

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

Understanding TFGBV as a Form of Gender-Based Violence

Promoting Human Rights · Democratic Governance · Justice · Rule of Law

WHAT IS TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, or TFGBV, is an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media against a person on the basis of gender.

It can occur through social media, messaging apps, email, gaming platforms, websites and other digital spaces. It has no limits or geographical boundaries. It can start online and escalate to physical spaces, or vice-versa, creating a dangerous continuum of online-offline abuse that can end in the most extreme forms of violence, including femicide.

The Core Principle

TFGBV is not separate from gender-based violence. Technology is the means through which the violence is committed, enabled, intensified or extended, while **gender inequality and discrimination are at its root.**

It can target women, girls and people of diverse gender identities, and can occur in both public and private digital spaces. **Online and offline violence exist on a continuum.** Harm that begins online can escalate into physical violence, and violence that occurs offline can be facilitated or amplified through technology.

HOW DOES TFGBV OCCUR?

TFGBV can take many forms including:

Harassment and Abuse

- ✦ **Online sexual harassment** – Unwanted sexual comments, messages, images or advances directed at a person through digital platforms.
- ✦ **Gendered hate speech** – Abusive, degrading or threatening language directed at a person because of their gender or gender identity.
- ✦ **Threats of rape, sexual violence or death** – Using digital platforms to threaten a person with sexual or physical violence, including rape or killing.
- ✦ **Coordinated online harassment** – When multiple people deliberately target, abuse, threaten or intimidate an individual online, often through organised campaigns.

Privacy Violations

- ✦ **Non-consensual sharing of intimate images (image-based sexual abuse)** – Sharing or threatening to share intimate images or videos of a person without their consent.
- ✦ **AI-generated deepfake sexual images and videos** – Using artificial intelligence to create or manipulate sexual images or videos to depict a person without their consent.
- ✦ **Doxxing** – Publishing or sharing someone's private or identifying information online without their consent, often to expose, intimidate or endanger them.

✦ **Sextortion** – Threatening to share intimate images, videos or other sexual material unless the victim provides money, more images, sexual acts or something else demanded by the perpetrator.

Identity-based Abuse

- ✦ **Cyberstalking** – Repeatedly monitoring, contacting, tracking or threatening a person through digital technologies in a way that causes fear or distress.
- ✦ **Fake accounts and impersonation** – Creating or using a fake account to impersonate another person, damage their reputation, deceive others or carry out abuse in their name.

TFGBV & HUMAN RIGHTS

TFGBV can interfere with a range of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including:

Human Right	How TFGBV Affects It
Equality and freedom from discrimination	Gender-based online violence can reinforce gender discrimination and harmful stereotypes against women and other vulnerable groups.
Dignity	Harassment, humiliation, threats, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate material can undermine a person’s dignity.
Privacy	Doxxing, unauthorised access to accounts, surveillance and the sharing of personal information can violate a person’s privacy.
Freedom of expression	Persistent online harassment and threats can cause people, particularly women, to withdraw from public conversations or avoid expressing their views.
Security and protection from violence	Digital threats can create real risks to a person's physical safety and may facilitate further violence.
Access to information	Online harassment and intimidation can restrict safe access to and sharing of information.
Access to justice and effective remedies	Under-reporting, inadequate responses to legal gaps can limit survivors’ access to protection and remedies.

TFGBV IN KENYA: KNOW THE FACTS

TFGBV is a growing concern in Kenya, with evidence showing significant gender disparities, gaps in accountability, and increasing institutional and government efforts to address technology-facilitated violence.

TFGBV PREVALENCE	40% of people surveyed in Mombasa County experienced TFGBV, compared with 37.04% nationally . This means approximately two in every five people surveyed in Mombasa had experienced at least one form of TFGBV.
GENDER DISPARITY	64.4% of female students in a 2024 study of three tertiary institutions in Nairobi reported experiencing at least one form of online violence, compared with 35.5% of male students , demonstrating a significant gender disparity in exposure to TFGBV.

PERPETRATORS	78.6% of reported perpetrators in the same study were male students . Female students accounted for 11.5% and male teaching staff for 5.4% of reported perpetrators.
INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE	Kenya's National Action Plan 2025–2029 specifically includes measures to strengthen gender-responsive cybercrime laws and policies, specialised cyber courts and digital-rights protections against TFGBV targeting women leaders, activists and girl.
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE	The State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action has established a Digital Safe Space initiative providing information, reporting mechanisms, digital-safety guidance and referral to survivor support services for TFGBV.
REPORTING GAP	Nationally, only 13.16% of survivors reported to authorities . UNFPA links low reporting partly to limited awareness of available services, perpetrator anonymity and inadequate specialised support within law enforcement.

2025 – 2026: CURRENT DEVELOPMENT

Africa's First Symposium on TFGBV

Regional Recognition & Action

- **Africa's first dedicated regional convening on TFGBV:** The First Africa Symposium on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence brought together governments, UN agencies, civil society organisations, technology actors, researchers, activists and survivors to address the growing threat of TFGBV across the continent.
- **A coordinated African response:** The symposium emphasised that TFGBV is not only an individual online safety issue, but a **human rights, gender equality, digital governance and development concern** requiring coordinated action across sectors and borders..
- **Evidence and knowledge sharing:** The symposium created a platform for stakeholders to share research, data, experiences and emerging trends, while identifying gaps in prevention, protection, accountability and survivor support.

