

P O L I C Y B R I E F

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Accelerating justice, expanding prevention, and strengthening accountability: The need for G20 action to end gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF)



Key messages

- Establish stronger and comprehensive laws.
- Establish policies that adopt gender-responsive approaches to engaging men and boys as part of the solution.
- Establish policies that invest in prevention, protection, care, and support services.
- Establish policies that encourage research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation for purposes of improved accountability.
- Establish policies aligned with international norms and standards to ensure the protection of women and girls in the context of conflict, migration, and humanitarian crisis.

Introduction statement and aim

Gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) are among the most widespread human rights violations, devastating lives across every country, culture, and class (UNICEF, n.d.). In 2023, it was estimated that approximately 51,000 women were killed by an intimate partner or a family member globally (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime & United Nations Women, 2024). Despite years of global commitments and progress, millions still live in fear – denied justice, safety, and dignity. GBVF is not only a personal tragedy; it also weakens the social fabric, impedes progress, and drains up to 3.7% of GDP in some countries (Ouedraogo & Stenzel, 2021). It is a collective crisis warranting urgent, united action.

In recent times, regressive policies and a

weakening global commitment to human rights have reinforced patriarchal power, inequality and unhealthy masculinities – while eroding protections for vulnerable groups. The escalation of all forms of GBVF reflects deeply interconnected systems of discrimination and oppression (CIVICUS, 2025; UNHCR n.d.). Addressing GBVF requires integrated and intersectional solutions rooted in women's reproductive and mental health, justice, expanded prevention, and accountability. This policy brief calls for bold policy shifts and systemic, transformative change to support national, regional and international advocacy efforts aimed at ensuring the protection and safeguarding of women and girls against GBVF.

Critique of the policy context

G20 declarations happen annually. According to the Sherpa Track issue on the Women's Empowerment Working Group, published in

December 2024 (G20 South Africa 2025), G20 leaders have made the following unified commitment to eradicate GBVF:

The G20 leaders collectively pledge to intensify efforts to eliminate gender-based violence and femicide, implementing legal reforms, enhancing support services, and engaging men and boys as allies. The commitment includes utilising technology and AI to support survivors and prevent violence, sharing best practices on institutional coordination, and promoting positive masculinity. This unified stance aims to create safer societies for all women, particularly those vulnerable due to poverty and other intersecting factors (p. 8).

Despite this commitment, global policy responses to GBVF remain fragmented, underfunded (Emaajo, 2025), and largely reactive. Similarly, legal frameworks, such as the Istanbul Convention, ILO Convention 190, and other national and regional instruments, are unevenly ratified and enforced, undermining their impact.

The primary focus on protection and response policies bypassed prevention strategies and cultural transformation needed to shift harmful gender dynamics and social norms. The

scarcity of comprehensive and disaggregated data collection and poor monitoring of cases, underreporting, inconsistent definitions, as well as the lack of conceptual clarity (Maina & Rooney, 2024; United Nations Women & World Health Organization, 2025), limit accountability and hinder evidence-based policymaking. Moreover, policies often fail to account for intersectional realities (Essue et al., 2025), thereby excluding migrants, persons with disabilities, and those in conflict or rural contexts.

The persistent gaps in policy context include:

- Weak enforcement of existing laws and conventions, leading to high levels of impunity and reduced levels of access to justice for victims/survivors of GBVF
- Limited focus on prevention and the role of communities
- The transformation of harmful masculinities
- Chronic underfunding of GBVF responses, thus under-resourced at all levels, including survivor-centred services
- Poor data systems and lack of accountability mechanisms
- Exclusion of marginalised groups in policy design
- GBV and its interconnectedness to women's health and well-being.

In summary, the global policy landscape demands structural transformation. With bold, survivor-centred, and intersectional policies

that invest equally in prevention, response, and accountability, G20 commitments can become truly transformative and impactful.

Recommendations

In response to the aforementioned policy gaps, the following key recommendations are vital for G20 commitment:

- **Establish stronger and more comprehensive laws**, policies, and regulatory frameworks that recognise technology-facilitated gender-based violence and femicide (TFGBVF) as crimes and violations of human rights. Legal frameworks must be strengthened to equip law enforcement, court systems, and judicial personnel to prevent impunity and secondary traumatising of survivors across all forms of GBV. Jurisdictional loopholes that allow perpetrators to evade accountability must be addressed. Corporate laws should also be enhanced to ensure that no sector is left behind.
- **Establish policies that adopt gender-responsive approaches to engaging men and boys as part of the solution** – addressing the deeper social norms, attitudes and behaviours that enable GBVF to persist. Integrating comprehensive gender equality education throughout the educational system plays a significant role in shaping future generations to be emotionally connected, socially responsible, and committed to justice. Additionally, policies must regulate and monitor media and online media platforms to prevent the promotion of harmful gender stereotypes and GBVF. The integration of transformative work on positive masculinities should be embedded into national action plans for GBV prevention, care and support.
- **Establish policies that invest in protection, care, and support services** that meet the needs of GBV victims and survivors. Policies should include well-resourced and funded systems, such as specialised personnel at police stations, specialised courts, fast-tracking of GBV-related cases, legal aid, economic security, safe shelters, trauma-informed counselling and psychosocial services, comprehensive healthcare, and sexual and reproductive health and rights services. These are integral to ensuring that quality of care and protection for GBV survivors is accessible, especially to those in rural, marginalised, and underserved areas. Policies must also honour the autonomy and healing journey of survivors, supporting their full re-integration back into society.
- **Establish policies that encourage research, data collection, monitoring and evaluation**

for purposes of improved accountability. Such policy actions would drive meaningful, lasting impact toward justice. A coordinated data repository is also recommended for policymakers, researchers, and advocates to access sex-disaggregated data, and track GBV cases effectively. This should be supported by a robust and transparent GBV Accountability Framework that guides investment in prevention strategies and measures, with tangible outcomes.

- **Establish policies aligned to international norms and standards that ensure the protection of women and girls in the context of conflict, migration, and humanitarian crises.** To prevent GBVF in these most precarious, unsafe, and life-threatening circumstances, governments must fully implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

Conclusion

Ending GBVF requires enforceable laws, sustained investment in prevention, and survivor-centred accountability. With coordinated action, GBVF can be eradicated across countries in a sustainable way. The G20 has the capacity to set new global standards. Pathways of policy action within the G20 and other multilateral organisations must

be further strengthened. Meaningful global action is needed to address financing, data and capacity gaps. Essentially, governments must be influenced to make adequate efforts – including defining parameters of societal well-being beyond income levels – to ensure lasting change.

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