



**Actionable points in SDG 5 for eradicating gender based violence  
By year 2030 in Nigeria: Way forward**

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**Abstract**

*The major challenge facing gender parity and discrimination in developing countries such as Nigeria is acts of various forms of abuse against females. Hence, workable strategies to eradicate gender-based violence (GBV) become imperative and essential towards an effort to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls (SDG 5). This study provides a brief overview of the types of GBV with rape and human trafficking turning out to be more prominent as a result of economic crisis, unemployment and massive exploitation, with visible physical and emotional signs displayed by victims. The astronomical rate of increase of GBV because of the prevalent issues such as, male dominance system of the society, joblessness and uneven access to education among other factors in Nigeria has widened the gender gap. The 6 targets of SDG5 that are outcome-oriented are highlighted with intervention programmes by the United Nations and its partners in the country. It is hoped that by the year 2030 the goals of Sustainable Development Agenda in achieving poverty and hunger reduction, provision of quality healthcare and promotion of well-being, ensuring quality education, promote gender equality and empower women and girls, safeguard the environment and its natural resources, provide decent work and economic growth, among other targets in creating an egalitarian society.*

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Existing gender policies, guidelines and legal frameworks such as Violence Against Person Prohibition Acts (VAPP) 2015, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Domestic Violence laws are presented with recommendations of preventive and control measures of Gender based violence.

**Keywords:** Gender, Violence, SDG5, Legal frameworks, Equality, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which was adopted by all the United Nation member states in 2015 was made available on a platform for an impactful development for people both in the present and future time. From the onset of the adoption, Nigeria has been striving to evolve various strategies in achieving the Global Goals. (United Nation, 2017).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the fallout of the inadequacy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) often referred to as the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development for all global, regional and national endeavors. The SDGs solicit for ending poverty and hunger, achieving quality education, gender equality and the protection of the planet and its natural resources by 2030.

However, the member States are expected to implement the 2030 Agenda in their respective countries through various strategies and frameworks (United Nation, 2020). These goals form the solid base for the Economic, Social and Environmental platform which are the three dimensions of sustainable development. Nigeria in collaboration with the UN and its partners are working towards achieving the SDGs.

This is being done through the office of the Senior Special Adviser to the President on SDGs and the Ministries in various states. According to the UN report, various percentages of resources have been committed to the actualization of the global goals in Nigeria, including zero hunger (Goal 2) with 81% allocation of the available resources while Goals 3, 4, 5 have varying percentages of 9.2, 2 and 1.7 respectively. Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is crucial to stopping the tide of violence that has spread throughout the country's many sectors.

Hence the focus on the SDG 5, with the mission statement "Achieve gender parity and give all girls and women more power." According



to the UN (2017), SDG 5 has nine targets and 14 indicators. Six of the nine targets are "outcome-oriented" as follows:

- i. eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls worldwide;
- ii. ending violence and exploitation against women and girls;
- iii. prohibiting harmful practices like female genital mutilation, child marriage, and early and forced marriage;
- iv. Promoting the shared domestic responsibilities and enhancing the recognition of unpaid care;
- v. ensuring that women are involved in decision-making and leadership; and
- vi. guaranteeing women's access to reproductive rights and health.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is not just an explicit target of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but is also a key factor in driving sustainable progress across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Ensuring women's full and equal participation not only fulfills an international commitment, but powers advancement overall. Gender equality is undermined by a spate of abuses referred to as violence.

According to WHO (2002), violence refers to any form of behavior involving the use of physical force, power, or other methods against oneself, another individual, or a society or organization. Its ultimate purpose is to hurt, damage, or kill, and it is likely to cause physical and psychological harm, death, mal-development, or deprivation.

Gender-based violence (GBV) involves harmful behaviors against individuals due to their gender that violate fundamental human rights. It stems from underlying causes such as gender inequality, misuse of power over others, and traditional customs that can promote harm. As a life-threatening health issue as well as threat to personal security, GBV constitutes a serious offense against basic human rights. GBV is one of the most restrictive expressions of gender-based discrimination, hindering both men and women from equal engagement in society, the economy, and governance. By addressing the roots of gender disparity, abuse of authority, and acceptance of damaging practices, the conditions that enable GBV can be dismantled to protect individuals and promote balanced participation of all in public life.