Emerging Technology & New Forms of Harm

- **AI is creating new avenues for TFGBV:** The rapid development of artificial intelligence and synthetic media has increased the potential for **deepfakes, manipulated sexual content and other forms of non-consensual digital abuse**.
- **Technology can amplify harm:** Digital platforms can allow abusive content to be created, reproduced and distributed rapidly to large

Women's Participation & Civic Space

- **TFGBV can silence women:** Online harassment, threats, sexualised abuse and coordinated attacks can discourage women from speaking, organising and participating in public life.
- **Women in public and political life face particular risks:** Women leaders, activists and other public-facing women may be targeted through gendered online abuse designed to intimidate, discredit or silence them..
- **TFGBV threatens democratic participation:** The misuse of technology to target women can restrict their ability to participate safely and equally in political, civic and public spaces.

Safety by Design

- **Prevention must begin at the design stage:** The symposium highlighted the importance of integrating **safety, privacy and gender-responsive protections into digital technologies from the outset**, rather than relying solely on responses after abuse occurs.
- **Technology companies have a role in prevention:** Digital platforms should strengthen measures to prevent, detect and respond to gender-based violence and provide

audiences, increasing the scale and duration of harm experienced by survivors.

■ **The digital–physical continuum:** TFGBV does not remain confined to online spaces. Digital abuse can facilitate or intensify offline violence, while existing offline violence can be extended through technology.

Survivor-centred Response

■ **Survivors must be at the centre of responses:** Prevention and response mechanisms should reflect survivors' experiences, needs and priorities.

■ **Access to support is essential:** Survivors require accessible legal, psychosocial and other support services, alongside effective mechanisms for reporting and obtaining remedies.

■ **Avoid further harm:** Institutional responses should protect survivors' privacy and dignity and avoid practices that may expose them to further harassment, stigma or retaliation.

Multi-sectoral Accountability

■ **Civil society:** Support survivors, conduct research, advocate for legal and policy reform and strengthen public awareness.

■ **Researchers and academia:** Generate reliable, sex-disaggregated and comparable data to inform policy and interventions.

■ **Law enforcement and justice actors:** Develop capacity to investigate and prosecute technology-facilitated forms of violence while ensuring survivor-centred approaches.

■ **Technology companies:** Improve platform safety, content moderation, reporting mechanisms and accountability for technology-enabled abuse.

■ **Governments:** Strengthen laws, policies, enforcement mechanisms and survivor support systems.

accessible mechanisms for reporting harmful content.

■ **Digital safety must be inclusive:** Responses should consider the different risks faced by women and girls, particularly those who are already vulnerable to discrimination or exclusion.

Regional Cooperation

■ **TFGBV crosses borders:** Digital platforms operate across jurisdictions, allowing perpetrators and harmful content to move beyond national boundaries.

■ **Shared approaches are needed:** The symposium emphasised stronger regional cooperation, knowledge sharing and coordinated responses to address the cross-border nature of technology-facilitated violence.

■ **From dialogue to action:** The symposium provides a basis for continued African collaboration on **prevention, digital safety, accountability, research and survivor protection.**

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR TFGBV

TFGBV is addressed through existing laws protecting equality, dignity, privacy and freedom from violence and discrimination.

International Law

◆ **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** - It requires State Parties to eliminate discrimination against women and take measures to prevent and address gender-based violence.

◆ **International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** - Protects rights including privacy, equality and non-discrimination and freedom of expression.

◆ **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights** - Protects human dignity, equality and freedom from discrimination.

- ✦ **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)**
 - Requires States to protect women from violence and discrimination and to take measures to eliminate harmful practices.

Kenya

- ✦ **Constitution of Kenya, 2010** - Provides key protections under **Articles 27, 28, 31, 33, 35 and 48** including equality and non-discrimination, dignity, privacy, freedom of expression, access to information and access to justice.
- ✦ **Data Protection Act, 2019** – Regulates the processing and protection of personal data and provides safeguards against its unlawful use or disclosure.
- ✦ **Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018** – Establishes offences and penalties relating to cybercrime and provides a framework for addressing harmful conduct committed through digital technologies.

PREVENTION, PROTECTION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

What can be done?

- ✦ **1. Strengthen laws and policies:** Develop a comprehensive legal framework that specifically recognises and addresses TFGBV.
- ✦ **2. Improve reporting and accountability:** Establish accessible reporting mechanisms and strengthen investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.
- ✦ **3. Protect survivors:** Ensure survivors have access to legal, psychosocial and other support services.
- ✦ **4. Enhance digital literacy and online safety:** Promote digital literacy, privacy and online safety, through public awareness campaigns and education on recognising, preventing and responding to TFGBV.
- ✦ **5. Hold platforms accountable:** Require digital platforms to respond effectively to abusive content and protect users from gender-based violence.
- ✦ **6. Improve data collection:** Invest in research and sex-disaggregated data to understand the scale, forms and impacts of TFGBV.
- ✦ **7. Challenge harmful gender norms:** Address the gender inequality and discrimination that underpin technology-facilitated violence.

Key Takeaway

TFGBV is not simply an online safety issue.

It is a **gender, human rights and accountability issue** that requires coordinated action from governments, technology companies, civil society, justice actors and communities. Effective responses must be **survivor-centred, rights-based and designed to prevent harm before it occurs.**

ICJ Kenya

ICJ Kenya House, Off Silanga Road, Karen, Nairobi

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Developed by: Keamogetse Motsage, Legal Research Fellow

Template designed by:

