SUMMARY REPORT

Understanding Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence among Women and Girls in South Sudan

AUGUST 2026



Research Study by Ma'Mara Sakit Village in collaboration with GoGirls ICT Initiative

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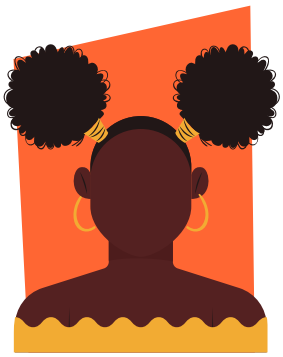
1. Overview of the Report

This summary condenses the full research report on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in South Sudan into a concise report-style overview. The full report examines the nature, manifestations, impacts, and response environment of TFGBV affecting young women and girls, while also considering the experiences of women in public-facing roles, students, women with disabilities, women leaders, activists, and service providers. The report treats TFGBV as a serious form of gendered harm that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified through digital technologies such as mobile phones, SMS, social media platforms, messaging applications, email, image-sharing tools, online forums, and emerging technologies such as AI-enabled manipulation.

The central argument of the report is that TFGBV in South Sudan should not be understood as a minor online behaviour problem or as a purely technical cyber incident. It is part of the broader continuum of violence against women and girls. Online harassment, threats, impersonation, account takeover, blackmail, image-based abuse, doxxing, cyberstalking, hate speech, and digital surveillance can produce offline consequences, including fear, shame, social withdrawal, loss of concentration, family conflict, school withdrawal, reputational injury, self-censorship, and reduced public participation. The research therefore situates digital abuse within South Sudan's wider social context of gender inequality, conflict legacies, weak protection systems, uneven digital access, stigma, and limited institutional trust.

The report is both empirical and policy-oriented. It is empirical because it draws on survey data, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, case examples, administrative incident material, and stakeholder validation. It is policy-oriented because it uses the findings to identify institutional gaps and propose practical recommendations for GBV service providers, schools, universities, women-led civil society organisations, justice actors, the communications regulator, cyber incident-response structures, telecoms, platforms, disability inclusion actors, donors, and humanitarian coordination systems. The report does not claim to produce a national prevalence estimate. Instead, it provides grounded evidence of serious and recurring patterns within the sampled populations and explains why a coordinated response is urgently needed.

The report examines technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) against young women and girls, its impacts and responses, and how digital technologies- including social media, messaging platforms, mobile phones, and AI-enable or amplify gendered harm.



2. Background and Rationale

The growth of digital communication has changed the ways in which gender-based violence can occur. Digital technologies do not create gender inequality by themselves, but they provide new infrastructures through which existing inequalities can be reproduced, scaled, made visible, and normalised. In South Sudan, this issue is particularly important because the country is shaped by conflict legacies, displacement, humanitarian pressures, weak formal protection systems, limited digital infrastructure, and deeply rooted patriarchal norms. Women and girls may therefore experience digital participation as both opportunity and risk: technology can support learning, organising, work, advocacy, and social connection, but it can also expose them to harassment, monitoring, humiliation, coercion, and abuse.

The report identifies a major knowledge and policy gap. South Sudan has an extensive body of concern around offline gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, conflict-related violence, child marriage, and sexual violence. However, there is far less local evidence on how gendered harm is mediated through phones, online groups, social media, messaging platforms, image-sharing tools, and digital accounts. This creates a problem for recognition and response. If TFGBV is not clearly named, it is difficult for institutions to count it, document it, refer it, investigate it, and support survivors. The report therefore aims to make these harms visible and to show how they intersect with offline vulnerability, stigma, reporting barriers, and institutional gaps.

Young women and girls are central to the report because they are active in digital spaces and may be especially exposed to peer harassment, relationship-based coercion, unwanted messages, pressure to share images, blackmail, impersonation, sexualised abuse, and reputational attacks.



- **Students and girls** are especially important because digital violence can affect school concentration, confidence, peer relationships, online participation, and educational continuation.
- **Women with disabilities** are also included because disability may increase vulnerability to abuse while also creating additional barriers to reporting, communication, mobility, and service access.
- **Women leaders, activists, feminist organisers, and public-facing women** are included because visibility can make women targets of trolling, sexualised attacks, political silencing, and reputational abuse.

3. Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions

The overall aim of the research is to examine the nature, manifestations, impacts, and response environment of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan.

The report asks

- what **forms of TFGBV** are experienced by young women and girls;
- how **different categories of respondents** describe the causes, dynamics, and consequences of digital abuse;
- what **impacts TFGBV** has on wellbeing, participation, education, relationships, and everyday digital behaviour;
- what **barriers prevent survivors** from reporting abuse or accessing support;
- how **adequate current** institutional, community, legal, educational, and platform **responses** are; and
- what **reforms are required to improve** prevention, protection, reporting, accessibility, data systems, and accountability.

The overall aim of the research is to examine the nature, manifestations, impacts, and response environment of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan.

The objectives of the study are practical as well as analytical. The research seeks

- to identify the main forms of TFGBV reported by participants,
- analyse patterns of vulnerability across respondent groups,
- examine emotional and social harms,
- explore reporting practices and help-seeking behaviour,
- assess perceptions of legal and institutional response, and
- generate action-oriented recommendations for policy and survivor support.

A key contribution of the report is that it does not isolate digital harm from social life. Instead, it asks how online abuse interacts with offline gender norms, family pressure, institutional weakness, educational participation, disability exclusion, and women's public visibility.

4. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The report is guided by three main conceptual lenses: the continuum of violence, intersectionality, and the ecological model.

The **continuum perspective** helps explain why TFGBV should not be treated as separate from offline GBV. Digital abuse can be part of a chain of coercion, humiliation, control, threat, stalking, and reputational damage. A message, image, hacked account, fake profile, or threatening post may begin online, but its consequences can move into family relations, school attendance, public leadership, intimate relationships, mental health, and physical safety. This framing is important because it rejects the idea that online harm is less real or less serious than offline harm.

Intersectionality is used to show that not all women and girls experience TFGBV in the same way. Age, disability, educational status, location, public visibility, digital literacy, access to devices, family expectations, and social status shape risk and response. A schoolgirl experiencing peer harassment may need a different pathway from a woman leader facing public trolling, a woman with disabilities facing inaccessible reporting systems, or a young woman facing sextortion from an intimate partner. The report therefore treats women and girls as diverse, and it argues that prevention and response must be age-sensitive, disability-inclusive, education-linked, locally adapted, and survivor-centred.

The **ecological model** connects individual experiences to wider social, institutional, and structural environments. At the individual level, digital skills, age, trauma, disability, and device access may shape risk. At the relationship level, partners, peers, teachers, family members, and ex-partners may use technology to monitor, pressure, shame, or threaten. At the community level, schools, religious institutions, peer groups, and local leaders can either protect survivors or intensify blame and stigma. At the societal level, laws, weak institutions, patriarchal norms, conflict legacies, platform governance, and uneven connectivity shape the environment in which TFGBV occurs. This framework allows the report to move beyond blaming individual survivors for being online and instead analyse the systems that make digital participation unsafe.

5. Methodology and Evidence Base

The study adopted a feminist-informed mixed-methods design. This was appropriate because TFGBV is both measurable and interpretive.

Quantitative survey data were needed to show patterns of exposure, platform use, perceived online safety, reporting knowledge, and behavioural changes.

Qualitative evidence from focus group discussions, interviews, open-ended responses, case narratives, and stakeholder reflections was needed to explain how participants understood TFGBV, how stigma and silence operate, and why institutions often fail to respond adequately.

The research therefore used both breadth and depth: numbers identified recurring patterns, while narratives and institutional interviews explained their meaning.

The report is careful not to merge all instruments into a single national prevalence dataset. The datasets differed in sampling frames, wording, population groups, and denominators. As a result, the report presents the evidence stream by stream and only compares indicators where the questions were sufficiently similar. This methodological caution is important because it reduces false comparability. It also means that the findings should be interpreted as strong descriptive and thematic evidence within the sampled populations, rather than as national prevalence statistics for South Sudan.

