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# Chief Justice advocates unified approach to end gender-based violence

By Justice Agbenorsi

**C**HIEF Justice Paul Baffoe-Bonnie has called for a unified approach to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in the country.

In a speech read on his behalf by the Chairperson of the Judicial Service Gender Equity Committee, Justice Sophia Rosetta Bernasko, at a stakeholder engagement on 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence with the Judicial Service, he explained that justice

for victims of GBV was a chain adding that if one link broke, the survivor would fall through hence the need for a coordinated and thorough response mechanisms to protect them.

"Justice does not begin the day a case reaches a judge. It starts the moment violence occurs, long before a docket is opened from the police officer who receives the first report, the doctor who conducts the medical exam, the community leader who supports or stigmatises the survivor, the media practitioner who reports responsibly or sensationalises, the service provider who secures

digital evidence before it disappears, the social worker who whispers, you are safe here and the development partner who helps build capacity.

Each of these steps determines whether justice will stand or collapse. Justice is a chain and if one link breaks, the survivor falls through," he said.

## Stakeholder engagement

The stakeholder engagement was organised by the Ghana Chapter of the African Women's Leaders Network (AWLN) in collaboration with the Judicial

Service and partners.

It was on the sub-theme, "Upholding rights, delivering justice: The Judiciary's role in curbing GBV in Ghana".

The Chief Justice said GBV was evolving from physical spaces to digital realms, adding, "Today, harm travels through WhatsApp messages, in the sharing of intimate images without consent and in online threats".

As a result, he called for a shift from traditional forms of abuse and a new era of justice that addressed both offline and online violence.

## Commitment

Justice Baffoe-Bonnie expressed the Judiciary's commitment to enhancing its response to gender-based violence.

In line with that, he said the judicial arm of government had established gender-sensitive court procedures and trained judges to effectively handle digital evidence in such cases.

He also highlighted the establishment of a user committee focused on gender-based violence and juvenile justice, created to propose

reforms and address challenges within the justice system.

"We must envision a system where no one feels intimidated in our courtrooms, where perpetrators cannot hide, and where communities protect survivors," he said, adding that the vision was within reach — but would require accountability, transparency, and collaboration.

## Reforms

The Chair of the Ghana Chapter of AWLN, Dr Charity Binka, said the engagement formed part of a deliberate and strategic commitment of the network to help build strong institutions to uphold the rights of women and girls.

"If we collaborate with the Judicial Service, then we will be able to confront the rising threats of digital violence that seek to threaten them," she said.

She called on the Judiciary to accelerate the handling of online and offline cases, reduce delays, expand capacity for digital evidence in handling cyber-related GBV, enhance legal aid for survivors in poor communities, and promote public awareness.



• Justice Sophia Rosetta Bernasko (seated 3rd from left), Chairperson of Judicial Service Gender Equity Committee, with Dr Charity Binka (seated 2nd from left), Chairperson of African Women Leaders Network Ghana, and other officials after the event. Picture: CALEB VANDERPUIE