There are many causes of GBV, including frustration, explosion/witness of violence media violence in the home or neighborhood, peer



pressure, disrespect or lack of attention, low self-esteem, abuse or neglect experienced, aggressive behavior such drinking, insulting, and provocation, and environmental factors (American Psychological Association, 2020).

GBV has been categorized as forms of aggression and hostility which may be physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and passive in nature. According to the National Population Census of 2014, a significant number of girls in specific communities in Nigeria encounter sexual abuse before they reach the age of eighteen. Additionally, in the name of culture, ethnicity, and religion, early and forced marriages are commonly practiced in these communities.

According to UNICEF (2015), 56.6% of girls in the North-East and 67.6% of girls in the North-West are forced into marriage before they attain adulthood. Similar statistics revealed the high prevalence of FGM among women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 in the South-East (49%) and 47.5% in South-West. Furthermore, 17.4% of women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 reported having experienced violent, physical, or sexual abuse at least once from intimate partners (UNICEF, 2015).

In Nigeria's northeast, abduction, assaults on sex workers, early and forced marriage, domestic abuse, and denial of resources have all been and continue to be commonplace. Particularly in Zamfara State, Nigeria, relationship violence, and sexual violence associated to conflicts are all pervasive and substantially increasing as of 2020 (Nagarajan, 2020).

GBV is vastly under-reported due to stigmatization (Khan, 2016). However, numerous efforts have been made globally to ensure an end to all forms of gender-based violence. These include an establishment of an international, regional and national legal environment for the elimination of all forms of GBV. Taking advantage of the existing legal frameworks, several feminist organizations, including the Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD), have recognized that preventing violence targeted at women and girls is pertinent. Moreover, these groups have been actively advocating for reforms with the objective of bridging the inequality gap between men and women by the year 2030. Even though many of the forerunners of these women's social movements have been bullied, falsely accused, sexually assaulted, and sometimes even murder as threats regularly, they have been able to identify the cultural and religious factors sustaining the perpetuation of gender inequality and GBV in society (Vukoicic, 2017).



Feminist groups have highlighted legitimization of disparities in power between families and society, passing discriminatory legislation, implementing unlawful policies, and applying the law in a discriminatory manner as some of the factors sustaining perpetuations of GBV and its tolerance on an unofficial level (i.e., in the family and in the community).

For this purpose, this paper attempts a review of literature to determine the factors that are still sustaining GBV in Nigeria and to highlight some actionable points for actualizing the SDGs and ending GBV by 2030.

### **Statement of Problem**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most severe types of gender inequality, significantly limiting women's ability to participate equally in social, economic, and political domains. Patriarchy, harmful traditional practices, cultural and religious norms are the fundamental cause of its perpetration.

GBV has a negative effect on mental health, eroding one's sense of self-worth and leading to suicidal thoughts, anxiety, PTSD, despair, and self-harm. It violates, impedes, or eliminates women's ability to enjoy their fundamental freedoms and human rights. Psychological assault is almost usually coupled with physical violence and can be equally dehumanising. Women's mobility is permanently impeded by their fear of violence, which also restricts their access to necessities and resources. One of the most important social factors that encourages women subordination and inferiority is violence against women. GBV is under-reported and has physical, social, sexual and psychological effects on married women thus the need to conduct this study.

### **Methodology**

The majority of the resources used in this study were obtained from secondary sources, which included journals, internet materials, official publications, periodicals, pertinent texts, and official publications. These sources all functioned as concrete sources for the research.