Evidence source	Sample/material	Main analytical role	Interpretive caution
Preliminary digital safety survey	32 valid respondents	Baseline risk and awareness profile before later tools	Not the main TFGBV prevalence measure
Broader women / young women TFGBV survey	99 respondents	Survivor prevalence, forms of abuse, reporting pathways and policy attitudes	Separate from the multistate survey
Age/location and multistate survey synthesis	424 cleaned age/location responses; multistate stream includes multiple states and Pibor	Location comparison, safety, reporting knowledge and behavioural change	Sample-based and not nationally representative
Students/Girls survey and FGDs	142 survey responses across five anonymised education sites, plus FGD evidence	Education-related harms, platform use, site and age comparisons	Education sites are anonymised
Disabled women dataset	10 analytical respondents	Disability-specific risks, mental health impacts and accessibility gaps	Small sample; strongest for qualitative warning signs
Key informant interviews	37 documents reviewed; 30 unique substantive KIIs coded	Institutional, legal, technical, GBV service and leadership perspectives	Coding frequency is salience, not prevalence
SS-CIRT / NCA administrative material	21 potential TFGBV-related cases, 2024-2025	Indicative administrative signal of cases reaching formal systems	Not a complete case-count or standardised prevalence dataset

The research also included a data validation workshop and a stakeholder validation workshop after the main data-gathering and analytical phases. These workshops were not treated as new prevalence datasets. Instead, they were used to test the clarity, accuracy, practical relevance, denominators, institutional findings, and recommendations. This validation step strengthens the credibility of the report because it allows interpretation to be reviewed by stakeholders who understand the local institutional and social environment.

6. Key Survey Findings

The findings show that TFGBV is a serious and recurring problem within the sampled populations. The preliminary digital safety survey already showed a risk environment in which threatening or abusive messages, lack of online safety, low cyberlaw awareness, and demand for stronger protections were visible. In that preliminary survey, 59.4% of respondents had received threatening or abusive messages, 62.5% felt unsafe online, only 25.0% felt they had enough digital safety information, and only 16.7% had any specific or partial cyberlaw awareness. These findings helped establish that the later research was examining an already visible digital safety gap.

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The broader women's TFGBV survey showed even higher exposure. In that survey, 82 of 99 respondents were recorded as having experienced TFGBV, while 90 of 99 had witnessed TFGBV against another woman or girl. Among survivors, the most common reported form was online harassment, threats, or hate speech. Other reported forms included impersonation or fake accounts, non-consensual intimate image sharing, digital stalking or surveillance, doxxing, and blackmail or sextortion. Importantly, 75.6% of survivors changed their online behaviour after experiencing TFGBV. This demonstrates that digital abuse affects not only immediate emotional safety but also long-term participation in digital spaces.

In the survey, 82 of 99 respondents experienced TFGBV and 90 of 99 witnessed it, with online harassment, threats, or hate speech most common, alongside impersonation, non-consensual image sharing, digital stalking, doxxing, and blackmail/sextortion, while 75.6% of survivors changed their online behaviour, highlighting the lasting impact on digital participation.



The combined age/location cohort retained 424 cleaned responses after deduplication. In this cohort, 384 of 424 respondents, or 90.6%, reported direct exposure to TFGBV; 343 of 423, or 81.1%, had witnessed TFGBV; 267 of 421, or 63.4%, had adjusted their online behaviour; and only 50 of 230, or 21.7%, knew where to report. This contrast between high exposure and low reporting knowledge is one of the most important findings of the report. It suggests that the problem is not only the frequency of abuse, but the weakness of response systems that survivors can understand, trust, and access.

