

FEMALE
LOUD - PROUD - FEMINISTS

ADVOCACY PAPER · FROM ONLINE HARM TO PROTECTION

Women and Girls' Experiences and Perceptions on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Lebanon

UNFPA | UKaid from the British people | Ipsos

Commissioned by FEMALE in partnership with UNFPA Lebanon, with support from FCDO. Research implemented by Ipsos in Lebanon.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Evidence from a mixed-method study with 1,000 women and girls aged 13+ and focus group discussions conducted across Lebanon.

1,000
face-to-face CAPI interviews with women and girls aged 13+

8
governorates across Lebanon

3
focus group discussions

SURVEY SAMPLE



FGD 1
Adolescent girls, 13–17

FGD 2
Young women, 18–34

FGD 3
Adult women, 35–49

Methodology

The study combined 1,000 face-to-face CAPI interviews with women and girls aged 13+ across all eight governorates (750 Lebanese and 250 refugee women and girls) and three FGDs with adolescent girls aged 13–17, young women aged 18–34 and adult women aged 35–49. Fieldwork was conducted from 15 January to 24 February 2026. Percentages in this paper refer to the relevant study respondents or subgroups; qualitative quotations reflect FGD participants' experiences and perceptions.

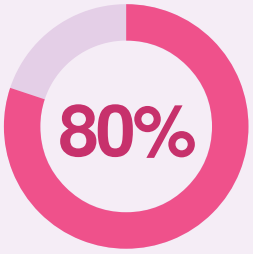
About FEMALE

FEMALE is a community-based grassroots feminist organization that works towards a just and safe world for women and girls in all their diversities through driving social-behavioral changes, movement building, knowledge production and dissemination, support services, including a helpline for survivors of TFGBV, advocacy and policy reform.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Why action is needed now

Digital spaces are central to communication, education, relationships and participation. They can also amplify gendered harassment, sexual abuse, monitoring, coercion and reputational harm. This research paper brings forward the study findings that matter most for advocacy: what respondents experienced, how they responded, and what institutions need to improve in their policies, procedures, and response pathways.



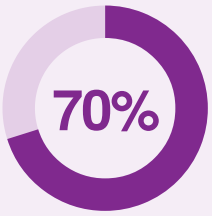
of affected respondents blocked the perpetrator or the perpetrator's account—the most common response to TFGBV.

How to read these findings

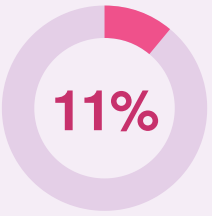
The study covered eight governorates across Lebanon: Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, South Lebanon, Nabatieh, Bekaa, Baalbek-Hermel, and Akkar. Included women and girls of different ages, education levels and nationalities. Findings should be read as evidence from the women and girls surveyed and from FGD participants, rather than as estimates for every woman or girl in Lebanon. The full report also notes possible underrepresentation of people with limited digital access or living in highly marginalized or insecure settings, alongside potential underreporting linked to stigma and confidentiality concerns.

WHY THIS MATTERS

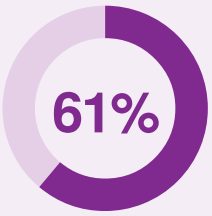
Evidence at a glance



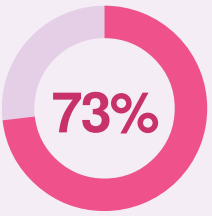
of respondents perceived TFGBV as somewhat or very common in their communities.



of affected respondents used formal reporting mechanisms after an incident.

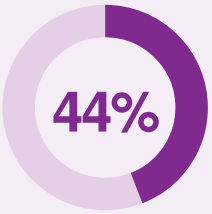


of respondents identified psychosocial support as a priority need.

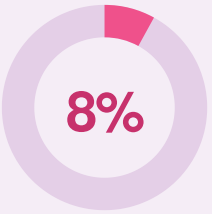


of respondents perceived children and adolescents under 18 as the groups most at risk.

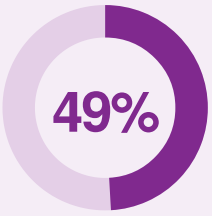
Girls aged 15–17 were most frequently identified as vulnerable



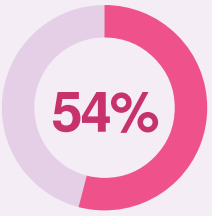
of affected respondents reporting insulting, abusive or hate messages/comments – the most frequently reported form of TFGBV.



of affected respondents saved evidence after an incident.



of affected respondents reported not seeking help following the incident.



of affected respondents said their most recent incident occurred within the previous six months.



