

Policy Playbook to fast-track the **implementation of GBV policies using Artificial Intelligence** in South Africa



PUBLISHED BY:



Women Political Leaders (WPL)

Rue Archimède 69 | 1000 Brussels | Belgium
<https://womenpoliticalleaders.org>

and



Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

P.O.Box 13732, Hatfield 0028
Hatfield Gardens, Block E, 1st Floor
333 Grosvenor Street, Pretoria, South Africa
www.giz.de

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:

POLICY INNOVATION LAB



Dr Itai Makone, Ms Tinashe Chikunichawa,
Ms Isabel Ray and Prof Willem Fourie

Policy Innovation Lab

School of Data Science and Computational
Thinking, Stellenbosch University
<https://policyinnovationlab.sun.ac.za>

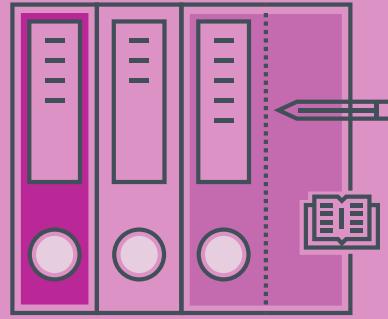


TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK	1
Background to the Playbook	1
Objectives of the Playbook	2
PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY LANDSCAPE	3
1.1 GBV and AI policy frameworks in South Africa	3
1.1.1 <i>GBV policy framework in South Africa</i>	3
1.1.2 <i>AI policy framework in South Africa</i>	6
1.2 GBV policy implementation challenges in South Africa.....	8
PART 2: PATHWAYS FOR ACTION.....	9
2.1 The promise and limits of AI	9
2.2 Collecting and using credible data.....	11
2.3 Levers to aid the use of AI to implement GBV related policies.....	13
PART 3: CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	15
References	16



ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK

Background to the Playbook

The FemAI Leaders for Africa Initiative is a collaboration between Women Political Leaders (WPL) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ). It celebrates women's leadership, fosters mutual learning, equips leaders with knowledge of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and promotes the ethical and inclusive adoption of AI across the continent.

FemAI conducts in-country Labs in African countries on AI-related issues that are of concern to that specific country to inform an advocacy report with recommendations for concrete political action. In-country Labs have been conducted in Nigeria and Tanzania. The South Africa in-country Lab identified Gender based Violence (GBV) as a key societal issue to discuss, and that AI has the potential to fast-track the implementation of policies aimed at ending GBV.

For the South Africa in-country Lab, WPL brought together political leaders, parliamentarians, policymakers, entrepreneurs, academics and civil society actors to co-develop a FemAI policy playbook through three interlinked events, each designed to combine dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and practical policy work on GBV and AI.

- In October 2025, the *Virtual Launch* introduced FemAI and set the stage for the Lab by establishing the role women should take in shaping AI and GBV policy discussions in South Africa.
- In November 2025, a two-day in-person *Leader's Lab* was conducted, and it explored how AI can be used in practical ways to tackle GBV.
- Also in November 2025, a *Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable* condensed the discussions of the first two events into a shared vision for this policy playbook¹.

¹ Disclaimer: The work was partially supported by AI tools for summarising GBV policies, refining phrasing, and improving readability. The authors take full responsibility for the Playbooks content.

Objectives of the Playbook

Eliminating GBV in South Africa deserves serious attention. Violence against women in all its forms was acknowledged as a national crisis by South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018 (Zungu et al, 2024:11). The conventional forms of GBV include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, whether as a threat or an actual action, resulting in harming an individual. Additionally, using coercion, and financial or educational deprivation, which a victim was legally entitled to or required out of necessity, constitute GBV practices.

The first national baseline study on GBV victimisation and penetration revealed that *more than 1 in 3 women* (7.3 million) have experienced physical violence in their lives, and 9.8% (2.1 million) have been victims of sexual violence. GBV is higher in marginalised women, as 31% of disabled women have experienced sexual or physical violence (Zungu et al, 2024). Although there are records, most GBV incidents remain undocumented, underreported and unaccounted within national statistics.

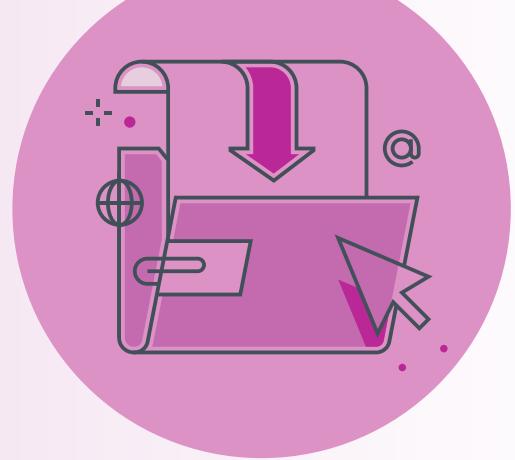
Technology-facilitated GBV (TFGBV) is a distinct form that differs from the conventional forms of GBV. It is defined as an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by using digital technologies against a person based on inequitable gender norms (Hartmann et al, 2025:2). TFGBV is exhibited in various forms of violence, for example, online harassment, cyberstalking, cyber harassment, video and image-based abuse, unwanted images or sexually explicit content, misinformation and defamation of character, hate speech and exploitation (Hinson et al, 2018:1). It is predominately experienced more by women, girls and LGBTI individuals which is consistent with the statistics of traditional forms of GBV.

This policy playbook builds on the existing policies, programmes and structures aimed at ending GBV already in place in South Africa. Its aim is not to add more administrative demands or policies. Rather, the aim is to provide policymakers, civil society actors, researchers and the private sector with *tips on using artificial intelligence to fast-track the implementation of policies aimed at ending gender-based violence*. The tips contained in this policy playbook will assist these users in engaging the implementation of relevant policies in South Africa.

TO THIS END, THE PLAYBOOK PROVIDES TIPS RELATED TO:

- The promise and limits of AI;
- The collection and use of credible data; and
- Ensuring the effective use of AI to implement policies related to GBV.





PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY LANDSCAPE

1.1 GBV and AI policy frameworks in South Africa

To make optimal use of the Playbook, it is imperative to have a basic understanding of the governing legal framework and the main implementing stakeholders for GBV and AI in South Africa.

1.1.1 GBV policy framework in South Africa

The *Constitution of South Africa* is the supreme law of the Republic. It guarantees fundamental rights such as human dignity, equality, freedom and security of persons. Legislation and policies are developed to protect these fundamental rights. South Africa's GBV legal framework and policy interventions align with international and regional instruments and strategies that protect human rights and eliminate violence against women.

INTERNATIONAL

- *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).*
- *ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment (ILO C190).*

REGIONAL

- *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Guidelines on Combating Sexual Violence.*
- *The African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.*
- *Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.*
- *Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development: A commitment relevant to GBV.*
- *SADC Regional Strategy and Framework of Action for Addressing Gender-Based Violence (2018–2030).*

NATIONAL

- *The National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act of 2024* provides the legislative framework for the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NCCBVF).
- *Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace 2022*.
- *Domestic Violence Amendment Act 14 of 2021*: Amends the principal Act and provides for dealing with domestic violence acts, regulating protection orders. It defines various types of domestic violence, including economic abuse, sexual harassment, elder abuse, coercive behaviour, and controlling behaviour.
- *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 13 of 2021*: This legislation introduces sexual intimidation as an offence and expands the list of vulnerable persons and the scope of the National Register for Sex Offenders.
- *Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act 12 of 2021*: Amends the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977, to further regulate bail conditions, and protects vulnerable persons in court proceedings.
- *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007 (SOA)*: Codified and broadened the definition of rape and other sexual offences.
- *The National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (2020–2030)*.

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) is a multi-sectoral *strategic policy and programming framework guiding the national response to GBV in South Africa*. It envisions all women, children, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ persons to be free from GBVF. It is organised in terms of six pillars whose aims are to provide accountable leadership and coordination, prevent GBV and build social cohesion, provide support, care and healing services to survivors of GBV and strengthen the criminal justice system (NSP on GBVF, 2020:44-55). The NSP on GBVF's legal mandate is derived from the National Council on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Act of 2024.

To address GBV effectively, a multi-sector approach is required between multiple government departments at the national, provincial and municipal levels. The government, collaborating with the private sector, development agencies, academia, and civil society, is key in addressing GBV. The main government departments and bodies involved in dealing with GBV and their roles are outlined below, structured according to the six pillars of the NSP on GBVF.

