-governmental organisations, international partners, and the federal government, can pave the way for a future where every female individual in Nigeria can live free from violence and the threat of sexual abuse, thus promoting inclusion.