WHAT WOMEN AND GIRLS TOLD US

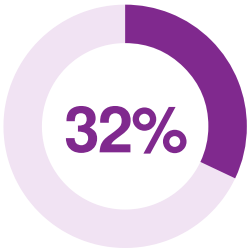
Eight findings that should shape advocacy

The strongest case for action comes from the combination of reported experiences and participants' own descriptions of what digital violence does to their safety, choices and participation.

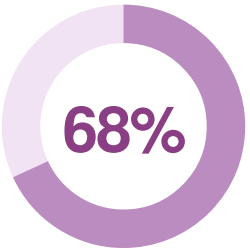
FINDING 01

Harm is often recognized before it is named

Only 32% of survey respondents had heard the term “technology-facilitated gender-based violence”, while 68% had not (N=1,000). However, focus group discussions revealed that participants could recognize behaviors such as harassment, threats, impersonation, stalking, and pressure to share images when concrete examples were discussed.



had heard the term

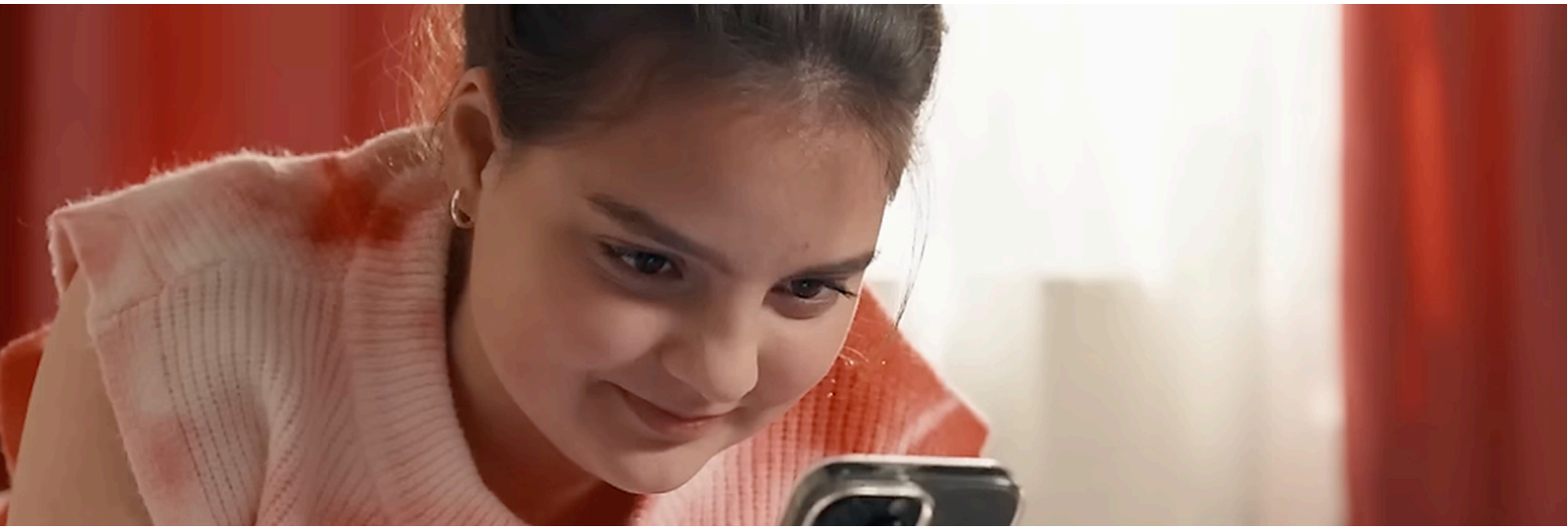


had not heard the term

These findings suggest that unfamiliarity with the terminology does not necessarily indicate an inability to recognize harmful behaviors.

ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

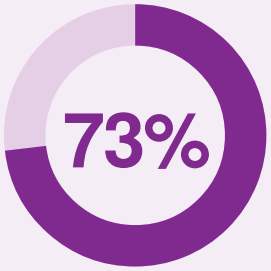
Awareness efforts should go beyond introducing terminology. They should help women and girls understand how harmful online experiences relate to TFGBV, what rights and protections are available, and where and how to seek support or report abuse safely.