Table 1: Key GBV policy actors

RESPONSIBILITY	DEPARTMENT / COMMITTEE / AGENCY	ROLES
 PILLAR 1 Central Accountability, Coordination, Leadership and Policy	National Council on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (NCGBVF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic oversight and coordination Planning and evaluation Resource management Advisory role
	Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership and coherence Accountability NCGBVF oversight Consultation
	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (IMC-GBVF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight Support
 PILLAR 2 Prevention and Rebuilding Social Cohesion	Department of Basic Education (DBE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Functionalities Support
	Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)	
 PILLAR 3 Justice, Safety, and Protection	South African Police Service (SAPS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigation Protection order enforcement Victim support National Register for Sex Offenders (NRSO)
	National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prosecution decision Prosecution policy directives Court support Legal reforms
	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)	

 <p>PILLAR 4</p> <p>Response, Care, Support, and Healing</p>	Department of Social Development (DSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-social services and shelter provision • Functionaries and reporting: Social Workers • Coordination
	Department of Health (DOH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and psychological support • Functionaries and reporting: Medical and forensic functions • Integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRH&R) services with GBV • National Register for Sex Offenders (NRSO)
	Gender-Based Violence Command Centre (GBVCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency response
 <p>PILLAR 5</p> <p>Economic Empowerment</p>	National Treasury (NT) Department of Small Business Development (DSBD), Department of Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic empowerment • Budgeting
 <p>PILLAR 6</p> <p>Research and Information Management</p>	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) SAPS Crime Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research to inform the nature and extent of GBVF • Produce statistics of GBVF that enable the development of effective interventions

Source: Adapted from the NSP on GBVF (2020)

1.1.2 AI policy framework in South Africa

While there are vast GBV policies, it is not the case with AI. Understandably so, AI is a recent phenomenon that many countries are currently creating governing legislation. South Africa is aligned with the framing of some regional strategies, and some policies complement the implementation of AI policies.

REGIONAL

- *African Union Continental AI Strategy of 2024.* This is not a treaty, but it sets out the continent's strategy for AI development and governance that ensures that countries build the necessary capabilities to maximise the benefits of AI while effectively mitigating the risks.
- *The African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection*, also referred to as the *Malabo Convention*.

NATIONAL POLICIES

- *National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework (2024).* In draft format.
- *The National Policy on Data and Cloud Act (2024).* Focuses on how data is managed, the development of data centres, data handling transparency, and data-related matters.
- *National Digital and Future Skills Strategy (2020).* It outlines a vision for coordinated digital governance and current and future digital skills development, thus creating a pipeline of human capital.
- *The Cybercrimes Act of 2020.* Provides a clear legal framework for fighting cybercrime.
- *National Cybersecurity Policy Framework 2015.* It creates a single, coordinated approach to cybersecurity to protect critical infrastructure, government systems and citizens from cyber threats.
- *Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) of 2013.* The law regulates the processing of personal information and how organisations collect, store and use it.

The *National Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework (2024)* was launched by the Department of Communication and Digital Technologies (DCDT) in April 2024. Multiple stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, academia, and civil society, were consulted at various forums. The draft AI policy framework was released in October 2024 for further consultations. The framework was presented to the South African Cabinet in October 2025. It is undergoing revisions to be presented to Cabinet again. The framework aims to *integrate AI into the economy and society to drive economic growth and societal well-being, and to lead AI innovation.*

Table 2: Key digital governance policy actors

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT	POLICIES DEVELOPED
• Department of Communications and Digital Transformation (DCDT)	• The National AI Policy Framework • The National Data and Cloud policy.
• Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)	• POPIA • The Cybercrimes Act
• The State Security Agency (SSA)	• National Cybersecurity Policy Framework
• Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA)	• National Digital and Future Skills Strategy & many other digital capacity building policies.

Source: Developed from the relevant policies and acts

1.2 GBV policy implementation challenges in South Africa

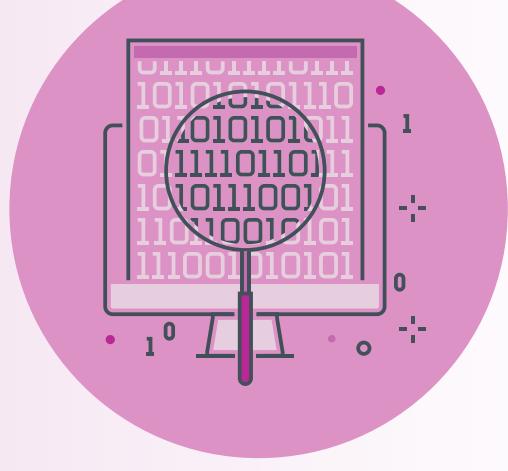
As indicated by the preceding sections, South Africa does not lack legislation to end GBV.

The first challenge is that *departments implement these policies in silos*, which results in interventions that focus on different types of violence (Jamieson & Matthews, 2022:6). For example, interventions can focus on sexual offences and child abuse while paying minimal attention to domestic violence. The siloed approach is not effective for developing a comprehensive and integrated set of strategies that address common risk factors (Jamieson & Matthews, 2022:6). In addition, there needs to be *proper coordination between all the line departments dealing with GBV*; otherwise, resources in terms of time, money and human expertise are inefficiently utilised.

Secondly, there is a *data management challenge*. Data is useful to develop effective programmes that eliminate GBV. Pillar 6 of the NSF on GBVF (2020) seeks to improve information management. Many data challenges exist; administrative data is not collected systematically, the data is in hard copies and not digital, and there is no centralisation of GBVF data (NSP on GBVF 2020, 33).

Thirdly, *resource and capacity constraints* limit the effective implementation of the GBV programmes. GBV policies are not implemented due to absent or inadequate budgeting plans. While departments are mandated to play a role of either prevention, support or healing, their annual budgets are not allocated adequate resources to be able to achieve their respective GBV roles. In terms of capacity constraints, adequate staffing and equipment are necessary in the whole lifecycle of a case, from when it is reported, receiving medical support, during legal proceedings and to the counselling of a victim. This is not always the case; for example, there are backlogs in forensic processing of evidence needed in courts to provide justice to victims, or police stations do not have rape kits, and the situation gets dire in under-resourced settings such as rural and informal areas (Commission of Gender Equality, 2021:5). Police stations do not have GBV rooms where victims can be assisted in privacy by trained individuals; they rely on counsellors from Civil Society Organisations (CSO) who are volunteers (Commission of Gender Equality, 2021:64). Considering these challenges, this Playbook offers some tips on how AI can accelerate GBV policy implementation.





PART 2: PATHWAYS FOR ACTION

2.1 The promise and limits of AI

AI offers potentially transformative possibilities to fast-track the implementation of GBV policies in South Africa. Yet to make the most of AI, one should understand both its promises and limits.

2.1.1 WHAT IS AI?

AI refers to technologies that simulate human intelligence. An AI system consists of at least the following technical components:

- **Data:** The raw material used to train, validate and operate an AI system.
- **Algorithm:** The instructions an AI system uses to find patterns in data and make predictions based on those patterns.
- **Model:** The outcome of applying algorithms to data, and therefore a representation of what the system has learned.
- **Infrastructure:** The computing power, storage and other hardware that enables the training, deployment and maintenance of an AI system.

AI is used in a very large number of settings and fields of application.

2.1.2 HOW ARE AI SYSTEMS TRAINED?

To understand how AI systems are trained, one first needs to understand the distinction between labelled and unlabelled data. *Labelled data* consists of raw data with a label that describes an element of the data. Labels could indicate, for example, whether a document is a police case file, an incident report, or a witness statement. *Unlabelled data* has no label attached to it, and the AI system typically needs to find relationships or patterns in the data on its own.

AI systems are typically trained using one or a combination of the following techniques:

- **Supervised learning:** The AI system is trained with labelled data, enabling it to learn from examples and make accurate predictions about new, unseen data. For instance, an AI system trained on different types of police documents can learn to automatically sort new documents into categories such as case files, incident reports, or administrative records.
- **Unsupervised learning:** The AI system uses statistical methods to identify patterns in unlabelled data. For example, an AI system could analyse community safety reports to detect emerging themes or trends that might inform prevention strategies.

- **Reinforcement learning:** The AI system learns through trial and error, improving its performance based on feedback. For example, a digital support tool could learn over time which referrals, such as legal advice, counselling, or medical assistance, are most relevant to users, helping to strengthen GBV prevention and response services.

2.1.3 WHAT IS GENERATIVE AI?

Generative AI is a type of AI system that can create new content such as text, images or sound. It learns through a combination of supervised learning, unsupervised learning, reinforcement learning, and other training methods. Text-based generative AI systems are trained on massive amounts of written material. The text is broken down into tokens. Tokens are small units of words converted into numbers. The AI system learns the relationships between these tokens. Based on this statistical understanding, the system can generate new text by predicting the most probable sequence of tokens. While a generative AI system can recognise relationships and patterns in language, it does not understand words or sentences. Its output is based on statistical probabilities.

Generative AI can fast-track GBV policy implementation in South Africa in many ways, and the potential use cases are increasing as the quality and capability of AI systems improve. Generative AI has the potential, for example, to guide victims of GBV through the reporting options available to them. Generative AI can assist policymakers with identifying trends across thousands of reports and can also assist with synthesising research-based evidence on GBV.

2.1.4 HOW CAN AI BE USED RESPONSIBLY?

The responsible use of AI has too many components to be discussed in the policy Playbook. Yet it is useful to take note of at least the following concepts:

- **Bias:** The data used to train an AI system, the design of its algorithms and the way in which users interact with AI systems, particularly AI systems built on reinforcement learning, can cause an AI system to be biased. Training AI systems on data from mostly urban areas or making systems available to mostly urban users, for example, could bias AI systems against rural areas and users.
- **Explainability:** Developers of AI systems should be able to explain in human-understandable terms how an AI system produces its output. This means that policymakers should be able to ask 'Why did the system reach this conclusion?' Typically, a distinction is drawn between a global explanation (how the whole model works), and a local explanation (how a specific instance operated).
- **Transparency:** Deployers of AI systems should be open about when, where, and for what purpose AI systems are being deployed. Policymakers could, for example, insist on clear documentation and communication to its stakeholders on its use of AI.
- **Accountability:** When considering who should be held accountable for the output of an AI system, various groups should be considered. AI developers, the deployers of AI systems, users of AI systems and regulatory bodies all bear responsibility.
- **Privacy and data protection:** AI systems should handle personal data in line with South Africa's legislation, evolving ethical norms, especially when dealing with data of vulnerable groups.

2.2 Collecting and using credible data

For AI to be a powerful and ethical tool in fast-tracking GBV policy, it must be built on a foundation of high-quality, credible data. Using flawed, incomplete, or biased data will not only deliver poor results but also risk actively causing harm, replicating systemic biases, and further marginalising vulnerable populations.

2.2.1 WHY CREDIBLE DATA IS NON-NEGOTIABLE

Before we can deploy AI, we must establish a clear standard for our data. Figure 1 outlines the core principles of a credible data system.

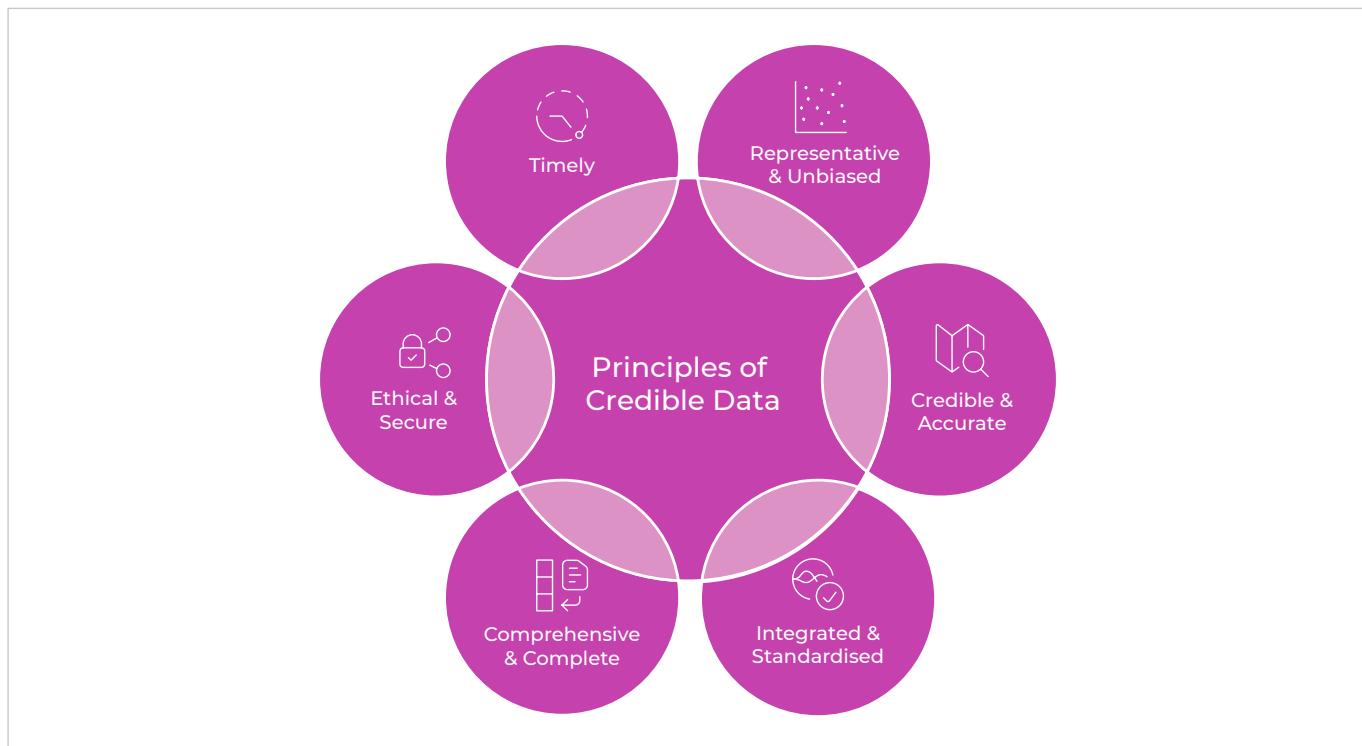


Figure 1: Principles of credible data

- Effective GBV data must, first and foremost, be *credible and accurate*. This means the data should be verifiable, with recorded incidents, demographics, and outcomes aligning with established definitions, such as those in the NSP on GBVF (South African Government, 2020) and from Stats SA (Statistics South Africa, 2020). This aligns with global standards, such as the OECD's "Robustness, Security and Safety" principle, which requires that AI systems be accurate and reliable throughout their lifecycle (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Effective GBV data should include, but not be limited to, survivor demographics, relationships to the perpetrator, specific type of abuse, and the full-service pathway (e.g., initial report, medical care, legal referrals, counselling).
- To be effective, data must be *integrated and standardised*. This allows information from the Department of Justice, healthcare facilities, CSOs and SAPS to 'talk' to each other using common formats. A primary challenge is the lack of data integration. Without this interoperability, it is impossible to track a survivor's journey, and an AI system cannot identify systemic barriers or referral failures that undermine transparency and accountability (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).
- *Timeliness* is also a key factor. Stakeholders report long backlogs in collecting or processing evidence, meaning the data reflects a reality that is months or even years old. AI-driven insights are only as valuable as the data is current; outdated data makes responsive policy intervention

impossible. The data framework must be grounded in *ethical and secure principles*. The collection and storage of this highly sensitive data must adhere strictly to POPIA (South African Government, 2013) to protect survivors from re-identification or further harm. All data must be securely stored and anonymised before use in AI modelling.

- Furthermore, the data must be *representative and unbiased*. It must reflect the entire population, not just those who are easiest to count. This is a core component of global ethical standards, which call for *“fairness and non-discrimination”* and mandate that AI systems *“respect human rights and fundamental freedoms”* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).

2.2.2 SOUTH AFRICA'S DATA CHALLENGES

Harnessing AI effectively requires a realistic assessment of South Africa's current GBV data. While key institutions such as Stats SA, the SAPS, the DPME and SAMRC collect relevant data, stakeholder consultations reveal significant systemic challenges. The primary issues in the data landscape are:

- *Fragmented data sources* are arguably the largest hurdle. The institutions mentioned above, along with other critical bodies like the NPA, DoH, and CSOs, tend to operate in data silos. They use different data structures, definitions, and systems that do not communicate with each other. This fragmentation makes it nearly impossible to track a survivor's journey, leading to cases being lost, duplicated, or never captured at all.
- There are concerns about *data credibility and reliability*. Significant backlogs in processing forensic evidence, such as DNA testing, create critical delays. This data *'lag'* means that by the time information is recorded, it is already too late to inform an immediate response, and its accuracy for analysis is diminished.
- Our current data tends to have *blind spots*. It often fails to capture the full extent of GBV, particularly among marginalised communities, including women in rural areas, individuals with disabilities, and minority groups. Furthermore, historical data reflects historical biases, which, if used to train an AI model without correction, will teach the AI to replicate those same biases. This includes potential gaps identified in national surveys (Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey, 2025).

2.2.3 HOW CAN DATA BE USED TO END GBV?

Ending GBV relies on how well data is collected, managed and used. To ensure that data contributes meaningfully to ending GBV, policymakers and practitioners should focus on the following principles:

- Data must be *accurate, verifiable and aligned with established definitions* such as those in the National Strategic Plan on GBVF (South African Government, 2020). Inaccurate or inconsistent data undermines both prevention and response efforts.
- GBV data *should not exist in silos*. Departments, CSOs and service providers must be able to share and compare information using compatible formats. Integration allows policymakers to follow a survivor's full journey through the system and identify where support fails.
- Because GBV data concerns highly sensitive personal information, all data collection and analysis must *strictly adhere to the Protection of Personal Information Act* (POPIA, 2013). Survivors' safety and confidentiality must always take precedence over analytic convenience.
- Data must *represent the experiences of all survivors*, including those in rural areas, persons with disabilities, older women and LGBTQIA+ communities. When some groups are missing from datasets, their needs remain invisible in policy design.
- Delays in data collection and reporting make it impossible to respond effectively to emerging risks or evaluate progress. *Rapid, standardised reporting processes* are essential for adaptive and responsive policymaking.

2.3 Levers to aid the use of AI to implement GBV related policies

The Playbook's focus is on *the use of AI to fast-track the implementation of policies aimed at ending GBV*. In this section, levers that could aid the use of AI to end GBV are discussed.

2.3.1 WHY INCLUSIVITY IS IMPORTANT

For AI to support GBV policy implementation, it must be designed and applied in a way that reflects South Africa's linguistic, cultural and demographic diversity. Inclusivity ensures that the insights generated by AI are representative of all communities, including those in rural and low-connectivity areas.

Key considerations include ensuring that data used to train AI systems represents the experiences of all survivors, including those from marginalised groups such as older women, persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Also important is promoting equitable digital access and literacy so that women and community-based organisations can participate in data collection, oversight and feedback.

2.3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

AI-enabled support to end GBV requires clear, transparent and continuous communication between the government, implementing partners and the public. Effective communication strategies help build trust, manage expectations, and ensure that stakeholders understand both the purpose and limitations of AI in GBV policy work.

Strong communication practices are also necessary to translate complex technical processes into accessible information for policymakers, service providers and citizens. This supports transparency and accountability in the use of AI technologies.

To enable effective communication, regular, coordinated messaging about the role of AI in GBV policy implementation is required to avoid misinformation or unrealistic expectations. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that all communications are accessible in multiple languages and formats, including those with limited digital literacy. Finally, clear feedback mechanisms need to be created so that survivors and service providers can report problems, biases or unintended harms in AI systems.

2.3.3 ENSURING BUDGETING AND PLANNING ARE ALIGNED WITH GBV POLICIES

For AI to contribute meaningfully to the implementation of GBV policies, budgeting and planning processes must align with national GBV objectives and be supported by realistic funding.

When budgets do not reflect policy commitments, AI initiatives risk being short-term or fragmented. Effective financial planning ensures that resources are allocated not just for system development but also for capacity building, evaluation and ethical oversight.

To ensure budgeting and planning are aligned with the implementation of GBV policies, AI-related activities need to be integrated into departmental and interdepartmental budgeting processes tied to the National Strategic Plan on GBVF (2020–2030). Specific funding needs to be allocated for the development of ethical AI frameworks, data management systems and workforce training.

2.3.4 BUILDING CAPACITY FOR THE RESPONSIBLE AI USE

Policymakers, service providers and technical staff must have the skills to understand, oversee and use AI tools responsibly. Without adequate knowledge, even well-designed AI systems may be underused, misinterpreted or misapplied. Capacity building should therefore enable government departments, CSOs and community partners to integrate AI tools into their workflows effectively. It also supports the ethical governance of AI by equipping users to identify bias, ensure privacy and protect survivor data.