Indicator	Finding	Meaning for the report
Broader women survey	82.8% experienced TFGBV and 90.9% witnessed TFGBV	Exposure and witnessing were high in the sampled group
Age/location cohort	90.6% direct TFGBV exposure; 81.1% witnessed TFGBV	TFGBV appeared across locations and was not confined to one site
Reporting knowledge	Only 21.7% in the age/location cohort knew where to report	High exposure is matched by weak reporting knowledge
Behavioural change	63.4% in the age/location cohort adjusted online behaviour	Digital abuse narrows participation and visibility
Students/Girls platforms	Facebook 73.9%; WhatsApp 56.3%; TikTok 35.9%	Risk occurs in ordinary digital spaces used for social and school life
Students/Girls experiences	81.0% added to groups/chats without consent; 72.5% received unwanted messages, explicit content or threats	Education-linked digital spaces require safeguarding and reporting systems
Disabled women	All 10 believed TFGBV affects mental health and that disabled women face unique forms of TFGBV	Accessibility and disability inclusion must be built into response from the start

The location findings require careful interpretation. Direct TFGBV exposure was high across the sampled locations, including Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes State, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Western Equatoria, and Pibor Administrative Area. Location did not significantly explain direct exposure in the statistical tests, but significant differences were recorded for witnessing TFGBV, feeling safe online, knowing where to report, and adjusted online behaviour. This suggests that location affects the experience and response environment around TFGBV, even where exposure is broadly present. Programming should therefore not assume that the same intervention will work equally across all states and administrative areas.

7. Students/Girls and Education-Related Findings

The Students/Girls results are especially important because they show that TFGBV is linked to education, social development, digital participation, and safeguarding. The student dataset contained 142 survey responses across five anonymised education sites. The report anonymises these as High School A, High School B, High School C, University A, and University B. This protects the institutions and participants while still allowing the report to compare patterns across sites.

The Students/Girls results are especially important because they show that TFGBV is linked to education, social development, digital participation, and safeguarding.



Among students and girls, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, Telegram, online forums, and Signal were the most commonly used platforms, with Facebook and WhatsApp being particularly important for peer communication, school-related contact, friendships, and information sharing.

The most commonly used platforms among Students/Girls were Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, Telegram, online forums, and Signal. Facebook and WhatsApp were especially important because they are routine spaces for peer communication, school-related contact, friendship networks, and information sharing. The report therefore shows that the main risk environment is not obscure or exceptional. TFGBV often occurs through everyday platforms, group chats, messaging tools, and social-media spaces used by young people in ordinary life.

The Students/Girls survey showed several major forms of direct harm. Among valid responses, 52.9% had experienced online harassment; 72.5% had received unwanted messages, explicit content, or threats; 81.0% had been added to groups or chats without consent; 39.4% had been pressured to share private images or personal information; 41.1% had been hacked or impersonated; 67.4% of those with a valid response reported being threatened online; and many reported misogynistic hate speech. These findings indicate that students and girls experience multiple overlapping forms of TFGBV rather than a single isolated type.

The impacts on education and wellbeing are central. The report links TFGBV to emotional and mental wellbeing, self-esteem, concentration, participation, online avoidance, and fear of public visibility. Students/Girls reported that TFGBV affects emotional and mental wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence, concentration in class, and willingness to participate online. The report also records a perceived link between TFGBV and students dropping out or changing schools. While the study does not claim that TFGBV alone causes school dropout, it shows that

TFGBV negatively affects students' and girls' mental wellbeing, self-esteem, concentration, participation, and online engagement, with participants also linking digital abuse to school dropout or transfers, making it a critical safeguarding, education, and GBV issue.



participants see a strong connection between digital harm and education retention. This makes TFGBV a safeguarding issue, an education issue, and a GBV issue at the same time.

The FGD evidence gives human meaning to the survey findings. Participants described cases involving intimate image circulation, edited images, account misuse, family backlash, shame, school withdrawal, forced decisions, and severe psychological distress.

These accounts demonstrate how online incidents can rapidly become offline crises. For girls and students, reputation damage can affect schooling, family relationships, peer networks, and mental health. The report therefore recommends that schools and universities establish confidential reporting routes, counselling support, digital evidence guidance, clear codes of conduct for digital spaces, and referral links to psychosocial, legal, and cyber-response actors.