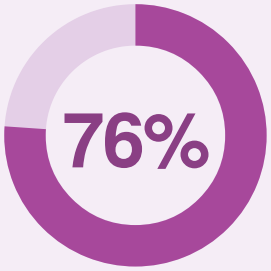
FINDING 02

Adolescence is a critical protection window

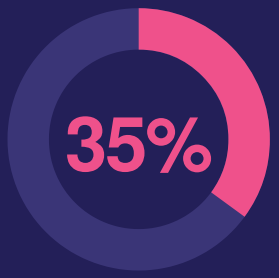
Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents identified children and adolescents under 18 as the groups most at risk of TFGBV, with girls aged 15–17 most frequently identified as vulnerable. Among adolescent respondents, 76% said they would first turn to a parent or caregiver if they faced an online safety issue, yet only 35% reported knowing how to safely report harmful content themselves.



perceived those under 18 as most at risk



of adolescents would first turn to a parent or caregiver



of adolescents reported knowing how to report harmful content safely

> **Sometimes you don’t tell your parents because you’re scared they’ll take your phone, not because you don’t need help.**
>
> Adolescent Girls FGD, 13–17 years old

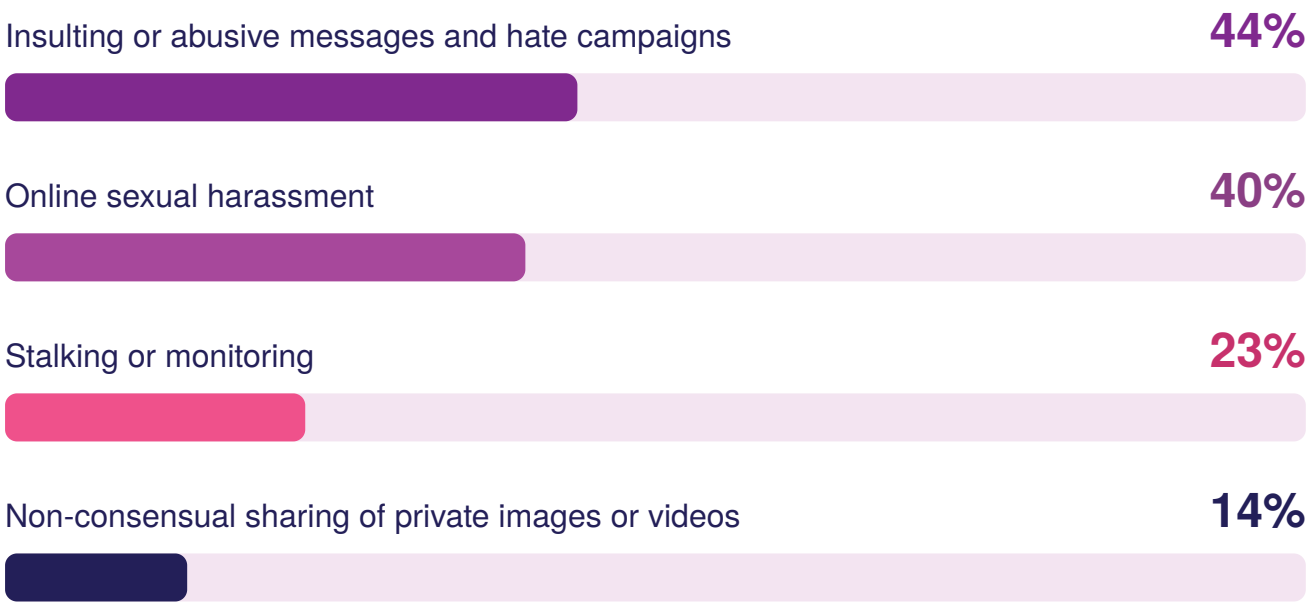
ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Prevention and response should begin early and equip schools, caregivers and young people with practical, non-punitive ways to recognize harm, report safely and seek support.

FINDING 03

Everyday harassment, not only “extreme” abuse, drives harm

Among respondents who reported personal experience, the most frequently reported forms were insulting or abusive messages and hate campaigns (44%), online sexual harassment (40%), stalking or monitoring (23%), and non-consensual sharing of private images or videos (14%).



ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Protection frameworks need to address repeated interpersonal abuse and coercion in everyday digital spaces while remaining capable of responding to emerging technology-enabled harms.





