

POLICY BRIEF

Overcoming the Challenges to the Effective Implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act in the Federal Capital territory (FCT)



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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Overcoming the Challenges to the Effective Implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act in the Federal Capital territory (FCT)₁



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01. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women (VAW) is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”.¹ It has been identified as the most pervasive human rights violation in the world, and it is estimated to cost countries up to 3.7% of their GDP – more than double what most governments spend on education.² An offshoot of gender inequality, violence against women is a significant cause of female morbidity and mortality, may be physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, or economic harm, and it takes place in the private or public arenas, affecting 1 in 3 women in their lifetime. Considering Nigeria’s estimated female population of over 106 million³ as of January 2022, that translates into about 35 million women. Recent happenings such as the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbat-

ed the cases of violence against women, particularly sexual violence. The UN brief of May 2020 revealed that during this time, the increase in reports of domestic violence cases in April 2020 was more profound in three states under total lockdown (Lagos state, Ogun state, and the Federal Capital Territory). The number of cases rose from 60 in March to 238 in April, an increase of 127%. Furthermore, women and girls are disproportionately affected by insecurity – Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, kidnappings, herder-farmers conflict, armed robbery, and so on – and an estimated 79% of internally displaced persons are women and children⁴, who are also “targeted for abduction by Boko Haram and are often raped, forced into labour, marriage, or religious conversion, abused, exposed to sexually transmitted infections and are often pregnant upon escaping captivity.”⁵

The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPPA) is the most com-

¹ UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, 20 December 1993, A/RES/48/104, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f25d2c.html> [accessed 10 February 2021]

² World Bank. 2019. Gender-based Violence (Violence against Women and Girls) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>

³ <https://countrymeters.info/en/Nigeria>

⁴ Displacement Tracking Matrix. (2017). Displacement Tracking Matrix: Nigeria Round XV Report 2017. Retrieved from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/56254> (assessed on 19th February 2021)

⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/results-baseline-survey-gender-based-violence-borno-state-nigeria>

prehensive and progressive law for addressing the silent pandemic of violence against women and girls in Nigeria. The main thrust of the VAPPA is to “eliminate violence in private and public life, prohibit all forms of violence against persons and to provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and punishment of offenders; and for other related matters”.¹ It guarantees maximum protection to all citizens by prohibiting all forms of violence and harmful traditional practices against women or men, boys or girls occurring in private and /or public spaces.

The Act is the first criminal legislation which expanded Nigerian criminal jurisprudence by recognising various forms of related crimes hitherto unacknowledged. Accordingly, the definition of rape was expanded beyond penetration of the female genitals and mouth, to forced sexual action on a male. It addresses a broad-spectrum of violence - physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, economic, and psychological abuses, as well as discrimination against persons, particularly women and girls. These include child abandonment, rape, incest, defilement of minors, forced eviction of a spouse and children, harmful widowhood laws and practices, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced financial dependence, attacks with harmful substance, political violence, among others. It also sets appropriate punishment for convicted perpetrators. For instance, the offence of rape may attract life imprisonment,

subject to the circumstance and the discretion of the judge. The offender will also be listed in the sexual offenders’ register as a deterrent to others. Similarly, the Act makes provisions for effective remedies for victims of violence – rehabilitation support, and compensation, among others. According to Section 38 (1) of the Act, victims of violence are entitled to material, medical, psychological, and legal assistance from governmental and non-governmental agencies providing such services. Additionally, they are afforded opportunity to acquire skills in any vocation of their choice and access to micro credit facilities.

Since it was enacted in 2015, the Act has the force of law in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and in twenty-three (23) states across Nigeria where it has been adopted into law.

The Act recognizes as punishable a wide range of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) offences including forced financial dependence or economic abuse, harmful widowhood practices, genital mutilation, abandonment of children, harmful substance attacks, and incest. Furthermore, due to its all-encompassing nature, the Act does not just protect women and girls from violence, it can also be used to improve the participation of women in politics and other positions of power. This is because violence and discrimination are amongst the reasons why women get excluded from politics and other aspects of public life.

