



ACT Policy Brief

Advancing Access to Justice to End Violence Against Women & Girls at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most pervasive and systematic human rights violations globally, affecting one in three women over their lifetime. Despite widespread legal reforms, access to justice remains deeply uneven and, in many contexts, inaccessible in practice.

Drawing on global consultations with more than 150 women's rights organisations and recent research undertaken under the [ACT to End Violence Against Women and Girls programme](#), this policy brief outlines urgent priorities for Member States to ensure that justice systems are effective, survivor-centred, and feminist movements at the frontlines are resourced and protected.

Access to justice is VAWG prevention strategy. In the absence of access to justice for survivors and accountability for perpetrators of violence, initiatives aimed at preventing VAWG are unlikely to be effective. Without access to justice, VAWG prevention lacks enforcement and credibility. These pillars are mutually reinforcing and must be treated as such in national strategies and CSW70 commitments.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Gender Equality Institutions and Policy Alignment:

Strong institutions and systems are the backbone of lasting gender and social justice.

- Ensure comprehensive laws addressing VAWG are aligned with international human rights standards.
- Mainstream gender perspectives across public policy design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Ensure coordination between justice, health, education, economic and social protection sectors.
- Engage men and boys as accountable allies and agents of change in dismantling patriarchal masculinities and promoting inclusive, caring and equitable legal systems and enacting needed reforms.

2. Reform Justice Systems to Be Gender-Responsive:

Justice institutions must be transformed to earn survivors' trust.

- Mandate ongoing, gender-transformative training for justice system actors (including police, judges, and lawyers) on survivor-centred, trauma-informed approaches to challenge patriarchal attitudes and improve accountability.
- Establish strong accountability mechanisms to guarantee access to justice for all marginalised communities, including women and girls, Indigenous peoples, youth, persons with disabilities, survivors, and LGBTIQ people.
- Strengthen oversight and independent complaints mechanisms for survivors of VAWG, with authority to monitor, sanction, and eliminate discrimination within justice and legal systems.



3. Fully Implement and Finance Legal Frameworks:

Laws without funding and enforcement do not deliver justice.

- Allocate dedicated, adequate, and transparent budgets for implementation.
- Reinforce national gender equality mechanisms with political authority and financial resources.
- Establish measurable targets and monitoring frameworks.

4. Guarantee Accessible, Survivor-Centred Services:

Access to justice must be practical, not theoretical.

- Provide effective, accessible and free legal aid for survivors regardless of income or status.
- Ensure trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and survivor-centred services.
- Invest in psychosocial support, safe accommodation, and integrated service models.
- Strengthen and resource frontline justice services (including community police stations, legal aid centres, and family courts) to integrate care-based approaches.
- Embed social workers, counsellors, and trained mediators, and ensure frontline staff have the time, training, and institutional support to process cases with empathy, dignity, and fairness.
- Ensure services are available in humanitarian and crisis settings.
- Evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the measures implemented.

5. Address Technology-Facilitated VAWG:

Justice systems must adapt to evolving forms of violence.

- Establish enforceable regulatory standards for digital platforms.
- Legislate responsibilities of technology companies.
- Expand legal protections in national laws and policies to address emerging forms of violence including technology-facilitated VAWG.
- Provide effective and accessible remedies and redress mechanisms for survivors, ensuring access by marginalised communities.
- Strengthen cross-border cooperation to address online harms.

6. Increase Direct, Flexible, Multi-Year Funding for Women's Rights Organisations at the Forefront of Ensuring Access to Justice:

Global evidence consistently shows that the presence of strong and autonomous women's rights movements is the single most critical factor in reducing violence against women and girls.

- Ensure that justice systems are accessible, transparent, and responsive by providing core, predictable resourcing and empowering feminist organisations and movements to play a central role in monitoring, evaluating, and holding justice institutions accountable.
- Simplify grant mechanisms for front line organisations.
- Support youth-led and community-based groups.
- Integrate feminist organisations into national justice strategies.

7. Protect Women Human Rights Defenders and Civic Space:

Without civic space, accountability collapses.

- Establish rapid response and protection mechanisms.
- Prevent threats, attacks, and reprisals.
- Ensure safe and meaningful participation of civil society at national and international levels.



There is more evidence than ever before showing that violence against women and girls is preventable. By committing to bold investments, supporting feminist movements, and strengthening justice and accountability systems, the world can take decisive steps toward a future where women and girls in all their diversities live free from violence, everywhere.

The ACT to End Violence Against Women and Girls Programme is supporting women's rights movements as they coordinate their push for justice. The ACT Shared Advocacy Agenda is elevating the priorities and amplifying the voices of feminist and women's rights movements, providing a collaborative framework focused on common priorities, strategies and actions.

The co-authoring organisations of this article support the implementation of the ACT shared advocacy agenda.

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ACT
to End Violence
against Women