FROM HARM TO RESPONSE

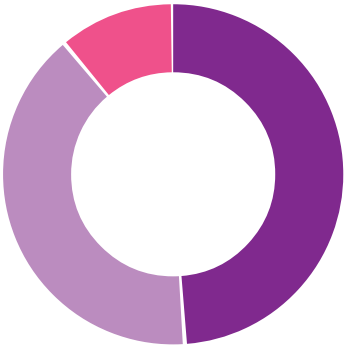
What follows every incident is important

The evidence points to a protection gap: women and girls often rely on themselves or trusted people around them, while formal systems are used far less often.

FINDING 04

Survivors often manage harm without formal support

Blocking the perpetrator or account was the most common response to TFGBV, reported by 80% of affected respondents. Nearly half (49%) sought no help, 40% relied on informal networks, and only 11% used formal mechanisms. These findings highlight survivors' reliance on self-protection and the need for safe, trusted reporting pathways.



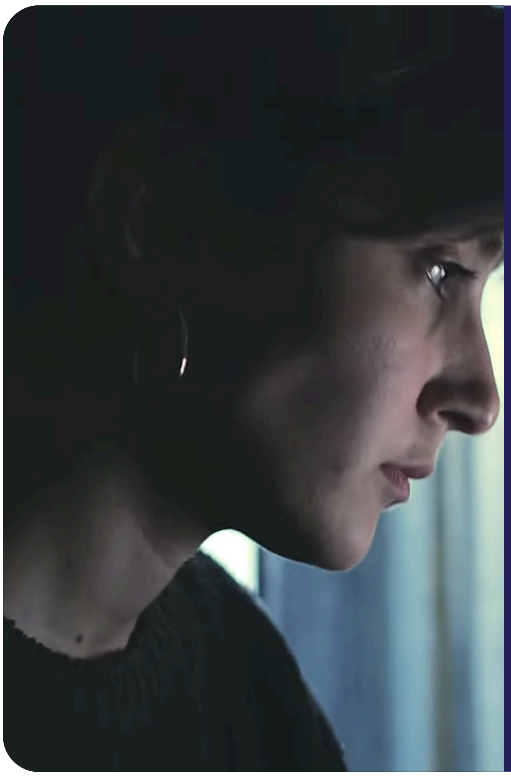
49% sought no help

40% sought informal help

11% used formal mechanisms

ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Reporting mechanisms must build survivors' trust through confidentiality, informed choice, clear information, and safe referrals, ensuring that they are not only available but also accessible, safe, and effective in practice.



> **You think ten times before telling anyone. Once people know, you can't control where the story goes.**

Adult Women FGD, 35–49 years old



FINDING 05

Digital harm can silence women and girls

Participants described anxiety, fear of escalation, self-censorship and withdrawing from platforms after harmful incidents. This means the consequences of TFGBV extend beyond the incident itself: they can narrow women's freedom to speak, connect, learn and participate online.

> **After what happened, I didn't want problems anymore. I stopped posting, stopped replying, even when I had something to say.**
>
> Young Women FGD, 18–34 years old

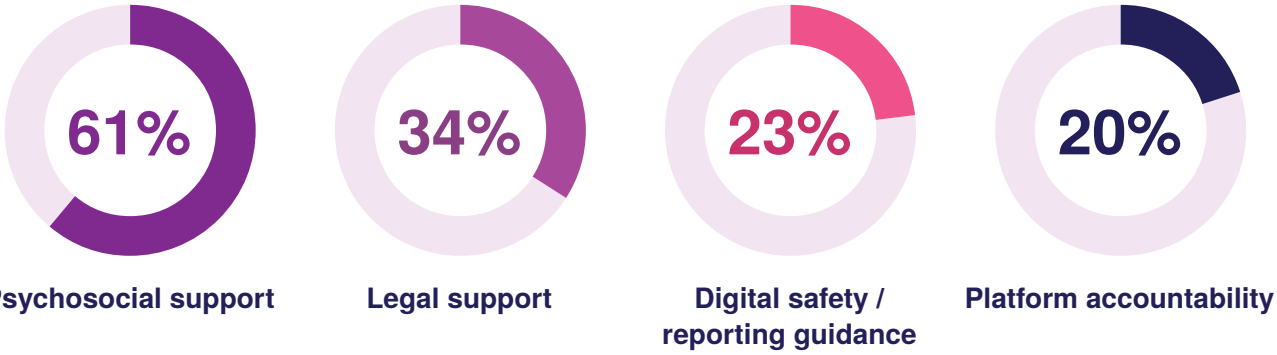
ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Protection measures should enable women and girls to continue using digital spaces safely, rather than expecting them to delete their accounts, stop participating online, or withdraw from these spaces to avoid violence.