¹ Violence against Persons Prohibition Act, 2015

Prior to the enactment of the VAPPA, there was no comprehensive legislation on violence against women at the national level. Nigeria only had disparate pieces of legislation, which did not address violence against women or gender-based violence uniformly across the country. A few states had passed legislation on domestic violence, harmful traditional practices, or gender-based violence. A few others had attempted to do so unsuccessfully. Much of the existing legislation was outdated, not sufficiently comprehensive, not specifically directed to this grave problem, and not adequately enforced. The coming together of more than fifty-five (55) different groups and individuals under the umbrella of the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women, (LACVAW), eventually

helped mobilise action to improve the legislative landscape for violence against women in Nigeria in 2002. The result of that activism was the signing into law of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act on May 25, 2015, after about thirteen (13) years in the legislative process. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in persons (NAPTIP) is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the law at the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

This policy brief gives an update to the status of the uptake of the VAPPA by the 36 states and provides information on the current implementation status of the VAPPA in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) specifically. It is aimed at guiding decision makers and relevant stakeholders in facilitating effective engagement



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02. OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF THE VAPP ACT AND RELATED LAWS

Between January and March 2021, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) commissioned a national research in twelve (12) states of the federation to assess the impact of the VAPP Act in Nigeria, five (5) years after it was enacted. Titled “The Impact of the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act and Related Laws in Nigeria”¹, the project aligned with WFD’s objective of promoting inclusion by ensuring gender equality and protecting women and girls from violence. The increased number of cases of violence against women and girls in particular in the context of COVID-19 and the frequent cases of perpetrators of gender-based violence facing insubstantial punishment provided the need for research on the uptake of the VAPPA by the states as well as the implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law (VAPPL) in states that had already domesticated the Act across the country. The research is the first national impact assessment of the Act since its enactment.

Originally designed to focus on the implementation of the Act in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and in eleven (11) out of the eighteen (18) states across the six geo-political zones where it had been domesticated at that time, the study assessed the adoption, successes, and challenges of the implementation of the Act, identified the factors that promote or limit the implementation of the Act, as well as the gaps that need to be addressed to ensure the Act achieves its objective of prohibiting violence against citizens, especially women, and promoting gender equality in the Nigerian society. It was also aimed at assessing the level of citizen participation and engagement in the adoption and implementation processes of the VAPPA.

The study was undertaken in Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Cross River, Edo, Enugu, FCT, Kaduna, Lagos, Osun, and Plateau States. It was however noted during the planning process that contrary to available data, three (3) of the selected states - Cross River, Osun,

¹ <https://www.wfd.org/2021/12/07/the-impact-of-the-violence-against-persons-prohibition-act-and-related-laws-in-nigeria/>

and Plateau - were only in the process of domesticating the VAPPA, while the domestication process was yet to start in Lagos State as of January 2021. Although those four states did not have a VAPPL in place yet, they had various legislations to protect women and girls from violence. Therefore, for ease of analysis, the study integrated related anti-violence against women and girls' laws into the research framework by identifying major pieces of legislation for protecting women and girls from the various forms of violence in those states. It assessed the legal and policy frameworks to determine how adequately the laws protect women and girls from violence; it also elicited information on the processes being undertaken to domesticate the Act.

The national research also identified best practices in the focal states, and generated recommendations to encourage rapid progress in the implementation of the VAPP Law of the states and /or its adoption by the states yet to domesticate it, while contributing to existing body of knowledge on the impact of anti-violence against women and girls' laws in Nigeria.

2.1. KEY FINDINGS

The national research revealed that:

- ❑ The VAPPA does not offer a universal coverage to all Nigerian women and girls as the uptake by states was generally low across the country.
- ❑ The culture of silence and concealment; stigmatisation; trivialisation; threats and intimidation; and inadequate funding of necessary structures and mechanisms for implementing anti-violence against women and girls' legislations are key constraints to the achievement of the significant success in the fight violence against women and girls in Nigeria.
- ❑ More cases of violence against women and girls are reported and taken up in places where the relevant implementation structures are put in place.
- ❑ Although the VAPPL seems to have helped in the decrease in the incidence of violence against women and girls in some states, the implementation can still be observed to be largely weak.
- ❑ The Sexual Offenders' Register (SOR) is an effective deterrent to perpetrators in states where such has been established, updated, and publicised.
- ❑ The VAPPA and related laws are more effectively implemented in states where the First Ladies take a keen interest in and contribute to efforts aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls.
- ❑ The intersection of disabilities, violence and gender is not often considered in the implementation of the VAPPA/VAPPL. As such, response mechanisms do not prioritise persons with disabilities who usually experience VAW differently.
- ❑ Institutions and personnel expected to be involved in the implementation include

the police, the judiciary, desk-officers, relevant ministries and agencies. However, they are challenged by lack of capacity in terms of training, funding, effects of corruption, and corrupt practices.