8. Disability, Public Visibility, and Institutional Evidence

The disabled women dataset is small, but it is analytically important. Eight of ten respondents recorded direct TFGBV experience. All ten believed disabled women face unique forms of TFGBV, all ten believed TFGBV affects mental health, and all ten reported self-isolation. The qualitative narrative connected online harassment to attempts to stop advocacy by women with disabilities. This shows that TFGBV against women with disabilities may be both personal and political: it harms individual wellbeing while also discouraging public participation, advocacy, and voice.

- The **disability findings** also show why response systems must be accessible from the beginning. Reporting pathways may fail women with disabilities if they rely only on written forms, inaccessible offices, online portals that are difficult to use, or communication methods that exclude people who need interpretation or assistive support. The report therefore recommends sign language, accessible formats, safe transport referrals, assistive communication, disability-sensitive counselling, disability-disaggregated monitoring, and the involvement of persons with disabilities in designing TFGBV tools and services. The principle is clear: disability inclusion should not be an afterthought.

- **Women leaders, youth leaders, activists, feminist organisers, and public-facing women are also highlighted** in the report. For these groups, TFGBV often functions as a tool of visibility control. Digital platforms can create opportunities for women to speak, organise, campaign, access work, build networks, and advocate. However, the same visibility can expose women to sexualised rumours, trolling, doxxing, stalking, impersonation, reputational attacks, threats, and self-censorship. The report therefore treats TFGBV as a participation issue as well as a safety issue. It affects who feels able to speak, lead, study, organise, work, or remain visible online.

The report recommends disability-inclusive TFGBV services, including sign language, accessible formats, safe transport, assistive communication, disability-sensitive counselling, disaggregated monitoring, and the meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities in designing services



The key informant interviews provide the institutional and expert dimension of the report. The KII workbook reviewed 37 interview documents and coded 30 unique substantive KIIs. Interviewees included GBV and humanitarian service providers, government and regulatory actors, CIRT/NCA-related perspectives, legal and justice actors, academia and ICT education, digital rights and technology actors, women leaders, gender advocates, and feminist activists. Across

the KII material, recurring concerns included weak legal and policy frameworks, low digital literacy, limited platform accountability, gaps in curriculum and education systems, weak reporting and referral pathways, limited survivor support, poor digital evidence handling, and weak institutional coordination.

The SS-CIRT/NCA administrative material strengthens the report by showing that formal cyber-response structures are already encountering potential TFGBV-related cases. The administrative annex recorded 21 potential TFGBV-related cases during 2024-2025. However, the report is careful to treat this as indicative evidence, not as a national case count. The administrative material lacked a fully standardised TFGBV taxonomy and consistent demographic disaggregation. This demonstrates a wider institutional problem: TFGBV is already visible in practice, but formal systems do not yet have the categories, forms, referral pathways, or monitoring tools needed to capture it consistently and safely.

9. Discussion of the Main Findings

The most important discussion point is the online-offline continuum. TFGBV often begins through messages, posts, images, groups, fake accounts, account hacking, or platform-based attacks, but the effects do not remain online.

The report shows that **digital abuse can produce fear, shame, reputational harm, school withdrawal, family conflict, intimate partner violence, loss of confidence, self-isolation, and public silence**. In South Sudan, where reputation, family standing, community judgment, and patriarchal norms can be powerful, the offline consequences of online harm can be severe.

A second major point is that everyday **digital spaces are the main risk environment**. The data repeatedly points to Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, group chats, phone calls, SMS, and messaging tools. This means that TFGBV prevention cannot focus only on technical cybercrime or rare digital attacks. Harm can happen through common features such as group invitations, private messages, screenshots, forwarding, fake accounts, profile misuse, and public comments. The report therefore argues that digital safety must be connected to consent, gender norms, privacy, platform use, peer behaviour, relationship dynamics, and bystander responsibility.

A third discussion point is that **TFGBV is strongly gendered.** Participants described women and girls as being targeted because of gender, sexuality, visibility, social role, relationship status, advocacy, disability, or public voice. The preliminary survey showed that almost all respondents believed women are more likely to be targeted online. The Students/Girls data also showed that many respondents believed young women and female students are especially affected. The report therefore rejects gender-neutral interpretations of TFGBV. Although any person can be harmed online, this study shows that abuse against women and girls is shaped by unequal gender power and by social norms that police women's behaviour, respectability, sexuality, and public participation.

