

POLICY BRIEF

Overcoming the Limitations to the Implementation of the Abia State Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

POLICY BRIEF

Overcoming the Limitations to the Implementation of the Abia State Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law¹



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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 million,³ as of January 2022, that translates into about 35 million

women. Recent happenings such as the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated 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 children,⁴ who are also “targeted for abduction by Boko Haram and are often raped, forced into labour, marriage, or religious conversion, abused, exposed to sexually

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)

transmitted infections and are often pregnant upon escaping captivity.”⁵

The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPPA) is the most comprehensive 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”.⁶ 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,

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

⁶ Violence against Persons Prohibition Act, 2015

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.

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 status of the Osun State Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law specifically. It is aimed at guiding decision makers and relevant stakeholders in facilitating effective engagement towards successful implementation of the law in the state.



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.

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 was 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.

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 patri-

archal 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 national 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



January 2022



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2.4. Findings from Abia State

The Abia State Violence Against Persons' Prohibition Law was enacted in October 2020 and in force at the time the national research was undertaken. As with the VAPP Act, the law aims to “prohibit all forms of violence against persons in private and public life and provide maximum protection and effective remedies for victims of and punishments for offenders”. It also provides protections against offenses that affect women disproportionately, including the prohibition of FGM, forceful ejection from home, forced financial dependence or economic abuse, forced isolation, emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse, harmful widowhood practices, spousal battery amongst others. It also criminalises rape of boys as an offence. The inclusion of violence in public places and even at political rallies is one of the successes recorded by the law as it is expected to enhance the participation and engagement of women in politics and elections when and if fully implemented.

Although the national research took place only a few months after the domestication of the VAPP Act, it was revealed that women had become more aware of their rights and the avenues for redress when those rights are trampled upon in the private or public realms. Similarly, the Sex Offenders Register is a deterrent from committing sexual offences as categorized in the VAPPL.

It was further revealed that there is a very high level of collaboration between state and non-state actors for the domestication and implementation of the law.

The opportunities for the VAPPL as highlighted by study respondents include the creation of a sustainable environment for development actors working for the promotion and protection of the rights of women, children, and other vulnerable groups or in the area of sustainable development generally to partner and thrive; as well as increased public perception about the government in protecting the rights of the citizenry.

Some of the gaps identified by the research include the absence of punishment for people who extort victims; inadequacy of penalties for certain offences; lack of information on where survivors can go to report offenders or even how to go about getting justice or seeking redress.

One of the major drivers of the adoption of the VAPPA and the implementation of the VAPPL is the First Lady of Abia State who as a key stakeholder had immediately established two shelters for abused women in Umuahia and Aba. These shelters have been put in place to house survivors of violence Counselling Centres had also been provided.

Non-state actors especially CSOs had also engaged with the VAPPL by embarking on advocacy initiatives especially in rural communities to create awareness to ensure the success

of the law. According to findings, the stakeholders believed that such engagement could help government achieve improved results through social inclusion and empowerment.

2.4.1. Structures for implementing VAPPL of Abia State

Findings from the research provide a picture of the structures for implementing the VAPPL in Abia State:

- The Office of the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice has responsibility for the implementation in coordination with other agencies like the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Police, the Office of the First Lady of Abia State, CSOs, particularly FIDA.
- The Action and Technical Working Group which has as its members representatives from security agencies, Ministries of Justice, and Health, and CSOs - FIDA, CAN, NCWS monitors the implementation of the VAPPL closely. The major responsibility of the working group is to sensitize and create public awareness, use advocacy as a tool to further deepen the response strategy and implement strategies that can prevent or mitigate effects of violence when they occur.
- The through the Ministry of Women Affairs, the state funds the cost of healthcare for the survivors. Pro bono legal services are also offered survivors from FIDA.
- The Administration of Criminal Justice System Committee set up by the state to look at issues of abuses, looking at other provisions on gender rights.

2.4.2 Challenges to the Effectiveness of the VAPPL

Study participants agreed that it was too early in the day to cite the benefits of the law as it was relatively new, and there had not been any case in Abia yet where the VAPP law was used to get justice for any woman or girl. However, the following are some of the challenges that may hinder the effective implementation of the law:

- Culture (traditional and religious) which will make it difficult for victims and survivors to access justice, just like it happens to women and girls in every other part of Nigeria. This may result in resistance to the law based on entrenched norms of gender inequity and opposition to concepts around equality and rights perceived as foreign.
- Delays in prosecuting cases by the Police and the courts due to corruption and corrupt practices, inadequate funding, overburdened courts, among others.
- Poor capacity among relevant implementing and enforcing agencies which limits their ability to deliver effectively and professionally. These include the police, the courts, and the relevant ministries.
- The culture of silence which puts 'family honour' above the rights and wellbeing of individual members of the family. This is also fueled by stigmatization.
- Inadequate funding as intervention efforts aimed at improving the lives of women and girls rarely receive adequate budgetary provisions.
- Lack of residents' access to the law as hard or e-copies were not in circulation months after its enactment.

03. UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE VAPP LAW IMPLEMENTATION IN ABIA STATE

There has been a significant leap in the level of implementation of the Abia State VAPPL. With funding support from the Ford Foundation, the state has undertaken various activities aimed at strengthening the evidence and response ecosystem for addressing GBV in the state. This entailed developing a pathway for addressing all forms of GBV; establishment of a support system for survivors; and the establishment of a multi sectoral/inter-agency coordinating mechanism to ensure knowledge management, learning, and sharing of best practices.

The project has assisted the state government to strengthen the capacities of responders and service providers; increase advocacy and sensitization of the general public; and facilitate interagency coordination and knowledge sharing. Specifically, the state has achieved the following:

- a. Development of Protocols and Guidelines for GBV Management and Reporting. Standardised GBV Incidence Reporting, Referral and Consent forms; Standard Operating Procedures for GBV Response; the GBV Service Provider Pocketbook; A Quick Guide to Gender-Based Violence Response and Management; A Training Manual on Prevention, Response and Multi-sectoral Coordination of GBV.
- b. Creation and strengthening of coordinated GBV response structures at the local government and community levels.
 - Establishment of the Coalition of Wives of Local Government Against GBV (COWL-GA-GBV) by the First Lady of Abia State, Dr. Nkechi Ikpeazu, to ensure an inclusive and well-coordinated response to GBV at the local government level.
 - Eliciting the commitment of the local government leaders to join the campaign of zero-tolerance to GBV.
 - Creation and appointment of Incident Reporting Offices and Officers within the local government council offices.
 - Organisation of capacity building for relevant state and non-state stakeholders and responders from the 17 local government areas of Abia State, including law

enforcement agents, gender desk officers, medical personnel, media practitioners, legal officers, community leaders, civil society actors, teachers, Civil Society Organizations, local government leaders, and teachers.

- Launch of Community GBV Watch in five communities to support anti-GBV initiatives and mechanisms at the local government level.
- c. Integration of anti-GBV as an extra-curricular activity in Schools
- Abia State has set up anti-GBV School Clubs to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in the state. The pilot project is being implemented in five (5) schools across the state. In addition to the Clubs, there have been training workshops for school advisors and relevant staff of the Ministry of Education to strengthen their capacity for effective implementation of the project. There is also a Standing Committee set up by the Ministry of Education with the mandate to advise and investigate cases of SRGBV.
- d. Improved awareness on GBV through Sensitisation and Advocacy
- The state employed traditional electronic and new media to sensitise and advocate a violence-free society for women. This was done through jingles produced in English and local languages Igbo for universal reach and which aired on radio. Similarly, the state created a portal for sharing information, resources as well as reporting GBV cases. Citizen engagement has also improved with the setting up of social media handles which enables the people to interface with the anti-GBV mechanisms in the state directly.

Furthermore, the state is preparing a Gender Policy. This will increase participation of women in political forums and again uplift their participation in decision making especially in education and economy. It is expected that women's presence in critical leadership positions will minimize violence against women in the state significantly.

A few of the challenges noted during the national research were also cited as limitations to the effective implementation of the Abia State VAPPL. These include unnecessary delays in the prosecution of perpetrators which wear survivors out, lack of gender-responsive budgeting which poses serious challenges to survivors, case workers and service providers; prosecution with the VAPPL is still difficult because some judicial officers are not yet conversant with the law and it is not yet cited in some courts.

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 fast-track the domestication of the VAPP Act as the Cross River VAPP Law, effective implementation of the VAPPL when it is eventually assented to and gazetted, and other related laws:

Short-Term

Abia State House of Assembly

- ❑ Members of Appropriation sub-committee of the HoA should demand adequate budgetary provisions for effective implementation of the CRS-VAPPL
- ❑ The House Committee on Women Affairs should prioritise the success of the VAPPL in its oversight functions

Abia State Government

- ❑ Gazette the CRS-VAPPL to facilitate use and citation of the law.
- ❑ Develop a costed action plan to guide and finance VAPPL implementation activities.
- ❑ Match political will with concrete action by making budgetary provisions for the implementation of the VAPPL. Adequate funding should be made available to the relevant agencies - Judiciary, law enforcement, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and the Social Welfare.
- ❑ Develop protocols and guidelines for GBV management and reporting be domiciled at the GBV center at the Ministry of Women Affairs.
- ❑ Provide hotlines for ease of reporting of cases of violence against women and girls.
- ❑ Provide capacity building opportunities by way of training and retraining to equip agencies and ministries tasked with the duty of implementing these laws, and the members of the judiciary with necessary skills.
- ❑ Simplify and translate the VAPPL into major local languages in the state and pidgin. Make this available to all citizens as much as possible.
- ❑ Undertake aggressive and regular state-wide awareness creation, especially in the northern part of Cross River State, using traditional and cultural medium where necessary.

- ❑ Provide necessary logistics to the Police to respond prompt to reported cases. Set up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the funds are used for the purpose they were given.
- ❑ Set up run shelters for abused women to provide temporary safe place for women and girls running from abusive environments and girls running from abusive environments and to protect survivors from allies of perpetrator/ and or perpetrators whose cases are currently in court.
- ❑ Declare a zero-tolerance to corruption across board and display political will to stamp VAWG.
- ❑ Develop an emergency response policy with broad definition of emergency situations to include public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and SGBV. It should list the various emergency service providers, to include NGOs rendering services.
- ❑ Coordinate prevention and response actions by various stakeholders.
- ❑ Set up a response/implementation mechanism that would also be responsible for reporting, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.
- ❑ Create a Sex Offenders' Register to be domiciled with the Ministry of Justice. Link to the National Sex Offender's Database (NSOD) and publish regularly.

Civil Society Organisations

- ❑ Embark on full-throttle sensitization and awareness creation on the CRS-VAPP bill to advocate for its full adoption – assent and gazette, as well as its implementation.
- ❑ Strengthen the coalition established by GPI, Project Alert, and Basic Rights Counsel Initiative for the passage of the bill by establishing partnerships between CSOs and government at the legislative and executive levels.
- ❑ Continuous sensitization of the general populace on the VAPPL and various anti-VAWG laws in the state. Prioritise the communities in the northern region. Partner with the media in holding the various government agencies accountable for the implementation of the anti-VAWG laws in the state.
- ❑ Simplify and popularize the VAPPL and other anti-VAWG laws of the state.
- ❑ Support government to carry out the functions that will operationalize the provisions of the VAPP Act such as: setting up an offenders' register; development of guidelines for those operating as service providers in the state, set up a register for them and circulate same; appointment of 'Protection Officers' for each local government area to help the Court and Police in coordinating actions; and appointment of a Coordinator that will oversee actions towards ending violence against women and girls and report annually.
- ❑ Monitor the implementation of the VAPPL and track release of funds to ensure judicious use for the intended purposes.
- ❑ Undertake advocacy visits to the government for creation of specialized courts

and inclusion of VAPPL in school curriculum in both at the primary and secondary levels.

Development Partners

- ❑ Provide strategic support to state and non-state actors working on different aspects of the implementation of the VAPPL and anti-VAWG laws of CRS.
- ❑ Engage with CSOs actively working to provide support legal, psychosocial, and medical as well as shelter to abused women.
- ❑ Enhance the capacity of partners to collect and interpret data reflecting diversity and inclusion.

Medium-Term

House of Assembly

- ❑ The House Committee on Women Affairs should prioritise the success of the VAPPL in its oversight functions.

Cross River State Government

- ❑ Establish Specialised Courts and Practice Direction to guide the implementation of the VAPPL and related laws.
- ❑ Establish a Survivors' Support Fund without further delay and provide clear management structure.
- ❑ Set up anti-GBV School Clubs to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in the state.

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 state.
- ❑ Sensitise and collaborate with local level administration – traditional rulers and local government council leaders advocate the implementation of anti-VAWG laws to stop VAWG in the communities.
- ❑ Strengthen the CSO partnership by FIDA, Project Alert, GPI, BRCI and others and create public awareness and sensitization on the VAPPL.

Development Partners

- ❑ Undertake research on good practices in GBV response at national and sub-national levels and produce factsheets.

Long-Term

House of Assembly

- ❑ Periodic review of the effectiveness of the VAPPL and amendment as appropriate.
- ❑ The House Committee on Women Affairs should prioritise the success of the VAPPL in its oversight functions.

Cross River State Government

- ❑ Integrate the VAPPL in the school curriculum Include the simplified version of the VAPPL in the reading list of primary school curriculum. This will go a long way in raising a next generation of anti-VAWG adults.

Civil Society Organisations

- ❑ Continuous sensitization of the general populace on the VAPPL and various anti-VAWG laws in the state. Prioritise the communities in the northern region.
- ❑ Partner with the media in holding the various government agencies accountable for the implementation of the anti-VAWG laws in the state.

Development Partners

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