- ❑ Though some level of awareness of some of the VAPPL and anti-violence against women and girls' laws has been created, many of the research participants do not know of their existence or the mechanisms to implement them.
- ❑ Ignorance, cultural beliefs and practices, misinterpretation of the major religions, misinformation, poor socialisation, and poverty are the major barriers to the effective implementation of the VAPPA/VAPPL and other anti-violence against women and girls' legislation.
- ❑ There is a general satisfaction with the VAPPA as an all-encompassing legal instrument. However, study participants largely faulted the implementation within the FCT and in states where it is in force for reasons of lack of political will, paucity of funds, lack of infrastructure, and low capacity among implementing officers.
- ❑ The simplification and popularisation of the VAPP Act and related laws help keep children, especially the girl-child, in school.
- ❑ Active collaboration between state actors and non-state actors enhances the level of effectiveness of the VAPPA/VAPPL.
- ❑ The VAPPA/VAPPL is rarely used to promote women's political participation.
- ❑ The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) is not adequately resourced to solely lead the implementation of the Act in the FCT effectively.
- ❑ There are still gaps in the laws, specifically relating to response and coordination in some of the states, and what specific penalties are attached to specific violations. These need to be reviewed and clearly designated.
- ❑ The challenges to the implementation structures set up by the government ranged from lack of synergy, intimidation, slow judicial process, to inadequacy of interventions specific to various needs or categories of victims.
- ❑ Poverty remains one of the factors that heightens the vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.



The Act provides under Section 38 that every victim of violence is entitled to receive the necessary medical, psychological, social, and legal assistance through governmental and non-governmental agencies providing such assistance.

2.2. BARRIERS TO THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS PROHIBITION ACT/LAWS AND RELATED LAWS

The study also highlighted some of the barriers to the success of the VAPPA. These include:

- ❑ Ignorance: For 39% of the research participants across the research sites, ignorance was the major barrier to the utilisation of the laws by the citizens.
- ❑ Cultural beliefs and practices: 25% of the study participants confirmed that patriarchal traditions and cultural beliefs ascribe power and control to men and boys. Therefore, VAWG has been normalised in most communities.
- ❑ Lack of political will by governments at the national and state levels was identified by 23% of the respondents as another barrier to effective implementation of the laws. What this means is that it is not enough to enact a law, the political will to ensure its successful implementation must be evident.
- ❑ Misinterpretation of the major religions is a limiting factor in the opinion of 9% of the respondents.
- ❑ *Other factors* such as misinformation, poor socialisation and poverty were highlighted for consideration when discussing the barriers to the implementation of the VAPPA and related anti-VAWG laws by the last 4% of the survey population.

2.3. UPDATE ON THE UPTAKE OF THE VAPPA BY SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Prior to the research, the Act had only been domesticated by twelve (12) states and by the time the report was presented, the figure had increased to fifteen (15). There has been a significant leap in the number of states that have domesticated the Act to twenty-five (25) since the research was commissioned in January 2021.

Status of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act in Focal States

S/N	State	January 2021	January 2022
1.	Abia	VAPPL in place	VAPPL In place
2.	Akwa Ibom	VAPPL in place	VAPPL in place
3.	Anambra	VAPPL in place	VAPPL in place

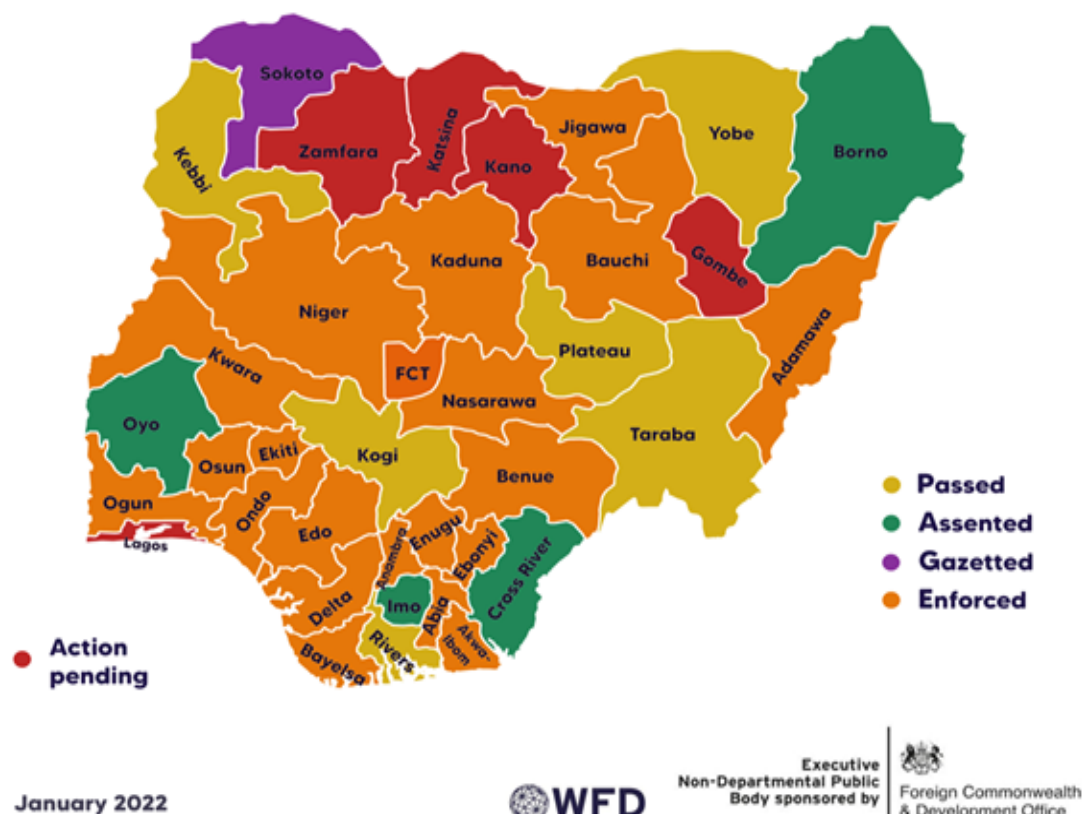
4.	Bauchi	Amendment of VAPPL in process	Amended VAPPL awaiting assent
5.	Cross River	Domestication in process	VAPPL in place
6.	Edo	Amendment of VAPPL in process	Amended VAPPL in place
7.	Enugu	VAPPL awaiting gazette	VAPPL in place
8.	FCT	VAPPA in place	VAPPA in place
9.	Kaduna	VAPPL in place	VAPPL in place
10.	Lagos	No Action towards domestication	Amendment of anti-VAW laws in process
11.	Osun	Domestication in process	VAPPL in place
12.	Plateau	VAPP Bill awaiting assent	VAPP Bill awaiting assent

At the time of preparing this Brief, six (6) states had passed their VAPP bills and are awaiting assent by the governors of their respective states. There are five (5) states yet to pass the VAPPA into law – Gombe, Katsina, Kano, Lagos, and Zamfara.

The success recorded within such a short period has been facilitated largely by the efforts of state and non-state actors, particularly the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Dame Pauline Tallen who has been a strong pillar of support to women's rights organisations and international development agencies working on domestication and adoption of the Act; putting the domestication of the Act on the front burners by civil society actors, especially women's organisations and groups; the accurate data on the uptake of the Act shown by the national research findings; the engagement of development partners, including WFD with the Nigerian Governors' Wives Forum (NGWF); and the dedication of members of the Erelu Bisi Fayemi-led NGWF to ensure universal adoption and effective implementation of the Act by the 36 states to protect women and girls from GBV in the states so that the lives of women and girls can be more meaningful.

The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act

PAGE Scorecard



2.4. FINDINGS FROM THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT)

The increase in violence against women and girls in the FCT has been attributed to many factors, one of which is poverty¹. According to Women Aid Collective (WACOL), poverty among women, which has been heightened by the faster loss of livelihoods during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, make women and girls vulnerable and exposed more to the risk of rape.

Being an Act of the National Assembly, the VAPPA is operational wholesale only in the

FCT. The national research showed that to achieve the goal of the Act, the implementing agency, NAPTIP has over the years undertaken the creation of a **Nigerian Sexual Offenders Database (NSOD)** which is available online on the NAPTIP website with the names and pictures of sex offenders; the establishment of a **Sexual and Gender Based Violence Unit** within the agency to deal with issues of violence against persons. This Unit collates information regarding SGBV across the area councils of the FCT, and coordinates response to each case. In addition, the Agency has engaged in consistent **sensitisation and awareness creation** drives via traditional and new media, especially on radio, television, Facebook and Twitter. Campaigns on social media to reach the public are targeted at young people. 44% of the study participants learnt about the Act on social media. Educational materials on SGBV like flyers, video clips, posters, animations, etc are also disseminated via those channels. Face-to-face campaigns are also organised to reach schools and communities in the area councils. Women and youths interviewed confirmed learning about the VAPP Act from protection and welfare officers. Other initiatives are: the establishment of a **Rapid Response Squad (RRS)** which was created to respond to emergency situations in communities, arrest perpetrators, quell an ongoing violent abuse, and rescue the victim or survivor; development of a **NAPTIP Gender Policy** which though was completed, had not been officially launched as of February 2021; conducting a **High-Level Multi-Agency Team (HiMAT) engagement** made up of FMOJ, NPF, FBOS, FMH, FMoWA, etc. The HiMAT is geared towards strategy development and information sharing among the agencies. Furthermore, NAPTIP conducts **Service Providers Accountability Resource Committee (SPARC)** meetings, with a pool of service providers to disseminate information for the improvement of the implementation of the VAPP Act; **collaborates with the FCT Sexual and Gender Based Violence Response Team** to render assistance to victims or survivors; and **engages with critical stakeholders**, including development partners to implement activities to mark the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women. The Agency also **supports neighbouring Nasarawa State** to adopt and implement the VAPP because a lot of workers in the FCT reside in neighbourhoods like Mararaba, Karu, Masaka, and other settlements in Nasarawa State; **collaborates with other partners** through webinars and virtual meetings such as FCT summit on Access to Justice for survivors of SGBV, geared towards proffering solutions to the challenges that implementing agencies encounter while trying to get justice for victims or survivors; and established SGBV Hotlines for reporting cases and online counselling.

The mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of its implementation include:

- a. Database of the number of complaints of domestic abuse within the FCT.
- b. Database of the number of arrests, prosecutions, and convictions of offenders.
- c. Establishment, maintenance, and public accessibility of an FCT Sex Offenders Register.

- d. Records of the number and rate of compensation that has been paid to victims of offences under the Act.

According to study participants, the Act has enhanced awareness of violence against persons, especially women and girls; facilitated the successful prosecution of GBV cases - between January 2020 and February 2021 for instance, a total of 46 offenders were prosecuted, with 38 of them successfully convicted and sentenced, including one life conviction for defiling a minor; enabled productive partnership between state and non-state actors - there are about eighty (80) registered service providers currently collaborating with NAPTIP; helped to curb the menace of VAWG in the FCT because the fear of the penalties which serve as deterrent to perpetrators and makes them refrain from causing harm to another; and activated the 'name and shame' campaign with the Sexual Offenders' Register which serves as deterrent to perpetrators of VAWG.

2.4.1. Structures for implementing the VAPPA in the FCT

Section 44 of the VAPP Act of 2015 places the responsibility for implementing the provisions of the Act on the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), which is under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development. The Agency executes this so in collaboration with relevant state and non-state stakeholders. As of February 2021, when the national study was conducted, there were 80 registered service providers collaborating with NAPTIP.