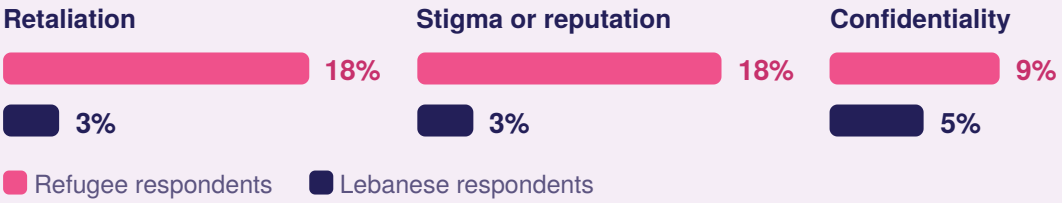
FINDING 06

Women want practical, survivor-centered support

Psychosocial support was the most frequently prioritized form of assistance (61%), followed by legal support (34%). Respondents also pointed to online reporting and digital safety guidance (23%) and stronger platform accountability (20%). Across FGDs, participants repeatedly asked for step-by-step guidance on what to do during an incident, how to report safely and how to preserve evidence.



REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS



Refugee women and girls cited greater concerns about retaliation (18% versus 3% among Lebanese respondents), stigma or reputational consequences (18% versus 3%), and confidentiality (9% versus 5%) as reasons for not reporting TFGBV. Legal support was prioritized by 46% of refugee respondents. Reported personal experience was lower among refugees (9% versus 17%); this may reflect disclosure or digital access differences rather than lower risk. These findings support confidential assistance through trusted humanitarian and community-based providers.

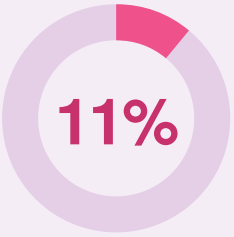
ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Provide practical response skills and accessible psychosocial and legal services, with confidential reporting pathways that account for the barriers faced by refugee women and girls.

FINDING 07

Formal reporting remains limited amid protection gaps

Only 11% of affected respondents used formal reporting mechanisms. FEMALE reports persistent challenges in obtaining effective responses and protection when following up cases with authorities. This experience reinforces the need to address trust, reporting effectiveness and legal protection gaps; low uptake alone does not establish why survivors did not report.

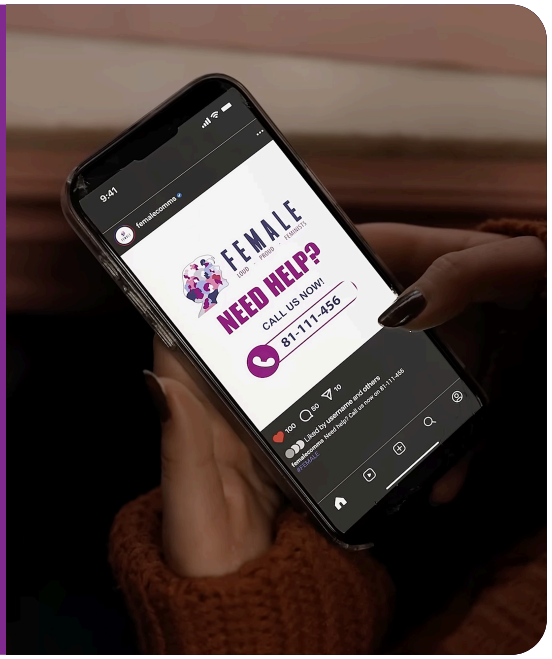


of affected respondents used formal reporting mechanisms.

ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Make reporting confidential and survivor-led, with clear procedures and safe referrals. ISF pathways include the Cybercrime and Intellectual Property Bureau and its online complaints form; complaints concerning online extortion can also be referred through the competent Public Prosecution. Existing laws do not comprehensively cover TFGBV, leaving protection gaps that a dedicated framework should address.