### **Findings and Discussion**

*Causes of gender-based violence in Nigeria*



There is a significant increase in the number of cases of GBV worldwide, and Nigeria is not an exception. Several elements that contribute to GBV in Nigeria have been identified by scholars to include the following among others: major migrant movements, public transportation shutdowns, food shortages, unemployment, economic insecurity, and school closures brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic are all factors contributing to GBV in Nigeria (Chime, 2022). The main causes of gender-based violence in Nigeria include:

1. Unequal Access to Education: Women continue to face barriers to education globally compared to men. A quarter of girls enrolled will not likely finish elementary school. One of the main issues affecting societies worldwide is the gender disparity in educational attainment.
2. Lack of employment equality: Women just like men also have the same legal rights to work in only six nations across the world. In most economies, women enjoy only three-quarter of the employment rights that males have. Attaining greater parity in the workplace will positively impact other areas where gender inequality is pervasive.
3. Job segregation: Division of labour is one factor contributing to gender disparity in the workplace. Across the world, there is a long-standing belief that males are simply better at some tasks. Men have been observed to hold the highest paying positions in the world of work.
4. Based on data from the World Bank, approximately one billion women worldwide lack legal safeguards against domestic economic and sexual violence. Additionally, there is a notable absence of legal protections against harassment in public spaces, workplaces, and educational environments. As a result, these spaces become unsafe for women, and the absence of protection forces them to frequently make choices that curtail their opportunities and place their aspirations at risk.
5. Lack of body autonomy: Even after becoming parents, a great deal of women worldwide lack authority over their own bodies. Getting access to birth control is often very challenging.
6. Poor medical treatment: Because women have less access to contraceptives than men do, they typically receive medical care that is of inferior quality. This is related to other factors contributing to gender inequality, such as the lack of opportunities for education and work, which pushes more women into poverty.



7. Lack of political representation: Even with advancements over time, women remain visibly underrepresented in politics and administration. This suggests that several of the issues raised by female legislators on a regular basis—such as pensions, laws advancing gender equality, gender-based violence, and childcare and maternity leave—are often ignored.

8. Racism: Speaking on gender inequality would be incomplete without discussing racism. It affects what kinds of jobs women get, how much they get paid, and how they are seen legally. There is a close relationship between racism and gender inequality.

9. Distorted Societal mindsets: Gender inequality is greatly influenced by a society's general style of thinking, even though it is less evident than some of the other factors on this list. There is frequently opposition following major changes in gender norms, despite the fact that laws and institutional reforms can advance the cause. This is due to the deeply embedded nature of gender beliefs.

#### **Factors Sustaining Perpetuation of Gender Based Violence**

Throughout history, there has been a consistent pattern of men holding power and exerting dominance over women in human society. This has been facilitated by patriarchal systems, cultural beliefs, and the relegation of women to subordinate positions, resulting in their marginalization and unequal treatment for an extended period. These cultural ideas have given the male child a great deal of reference and preference in the majority of the world's worldwide cultures. Ezeh & Gage (2008). In certain Arabian cultures, the arrival of a female child is often considered a cause for shame and dishonor due to cultural beliefs. Conversely, the birth of a male child is highly valued and celebrated. Similarly, in Nigeria, particularly in the southern geopolitical zone, there is a strong preference for male offspring, leading to greater excitement and joy surrounding the birth of a boy compared to a girl. As girls grow older, they find this differential treatment frustrating, and women in Nigeria, like women globally, face gender-based abuse regardless of their age, ethnicity, educational background, socioeconomic status, or religious beliefs (Zakaria, 2021).

Women are depicted as the complete opposite of every attribute included in the male traits which in turn is exacerbated gender bias against women in the society. Also, the way some parents nurture their kids generates a gender disparity that exacerbates GBV throughout the society. According to Ezeh and Gage, the application of strong

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authority and judgments to create a gender gap that permits ongoing superiority and dominance over females can be linked to violence against women.