The Act also makes provisions for the appointment of a coordinator for the prevention of domestic violence, whose duty it is to submit to the federal government, an annual report on the administration of the Act, a copy of which is expected to be submitted to the National Bureau for Statistics (NBS). There are VAPP Protection Officers in the six Area Councils that make up the FCT. The pioneer VAPP coordinator, Ms. Ene Ede provides technical support to NAPTIP, coordinates the Protection Officers, and supports the NAPTIP overseeing the operations of the Sex Offenders' Register and the Service Providers' Register.

Although NAPTIP is responsible for operationalising the VAPPA, the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) which administers the FCT established the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Team (FCT-SGBVRT) located in the Gender Department in 2016. The objective is to address sexual and gender-based violence in all its ramifications and the team consists of state and non-state actors critical to ending SGBV. These include the FCTA secretariats, NAPTIP, National Human Rights Commission, relevant non-profits, law enforcement and legal agencies, among others.

Other structures that have been set up to serve the victim or abuse survivor are Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC), Family Support Unit (FSU) domiciled in Police Stations. Additionally, shelters for abused women have been set up in FCT by civil society organisations, one of which is the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF), which is in the heart of the FCT. The PWD community has a referral centre – “safe space”, set up by a former president of JONAPWD, called the Purple Corner². The Purple Corner is run by the Family Centered Initiative for Challenged Persons (FACICP), a centre set up to address the development imbalance suffered by women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria. The Purple Corner serves as a referral centre for victims or abuse survivors from the PWD community, offering them counselling and other related services.

Section 46 of the Act empowers the appropriate government ministries to appoint any number of protection officers in each Area Council of the FCT for the purpose of assisting the Court in the discharge of its duties. A Protection officer works together with the Police and accredited service providers and is required to ensure that the victims of violence have easy access to an accredited service provider, alternative residence or shelter or medical facility to receive treatment.

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMoWA) has a Gender Affairs department and a Women Development department that support SGBV victims and survivors. These departments work with the Police, the Ministry of Justice, CSOs, accredited service providers and other bodies that support the SGBV sensitization programmes as well as implementing the VAPP in general in the FCT.

2.4.2. *Challenges to the Effectiveness of the VAPPA*

Information gathered from study participants in the FCT indicated that only 31% of the respondents were satisfied with the implementation of the Act, with poor data management was identified as a major challenge. Though the Act provides under Section 38 that every victim of violence is entitled to receive the necessary medical, psychological, social, and legal assistance through governmental and non-governmental agencies providing such assistance, in reality, the cost of healthcare, transportation, legal representation, among others are borne by the survivor’s family, NGOs or goodwill donors.

Some of the factors highlighted by study participants as challenges encumbering the implementation of the law in the FCT include:

- ❑ **Inadequate funding** for the implementation of the Act. NAPTIP reported working

with a “zero budget” as at the time of the study in February 2021. Funds being used to procure tools for the SGBV unit of the Agency to work with either come from Civil Society Organisations (CSO), international development agencies, or goodwill donations. In fact, victims of domestic abuse in most cases pay for the cost of medical checks and for processing evidence at the crime scene. NAPTIP does not have a working response vehicle. Staff members often volunteer their cars to respond to a call from a victim.

- ❑ **Data Inconsistency due to poor database management among relevant agencies.** Respondents decried the irregularity of figures provided by government agencies like the Ministry of Women Affairs, NAPTIP, the Area Councils and the Police.
- ❑ **Limited capacity among case workers, welfare officers and law enforcement.** The welfare officers in AMAC described their lack of training to the reason why there is low awareness of the provisions of the Act, even within the Area Council. NAPTIP highlighted the lack of training for staff of the SGBV Unit as a major impediment in the implementation of the Act.
- **Limited shelter facilities for survivors of domestic violence.** The shelters available, accessible, and functioning in the FCT, like the DNF and Purple Corner, are run by private individuals and NGOs. They get limited support to cater to the enormous number of cases that they deal with on a regular basis. Consequently, battered women are forced to return to abusive relationships. This has led to massive withdrawal of the cases against perpetrators.
- ❑ **Inadequate number of prosecutors to handle all SGBV cases.** This impacts negatively on securing justice for indigent survivors or victims who may not be able afford the cost of a civil suit.
- ❑ **Non-designation of Special courts for SGBV matters.** This is challenging because of the high volume of cases that come up before the High Court which has jurisdiction to hear such cases in accordance with Section 27 of the Act.
- ❑ **Overburdening of NAPTIP** with the sole implementation of the VAPP Act, in addition to other national responsibilities like implementing the Trafficking in Person Law Enforcement Administration Act for which it was originally established. and cannot handle the numerous cases because they handle trafficking in persons as well.

03. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE VAPP ACT IN THE FCT.

Since the national research report was released, the following have taken place:

- ❑ In line with the provision of Section 42 of the Act, NAPTIP produced the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) 2020. The report which provides a progress update on the implementation of the VAPP Act by NAPTIP since its enactment, challenges, and strategies for improving on the achievements was released in July 2021. The report reiterates many of the challenges captured in the WFD-commissioned research earlier in the year.
- ❑ NAPTIP has recently dedicated a department to the implementation of the VAPPA. A VAPP Coordinator was appointed to oversee the affairs of this division in the last quarter of 2021.
- ❑ The Nigerian Police Force assigned desk officer to each area council in the FCT in December 2021 to address the challenge of arbitrary transfers of Police officer who receive training on handling SGBV cases.
- ❑ NAPTIP has developed reporting tools, and shared with the Special Protection Officer (SPOs)
- ❑ NAPTIP is partnering with ROLAC to hold an annual of stakeholders. The next one will hold in the 1st quarter of 2022.
- ❑ Simplified version of the Act has been interpreted in the 3 major languages.
- ❑ The Ministry of Justice partnered with the FCT judiciary and NAPTIP to launch a legal clinic and counselling for survivors. This programme created awareness by organizing a mock trial during the 2021 16 days of activism.
- ❑ The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sensitization workshop for PWDs. Some of the programs involve children in schools in the FCT.

04. RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges identified during the national research and in the course of the follow-up assessment, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure effective implementation of the VAPP Act in the FCT:

National Assembly

- ❑ Amend the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act to include other Courts instead of just the High Courts as Courts of First instance. include the FCTA and other agencies to support the effort of NAPTIP or create a new agency solely to implement the Act.
- ❑ Members of Appropriation sub-committee should demand adequate budgetary provisions for effective implementation of the VAPPA.

Federal Government

- ❑ Ministry of Finance should prioritise budgetary provisions for government institutions responsible for the VAPP Act implementation - FMWASD, NAPTIP, MoJ and the FCTA (i.e. FCT Statutory Budget and the Ministry of FCT National Priority Budget).
- ❑ NAPTIP should as a matter of urgency build strong partnerships with the media that have very strong presence in Abuja to ramp up the awareness creation.
- ❑ NAPTIP should undertake periodic peer review of the members of the coordinating group to ensure effectiveness.
- ❑ Engage more prosecutors for NAPTIP and the Ministry of Justice for the prosecution of SGBV cases.
- ❑ NAPTIP should build stronger partnerships to address the challenges of rehabilitation and general service provision. Partnership between health agencies such as hospitals and the Police for instance is critical to ensuring evidence is preserved to aid diligent prosecution.
- ❑ The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should intensify advocacy efforts to achieve national coverage of the VAPP Act for women and girls in the 36 states. That is likely to improve government's interest in its enforcement and implementation.
- ❑ Institutional re-engagement among implementing agencies. Government institutions working to support survivors need to define clear cut roles and rules of engagement to enable CSOs collaborate effectively with them.

- ❑ Set up forensic laboratories in both the Ministry of Justice and the Police in the FCT.
- ❑ Create Special courts for SGBV matters for speedy trials. The Court of first instance, in accordance with Section 27 of the Act is the FCT High Court. This constitutes a problem because of the high volume of cases that come up before the Court on a regular basis.
- ❑ Initiate cluster systems where responses are coordinated to enhance service delivery and develop mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery among coordination structures.
- ❑ Set clearly defined roles for anti-VAWG Agencies for greater effectiveness and facilitation of synergy which removes unhealthy rivalry among coordination structures and enhance the success of the implementation of the VAPPA.
- ❑ Other agencies working to achieve the objectives of the VAPPA should adapt the specialized reporting tool for SGBV developed by NAPTIP instead of starting theirs from scratch.

Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA)

- ❑ Make funds available to the Area Councils level for better access to communities. The welfare workers who have direct access to the communities around the FCT know the challenges encountered by women and girls who are abused or assaulted and so need funds to take care of logistics and other incidentals. They have become accustomed to the way of life of community members that they have gained their trust and can extract information from them easily.
- ❑ Engage in community sensitization, dialogues, consultation and strategic persuasive communication with community leaders and traditional institution to disseminate information about VAWG and VAPPA to change the narrative. engagement is required as respondents believe that awareness is low in the FCT.
- ❑ Encourage the Wife of the FCT Minister to develop a keen interest in efforts aimed eliminating violence against women and girls in the Area Councils of the FCT.

Civil Society Organisations

- ❑ Continuous sensitization and awareness creation on the VAPPA to advocate for its effective implementation.
- ❑ Promote the use of the Sexual Offenders' Register and reversing the shame which aims at redirecting the stigma from the victim to the perpetrator by naming and shaming the perpetrators rather than the victim who may be stigmatised in their community.

Development Partners

- Provide strategic support to state and non-state actors working on different aspects of the implementation of the VAPPA.
- Engage with CSOs actively working to provide support legal, psychosocial, and medical as well as shelter to abused women. Undertake research on good practices in GBV response at national and sub-national levels and produce factsheets

MEDIUM-TERM

National Assembly

- ❑ Members of Appropriation sub-committee should demand adequate budgetary provisions for effective implementation of the VAPPA.
- ❑ The Senate Committee and House Committee on Women Affairs should prioritise the success of the VAPPA in their oversight functions.

Federal Government

- ❑ Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHDSD) should improve on social protection programmes to support the indigent and most vulnerable, made up of mostly women and girls, especially from the PWD community.
- ❑ Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHDSD) should strengthen NAPTIP with adequate human, material and financial resources.
- ❑ NAPTIP, National Orientation Agency (NOA), Ministry of Information and Culture, and other agencies should develop gender-responsive messaging in the advocacy campaigns.

Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA)

- ❑ Support NAPTIP in the area of provision of response equipment like vehicles and motorcycles.
- ❑ Establish and manage a SARC and a shelter in each of the Area Councils.

Civil Society Organisations

- ❑ Enlist the support of state and national assembly legislators, top government officials, and social media influencers in the campaign against violence against women and girls in the FCT.
- ❑ Sensitise and collaborate with local level administration – traditional rulers and

local government council leaders advocate the implementation of the VAPPA to eliminate VAWG in rural communities in the six Area Councils.

- ❑ Monitor the implementation of the VAPPA and track release of funds to ensure judicious use for the intended purposes.

Development Partners

- Enhance the capacity of partners to collect and interpret data reflecting diversity and inclusion.
- ❑ Enhance the capacity of lawmakers to periodically assess the effectiveness of the law and review as appropriate.

Long-Term

National Assembly

- ❑ Members of Appropriation sub-committee should demand adequate budgetary provisions for effective implementation of the VAPPA.
- ❑ Undertake periodic review the effectiveness of the VAPPA and amend as appropriate.

Federal Government

- ❑ Ministry of Education should incorporate SGBV education into the school curriculum to sensitising young people early.
- ❑ NAPTIP should strengthen collaboration of law Enforcement Agencies - Nigerian Police Force, NSCDC, Military, DSS; NAPTIP, Ministries of Justice, Women Affairs and Social Development, Health, Education; Social Welfare; Healthcare providers; the Media; Civil Society Organizations – NGOs, CBOs, media, FBOs, traditional and religious institutions in the areas of Investigation, Medical care, Legal Aid, Empowerment, Intelligence Sharing, Counselling, Psycho-social care, and rescue.

Civil Society Organisations

- ❑ Partner with the media in holding the various government agencies accountable for the implementation of the VAPPA.

Development Partners

- ❑ Enhance the capacity of lawmakers to periodically assess the effectiveness of the law and review as appropriate.

Endnotes

- 1 WACOL, *Beijing+ 25: Assessing the Realization of Nigerian Women's Rights in Critical Areas of SGBV*, 2020. Pp 25
- 2 FACICP Disability Plus <https://www.facicp.org/> (accessed February 20, 2021)