A fourth point is the **mismatch between exposure and reporting**. High levels of exposure are repeatedly paired with low reporting knowledge, low trust, and weak institutional response. Survivors may block perpetrators, delete evidence, reduce their visibility, change privacy settings, seek help from friends, or leave platforms, but these strategies do not create accountability. They can also shift the burden of safety onto the survivor. The report therefore argues that underreporting should be understood as structural. It is shaped by stigma, fear, blame, uncertainty, low trust in police or platforms, weak service pathways, limited legal literacy, and concerns that reporting may make the abuse more visible.

A fifth point is the **need for coordination**. TFGBV cannot be handled only by GBV actors or only by cyber actors. If it is treated only as cybercrime, survivors may be directed to technical channels without psychosocial support, legal advice, safeguarding, or protection planning. If it is treated only as GBV, responders may not know how to preserve digital evidence, request account recovery, support takedowns, understand platform escalation, or assess ongoing digital risk. The report therefore calls for a linked ecosystem involving GBV services, NCA/SS-CIRT, telecoms, platforms, police, legal aid, schools, universities, CSOs, disability actors, community leaders, and donors.

10. Main Recommendations

The recommendations in the report form a systems-strengthening agenda. The goal is not simply to create one new institution or one new law. Instead, the report recommends adapting existing GBV, justice, education, ICT, telecommunications, disability inclusion, and community systems so that they can recognise, document, refer, investigate, prevent, and monitor TFGBV safely. The guiding principles are survivor-centred practice, do-no-harm digital response, recognition of the online-offline continuum, operational readiness, intersectional inclusion, shared institutional responsibility, and context-specific accountability.

Institution/sector	Main gap identified	Priority actions recommended
GBV one-stop centres and psychosocial services	TFGBV not consistently captured in intake, case notes or referrals	Add TFGBV categories, train caseworkers, include digital safety in protection plans and create referral maps
Women-led CSOs and community GBV actors	High trust but limited authority, resources and formal referral role	Fund survivor accompaniment, community awareness, peer support, local-language materials and anti-victim-blaming work
Ministry responsible for gender and national GBV coordination	No coherent national TFGBV response framework	Lead a national action plan, inter-agency taskforce, service mapping and state-level implementation
NCA / SS-CIRT and cyber-response actors	Technical systems not yet linked to survivor-centred GBV support	Develop a TFGBV taxonomy, complaint desk, technical referral protocol and platform/telecom escalation routes
Justice actors and legal aid	Weak digital evidence capacity and survivor-sensitive case handling	Train police, prosecutors, legal aid and courts; create digital evidence standards and privacy safeguards
Schools and universities	Digital safety not embedded in safeguarding, curricula or confidential reporting	Create campus/school TFGBV policies, trained focal points, reporting routes, digital safety education and referral links
Disability inclusion actors	Reporting and services often inaccessible	Co-design accessible tools, provide interpreters and accessible formats, include disability data and representatives
Donors, UN agencies and humanitarian coordination	Short-term and urban-focused support risks leaving systems weak	Fund multi-year institutional strengthening, state-level pilots, legal aid, data systems and evaluation



The report recommends adapting existing GBV, justice, education, ICT, telecommunications, disability inclusion, and community systems so that they can recognise, document, refer, investigate, prevent, and monitor TFGBV safely.

For GBV service providers, the report recommends integrating TFGBV into intake forms, psychosocial assessments, case management, referral templates, and safety planning. Survivors should not be required to repeatedly display harmful content, and institutions should avoid saving or circulating sensitive images unless there is a clear legal and safety basis. Caseworkers should be trained to recognise TFGBV as gender-based violence, document it safely, provide psychosocial support, explain survivor options, and refer to legal or technical actors where needed.