### **Factors that enhance GBV in Nigeria**

- Cultural factors: Traditionally, women and children are seen as a man's property. Historically, patriarchal societies have accepted that beating and reprimanding women and children is normal. The honour of families is frequently linked to woman's sexuality. Hence, criticism and abuse are specifically directed at women for any conduct or demeanor that is perceived as lacking reverence for the family. As a consequence, criticism and mistreatment are directed at women whose conduct or demeanor is deemed to be an act of betrayal towards the family (Amnesty International, 2009).
- Legal factors: Domestic violence is often seen and handled by law enforcement as a private and family issue to which they are often reluctant to become involved or act upon. Domestic abuse charges are frequently given greater leniency than violence committed by outsiders.
- Economic factors: A lack of economic resources is often closely linked to domestic abuse, as financial constraints can exacerbate power imbalances within relationships and create an environment conducive to abuse. Economic factors can play substantial role in perpetuating and escalating instances of domestic violence. Financial dependency on an abusive partner can leave the victim feeling trapped and unable to leave the abusive situation. The perpetrator may use financial control as a means of manipulation, limiting the victim's access to money, employment opportunities, or educational resources. This economic dependence can make it difficult for the victim to escape the abusive relationship or seek help.
- Environmental factors: The intergenerational cycle of abuse describes how people who were raised in violent homes and who saw or experienced abuse as children may have a higher likelihood of engaging in domestic abuse as adults.
- Social factors: The society often stigmatize and hold victims accountable for their abuse. This made it difficult for victims to come forward and expose their abusers. Victims are often subjected to extensive examinations, with any weaknesses being exploited (Kuiz, 1992).



- **Substance Abuse:** The excessive use of substances, such as alcohol and drugs, has been identified as a contributing factor to domestic abuse. Substance abuse can significantly impact the dynamics within relationships and increase the risk of violent behavior. Substance abuse has the potential to impair judgment, decrease inhibitions, and alter one's mental state, leading to a loss of control and an increased likelihood of engaging in aggressive or violent acts. Individuals under the influence of substances may become more irritable, impulsive, and prone to outbursts of anger, which can escalate conflicts within intimate partnerships or family settings.

### **Effects of Gender Based Violence**

The impacts of GBV include sexual assault and homicide, STDs, depression, solitude, damage and shock, PTSD, homicide and suicide, reproductive issues, and emotional, psychological, social, and economic difficulties. Gender inequality is increased by all of these.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), unintended pregnancies, illegal abortions, permanent trauma, immediate behavioural reactions like shock, shame, guilt, and anger, as well as long-term psychological effects like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal thoughts, decreased sexual pleasure, and anxieties are just a few of the medical and health effects of gender-based violence (Akinlusi et al., 2014).

Violence against women who have experienced sexual abuse at the hands of non-partners is linked to a 2.6 times higher likelihood of clinical depression or sadness and a 2.3 times higher likelihood of alcohol and drug use (WHO, 2013). Moreover, the risk of contracting sexually transmitted illnesses like Human Papilloma virus (HPV), Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), Gonorrhoea, Genital Warts, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is 1.5 times higher in women who have experienced sexual abuse from their partners. The majority of these sufferers are afraid of being shunned if they confess their illness to get help, most are not ready to notify others that they are sick. Nigeria has one of the lowest percentages of help-seeking behavior in the world with relation to GBV acts; in the country, the North-Eastern region has the lowest percentage of female population, at 23 percent. (World Bank, 2019).

With almost 23 million girls and women married as minors, Nigeria has more child marriages than any other country in Africa, according to a UNICEF study (UNICEF, 2018). The bulk of these brides come from underprivileged and rural areas according the report by UNICEF

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(2018). Most Nigerian communities, especially those in the north, do not consider this practice to be a form of gender-based violence because it is publicly encouraged by the people's religious and cultural beliefs.

Economic instability, the nation's fast rising poverty rate, food shortages, heightened tensions and stress in regions with high rates of gender-based violence, and grave medical issues for the victims have all been directly impacted by gender-based violence. Regardless of a nation's technological advancement, gender-based violence has an impact on the world economy, and Nigeria is not immune to these ramifications. In Nigeria, its economic effects are typically felt in the areas of opportunity costs, intervention, and prevention.

### **Legal and Regulatory Frameworks for Handling Gender-Based Violence**

Key commitments that have set the tone for the global response to gender-based violence (GBV) in a more systematic, comprehensive, and sustained way through coordinated efforts include the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1981), the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC, 1990), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA, 1995), the Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999), and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Examples of regional strategies and frameworks for addressing gender-based violence include the Dakar Platform for Action (1994), African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Resolution on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Women and Girls Victims of Sexual Violence, (2007).

The National Strategy and Framework of Action for addressing Gender-Based Violence include the Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended); Protection Against Domestic Violence Law of Lagos State, 2007; The National Gender Policy; Violence Against Person's Prohibition Act, (VAPP) 2015; The Lagos State Protection Against Domestic Violence Law (PADVL) 2007; Ekiti State Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law; The Cross River Domestic Violence and Maltreatment of Widows' Prohibition Law, 2014; Ebonyi State Domestic Violence and Related Matters Law.



