

# Gender

## Digital violence hinders women's participation

By Rebecca Quaioco Duho

**G**ENDER-BASED civil society organisations (CSOs) have described the use of Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) to silence and discourage women from seeking or holding positions of influence as a threat to equal and meaningful participation.

According to them, women in public life, human rights defenders and peacebuilders, among others, played essential roles in advancing the gender equality agenda.

At a meeting organised by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (Gender Centre) in Accra, which brought together women's rights organisations, they called on stakeholders to work together to address TFGBV in the country and

beyond.

The meeting was at the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), under a project dubbed "Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV): A Violation of Rights and Hindrance to Women's Participation in Public Life".

The main objective of the project is to shed light on TFGBV, amplify the voices of women in decision-making and women human rights defenders on violence they encounter online, while engaging stakeholders to recognise the impacts of TFGBV and to also seek policy reforms.

### TFGBV

Touching on laws on TFGBV in Ghana, the Convenor, Affirmative Action Act Coalition, Sheila Minkah-Premo, said the term referred to various forms of GBV that used modern technology, including Artificial Intelligence, to cause harm to victims, noting that it

was a human rights issue that transcended international and cross-border boundaries, leading to physical and psychological harm.

She mentioned some of the forms as online violence, insults, fake news, shaming, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, trolling, cyberstalking, digital surveillance, and deepfakes using AI.

Others, she said, included doxxing or providing personal details to enable tracing, and sometimes harming the target and sextortion.

She said existing laws in the country, such as the Criminal Offences Act, the Domestic Violence Act, the Electronic Transactions Act, and the Cybersecurity Act, among others, did not have specific provisions to prosecute TFGBV, making it difficult to find justice for victims.

### Digital violence

The Executive Director of Child Online Africa, Awo Aidam Amenyah, explained that Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) encompasses acts of violence carried out through digital means, targeting individuals based on their gender. She noted that it involved the use of online platforms and technologies to harass, control, or harm others, and disproportionately affected women and girls.

"The digital world, while offering unprecedented opportunities, has also become a battleground where women and girls face relentless gender-based violence," she said.

She said statistics revealed a grim reality of how widespread and severe

the issue had become, adding that a total of 583 cases of online gender-based violence against women were recorded from August 2024 to March 2025.

Giving the broader impact of the violence on women, she said it created fear, anxiety, depression and loss of confidence, as well as withdrawal from online spaces and censorship.

She called for urgent policy reforms, urging the strengthening of laws to explicitly recognise Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) as a distinct crime, including offences such as online harassment, non-consensual intimate imagery, deepfakes, and sextortion. She also emphasised the need to prioritise robust enforcement mechanisms and stronger protection for victims.

### Silencing effect

A researcher, Nana Nyama Danso, who presented the results of a research she conducted on 'Online Gender-Based Violence: The Experiences of Women in Public Life in Ghana', said OGBV was shaped by strong patriarchal norms, weak enforcement and uneven digital access, adding that it was used in reinforcing power structures.

She said it was typically an extension of offline GBV enabled by a digital platform.

She gave key findings of the research as that online GBV created a silencing effect on women, created safety and mental health issues, job losses, stigmatisation and shaming.

A Gender and Development Expert at the Gender Centre, Deborah Tayo Akakpo, said the use of TFGBV to silence and discourage women from seeking and holding positions of influence was a threat to equal and meaningful participation.

She said finding meaningful ways to address the threats they faced from TFGBV would be critical to promoting women's leadership and participation in decision-making.



• Participants in the meeting