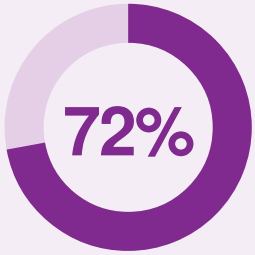
> **We hear warnings all the time, but no one explains what to actually do when something happens.**
>
> Young Women FGD, 18–34 years old



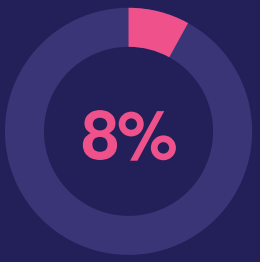
FINDING 08

Knowing how to preserve evidence does not always translate into action

While 72% of respondents reported knowing and using screenshot or evidence-saving tools, only 8% of affected respondents reported actually saving evidence after an incident. This contrast suggests that general familiarity with digital safety tools may not translate into practical action when women are dealing with stress, fear, or uncertainty during an actual case of TFGBV.



reported knowing and using evidence-saving tools



of affected respondents saved evidence after an incident

ADVOCACY IMPLICATION

Digital safety initiatives should go beyond awareness and provide practical, step-by-step guidance on documenting abuse and preserving evidence safely.





THE ADVOCACY AGENDA

Four priorities for action

The evidence should translate into a small number of clear commitments. For a parliamentary roundtable and wider public advocacy, the following priorities provide a focused agenda for legal, institutional and platform-level change.

1 Close legal protection gaps and advance a comprehensive TFGBV framework

Lebanon's current legal framework addresses some forms of harassment but does not comprehensively cover the full spectrum and evolving dynamics of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

- Advance a comprehensive, gender-responsive legal framework addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women and girls, building on the draft law prepared and submitted to Parliament by FEMALE.
- Ensure the framework can address image-based abuse, impersonation, cyberstalking, doxxing, extortion, technology-enabled monitoring and AI/deepfake abuse as technologies evolve.
- Embed confidentiality, survivor safety and accessible protection for adolescents, refugees and women in marginalized contexts.

2 Make reporting safe, clear and survivor-led

Low use of formal reporting should be treated as a trust and accessibility challenge, not as a lack of need.

- Simplify and clearly communicate reporting options across public institutions, civil society services and digital platforms.
- Protect confidentiality and informed consent, and allow survivors to choose whether, when and how to pursue formal action.
- Provide practical guidance on documenting incidents and preserving evidence safely, with referral pathways to psychosocial and legal support.

3 Put adolescents at the center of prevention and early response

Adolescents were widely perceived as particularly vulnerable to TFGBV, while qualitative findings show that fear of blame, punishment or losing digital access can discourage disclosure.

- Integrate age-appropriate digital safety, consent, boundaries and reporting guidance into schools and youth programs before late adolescence.
- Equip teachers, counselors and administrators with confidential disclosure-response protocols and referral pathways.
- Support caregivers with practical digital literacy and non-punitive responses that keep communication open after harm occurs.

4 Hold platforms accountable and fund survivor-centered services

Digital safety requires both stronger platform response and accessible human support.

- Advocate for clearer reporting tools, faster response to harmful content and survivor-responsive moderation, with transparency on enforcement and response timelines.
- Expand confidential, trauma-informed psychosocial services and accessible legal consultation for TFGBV survivors.
- Move awareness programming toward hands-on digital safety skills, including privacy settings, blocking, evidence preservation and two-factor authentication.

THE FOUR PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

01 Close legal protection gaps and advance a comprehensive TFGBV framework

02 Make reporting safe, clear and survivor-led

03 Put adolescents at the center of prevention and early response

04 Hold platforms accountable and fund survivor-centered services

THE POLICY OPPORTUNITY

What change should look like

Digital safety should not depend on women and girls becoming less visible, less connected or less able to participate. The objective is a system in which harm is recognized early, survivors know where to turn, institutions respond safely, platforms act quickly, and the law keeps pace with evolving forms of abuse.

01

Survivors can seek help without losing control

Reporting is confidential, understandable and survivor-led, with safe referral to psychosocial and legal support.

02

Girls receive protection before harm escalates

Schools, caregivers and youth services know how to respond without blame, punishment or unnecessary digital exclusion.

03

Platforms act as protection actors

Reporting tools are clear, harmful content is addressed quickly, and enforcement is transparent and responsive to local realities.

04

The legal framework keeps pace

Technology-facilitated abuse is addressed comprehensively, including emerging forms such as AI-enabled and deepfake abuse.

A focused message for decision-makers

The evidence does not call for women and girls to retreat from digital spaces. It calls for stronger public responsibility: laws that recognize evolving forms of abuse, institutions that survivors can trust, schools and families equipped to respond, accessible psychosocial and legal support, and platforms that are accountable for safety.

From awareness to protection: recognize the harm, make reporting safe, support survivors, and close the legal gaps.

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To report cases of digital violence, contact our helpline

81-111456

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK

Scan the QR code