For education authorities, schools, and universities, the report recommends age-appropriate digital safety education, survivor-centred reporting, clear campus and school policies, trained teachers and counsellors, student welfare links, safe management of class WhatsApp groups and online learning spaces, and academic support for survivors whose studies are disrupted. Schools and universities should treat TFGBV as a safeguarding and retention issue, not only as peer conflict or ICT misuse.

For regulators, telecoms, platforms, and ICT actors, the report recommends a standard TFGBV taxonomy, complaint classification system, urgent escalation channels, local-language reporting guidance, anonymous or confidential reporting options, account recovery support, evidence-preservation guidance, and coordination with GBV and legal actors. Technical responders should be trained in trauma-informed and survivor-centred practice so that technical action does not unintentionally expose survivors or minimise the gendered nature of abuse.

11. Limitations of the Study

The report clearly states its limitations.



First, the **data are not nationally representative of all women, girls, or communities** in South Sudan. The samples were shaped by project networks, field access, safety constraints, available locations, institutional partners, and digital connectivity. The report therefore provides serious evidence within the research population, but it should not be used as a national prevalence estimate.



Second, the study has an **urban and digitally connected bias**. Many respondents were reachable through schools, universities, online forms, civil society networks, urban communities, service providers, and digitally active groups. Rural women, older women, displaced women, women without smartphones, women with limited privacy, and women using shared devices may be underrepresented. This matters because lower digital access does not necessarily mean lower risk. It may create different forms of vulnerability, including dependence on shared phones, family surveillance, limited reporting access, and reduced digital evidence support.



Third, some **subgroups and disaggregated cells were small**. The disabled women dataset had 10 analytical respondents, the preliminary survey had 32, the broader women survey had 99, and the Students/Girls survey had 142. Even within the larger age/location cohort, some state or location groups were small. This limits the ability to make definitive statistical claims about differences by age, disability, school site, or location. The report therefore treats such patterns as exploratory and descriptive.



Fourth, the **instruments were not identical across datasets**. Not every survey asked the same questions in the same way, and denominators varied across indicators. This required careful separation of datasets and cautious interpretation of pooled estimates.



Fifth, **sensitive self-reporting may have produced underreporting** because TFGBV can involve shame, trauma, fear of retaliation, family consequences, or uncertainty about whether an experience counts as violence.



Finally, **administrative data remain incomplete** because institutions do not yet have a standard TFGBV classification and disaggregation system.

12. Overall Conclusion

The report concludes that TFGBV is already affecting young women and girls in South Sudan and should be treated as a serious form of gender-based violence. The research shows that digital abuse is not separate from offline harm. It can damage wellbeing, reputation, schooling, relationships, advocacy, public leadership, and women's ability to remain visible online. It can also intensify existing inequalities where survivors fear blame, lack reporting options, or cannot trust institutions to protect their privacy and safety.

The report also shows that digital participation is not optional for many young women and girls. It supports education, friendship, work, organising, leadership, information access, and public voice. However, without adequate protection, the same spaces become sites of harassment, coercion, humiliation, impersonation, image-based abuse, and surveillance. The goal should therefore not be to push women and girls offline, but to make digital participation safer, more accountable, more accessible, and more survivor-centred.

The strongest policy message is that South Sudan needs a coordinated TFGBV response ecosystem. Laws are necessary, but they are not enough. Effective response requires trained GBV and justice actors, safe digital evidence procedures, accessible reporting, psychosocial care, legal aid, school and university safeguarding, disability-inclusive services, platform and telecom escalation, community awareness without victim-blaming, and ethical data systems. Survivors should not have to move alone between disconnected institutions that each recognise only part of the harm.

The report therefore offers a foundational evidence base for action. It does not claim to answer every question or represent the whole country. Instead, it makes visible a pattern of harm that had been insufficiently documented and provides a practical roadmap for institutional response. Future research should expand the sample, include more rural and older women, use disability-accessible tools, study perpetrators and platform-specific dynamics, examine AI-enabled abuse, and evaluate whether institutional reforms improve survivor safety. The central conclusion remains clear: TFGBV in South Sudan is real, gendered, socially consequential, and urgent. It requires recognition, prevention, accountability, and survivor-centred support across every relevant sector.

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