

CSW

Global Policy
Recommendations

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Access to Justice for Women and Girls



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context

Access to justice for women and girls in Nigeria remains deeply unequal, particularly for those from marginalised communities, rural areas, or those living with disabilities. Despite progressive frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act (2015), the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015), and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018), structural, institutional, and socio-cultural barriers persist.



context

YNCSD has garnered a wealth of experience on justice issues that affect women and girls in Nigeria. Drawing from field engagements and evidence from YNCSD's Diva Hotline, YNCSD has identified key areas that need reform and will significantly accelerate access to justice for women and girls in Nigeria.



Legal and policy barriers:

In Nigeria, there is an inconsistent domestication of the VAPP Act across states, and there are conflicting laws on SRHR that restrict women's autonomy and access to healthcare, especially for gender and sexual minorities. For example, Nigeria's recently validated Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) policy does not categorically articulate provisions that might be peculiar to intersex persons.



Institutional Gaps:

In Nigeria, weak coordination between government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, limited gender desks, and bias in law enforcement discourage survivors from reporting injustices and violations.



Service and Budget Deficits:

Underfunded legal aid, lack of psychosocial support, and minimal investment in gender justice systems constrain access to justice for women and girls in Nigeria.



Disability Exclusion:

Most justice facilities, like police stations, lack physical accessibility, sign language interpreters, or alternative communication tools. This is a significant constraint for women and girls with disabilities.

Without urgent reforms, these barriers will continue to deny women and girls their right to equal protection, dignity, and justice.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Harmonise and Enforce Gender-Responsive Legal Frameworks

Nigeria should ensure the full domestication, harmonisation, and enforcement of gender equality laws, including the VAPP Act, Child Rights Act, and Disability Act, across all 36 states. This should include clear provisions protecting women's bodily autonomy and access to safe abortion as a component of justice and health rights.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Harmonise and Enforce Gender-Responsive Legal Frameworks

The Ministry of Women Affairs, Justice, and Health should consult with and work closely with Nigeria's legislators at the national and state levels to ensure that all gender responsive legal frameworks do not just protect women, but are effectively domesticated across all 36 states in Nigeria.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Strengthen Gender and Disability- Responsive Justice Institutions

Institutionalise Gender and Disability Justice Desks across all police stations, courts, and correctional facilities.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Strengthen Gender and Disability-Responsive Justice Institutions

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health should work closely with Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Centres across Nigeria to equip personnel with survivor-centred and trauma-informed training, to provide both medical, psychosocial and other practical support for survivors.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Strengthen Gender and Disability-Responsive Justice Institutions

Furthermore, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) should work closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure integration of interpreters, assistive technologies, and accessibility infrastructure to accelerate justice for persons with disabilities.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Create a National Access-to-Justice Fund for Women and Girls

The Federal and state governments in Nigeria should jointly create a dedicated fund, managed by an agency, to finance free legal aid, shelters, counselling, and community mediation programs, especially for survivors of GBV, SRHR violations, and persons with disabilities.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Create a National Access-to-Justice Fund for Women and Girls

Civil society organisations and the Nigerian Bar Association should be recognised as implementing partners.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Institutionalise Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Accountability

The Federal government should mandate annual public reporting on justice-sector budgets disaggregated by gender and disability inclusion indicators.



YNCSD's Priority Recommendations

Institutionalise Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Accountability

The Federal government should further establish accountability mechanisms to track expenditure and impact on women's access to justice, including in rural and underserved areas.



Access to justice is not only a legal imperative, it is a prerequisite for achieving gender equality, inclusive governance, and sustainable development.

YNCSD urges national and global stakeholders to adopt these recommendations as pathways to transform justice systems into safe, inclusive, and equitable spaces for all women and girls.



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