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### **Preventive Measures against Gender Based Violence**

The following are some of the steps taken to lessen the prevalence and incidence of GBV in Nigeria, taking into account the legal and regulatory framework for treating the crime at the federal and state levels:

- a. Encouraging and fostering healthy relationship skills through social-emotional learning initiatives for young people and implementing programs that promote healthy relationships among adults.
- b. Engaging influential adults and peers in family programs and educational efforts to provide instruction and guidance on building strong relationships.
- c. Disrupting the pathways that can lead to domestic violence by implementing early childhood home visitation programs, offering parenting skill programs, and providing targeted interventions for at-risk children.
- d. Creating protective environments by enhancing the climate in schools and workplaces, as well as improving social settings to foster safety, respect, and equality.
- e. Strengthening economic support for families through the implementation of employment programs and initiatives that promote financial security.
- f. Promoting support for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) by establishing victim support services, implementing housing programs, and providing comprehensive protections through first responder and civil legal measures to increase safety and minimize harm.

### **Actionable Points in SDG 5 for Ending GBV by 2030**

The actionable points for ending all forms of GBV by 2030 in Nigeria in line with SDG 5 are:

- i. Creating plans to end prejudice against women and girls worldwide in all its forms
- ii. Putting into practice the current legislative frameworks that support, uphold, and oversee sex-based equality and nondiscrimination.

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iii. We must strive to eliminate all forms of abuse targeting women and girls who are victims of exploitation. This entails taking comprehensive measures to prevent and address various forms of violence and mistreatment inflicted upon them.

iv. Creating plans to end all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private settings, such as human trafficking and various forms of sexual and other forms of exploitation

v. The creation of plans to stop intimate partner abuse against women

vi. The formulation of plans to end violence against women by people who are not close partners.

vii. Developing plans to end all harmful practises against women and girls, with a focus on female genital mutilation, child marriage, early and forced marriage, and genital mutilation

viii. Creating public service infrastructure, social protection policies, and strategies to value and acknowledge unpaid caregiving and foster shared domestic responsibilities; encouraging shared responsibility within the family and home as appropriate for the country

ix. Encourage and guarantee that women and girls participate fully in leadership and decision-making at all tiers of the political, economic, and public spheres.

x. Promote equal opportunities for women to assume leadership roles and ensure their active and meaningful involvement in decision-making processes across political, economic, and public spheres.

xi. Encourage women to have universal access to sexual and reproductive rights as stipulated by the Beijing Platform for Action, the International Conference on Population Development's Action Plan, and its results.

xii. Enact measures to guarantee that women have equal access to financial resources, land ownership and control, inheritance rights, financial services, and natural resources in accordance with national legislation.

xiii. Encourage women to have equal access to and control over land and other types of property, as well as economic resources.



xiv. Encourages women to be empowered by technology, especially information and communications technology

xv. Establish and strengthen inclusive laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls across all levels of society.xvi. Advocate for a framework to monitor gender parity

### **Conclusion**

GBV is serving as a tool in scuttling the effort of many Nations towards achieving sustainable development goals especially SDG 5. GBV is a scourge in our society that sometimes leaves victims with visible and invisible scars that they must live with for the rest of their life. On the other hand, more local and national groups committed to ending GBV and assisting victims in their recovery are emerging.

### **Way Forward**

- a) It is impossible to overstate the contribution that society, cultural impact, and parental supervision have made to the reduction of GBV in our country.
- b) GBV can be significantly reduced by a cultural shift that promotes respect for one another and the preservation of human rights for people of all ages and genders.
- c) Institutions that support cultural marriage should encourage judicial dispute resolution that meets the needs of all parties and respect and dignity in marital situations.
- d) GBV can be reduced by offering sufficient funding, promoting human rights through mass education, educating women, and educating the public about GBV on a national level.
- e) It is crucial for lawmakers to play a role in implementing updated, comprehensive, and effective laws and reforms to address GBV on all fronts, including prevention, legislation, punishment, and rehabilitation.

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