Priorities for capacity development include training policymakers and technical officers in data ethics, algorithmic accountability and the principles of inclusive AI. It also includes supporting digital literacy programmes for front-line workers and communities that engage directly with AI-based systems.

2.3.5 STRENGTHENING MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Without reliable and robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, it is impossible to determine whether AI is used effectively to aid the implementation of GBV policies in South Africa. M&E systems should therefore be designed to track both the performance of AI tools and their impact on service delivery, coordination and survivor outcomes.

To strengthen AI-related M&E, AI-specific indicators could be integrated into existing GBV policy evaluation frameworks. It could also be considered to establish independent oversight structures to assess algorithmic fairness, privacy compliance and outcome accuracy. M&E findings should be used to inform iterative improvement of AI systems and data practices.





PART 3: CONCLUDING REMARKS

The focus of this Playbook was to provide policymakers, civil society actors, researchers and the private sector with *tips on using artificial intelligence to fast-track the implementation of policies aimed at ending gender-based violence*. The hope is that each actor identifies the role they can play in aiding the use of AI to end GBV. ***The Playbook showed that South Africa has a strong policy foundation that addresses ending GBV, for example, NSP on GBVF (2020–2030), the NCBVF Act (2024). The National AI framework is being developed, and some existing policies that complement the use of AI, for example, the National Data and Cloud Policy (2024) and POPIA (2013).*** The challenges are with the implementation of these policies, caused by fragmented and outdated data sources, resource and capacity constraints, and the implementation of policies in silos.

Data is important to aid the use of AI to accelerate the implementation of GBV. GBV data must be credible, verifiable, timely, and aligned with established definitions, like those in the NSP on GBVF. ***Data used to train AI models must be representative and inclusive of diverse demographics of women, including those with disabilities, older women, rural communities, LGBTQIA+ people, and consider diverse languages and cultures in South Africa to prevent developing AI systems and tools that replicate harm.*** Adhering to AI ethics is vital. AI usage should be free from bias, prioritise explainability and transparency, assign clear accountability roles and adhere to the privacy as stipulated by POPIA and the data protection of the victims and survivors of GBV.

AI can only meaningfully support GBV policy implementation if ***budgeting and planning align with national objectives of the NSP on GBVF and are backed by realistic, sustained funding.*** Departmental and interdepartmental budgets must allocate resources towards AI systems development, data management systems, capacity building for GBV service providers, evaluation and oversight to avoid fragmented, piecemeal and short-term solutions. Capacity building is essential to support GBV policy implementation. ***Training priorities include data ethics, algorithmic accountability, principles of inclusive AI, digital literacy programmes for frontline workers and community partners to prevent misuse and underuse of AI systems.***

Communication is an important lever to support AI in GBV policy implementation. ***Communication strategies should be clear, regular, coordinated and ongoing on how and when AI systems are used to aid GBV implementation among the government, implementing partners, and the public, as this is essential to build trust and to prevent misinformation.*** The communication messages must be accessible in different formats and languages to make them accessible by everyone. Feedback channels for survivors and service providers must be developed so that they can report problems, biases or unintended harms in the AI system

Robust M&E is essential to determine whether AI is improving GBV policy implementation in South Africa concerning service delivery, coordination, and survivor outcomes. ***AI-specific indicators need to be added to existing GBV evaluation frameworks. To improve AI systems and data practices, establish independent oversight mechanisms to assess fairness, privacy, and accuracy.*** Taken collectively, the mechanisms discussed in this Playbook can turn AI from promise into practice, enabling the effective use of AI to implement policies related to GBV.

References

Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey. 2025. *Data*. <https://cramsurvey.org/data/>

Commission of Gender Equality. 2021. A call to Action: United to End GBVF. Biannual SAPS report: March to September. Available at: <https://cge.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/CGE-SAPS-REPORT.pdf>

Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), 2023. *South Africa's Artificial Intelligence Planning: Adoption of AI by Government*. Available at: https://www.dcdt.gov.za/images/phocadownload/AI_Government_Summit/National_AI_Government_Summit_Discussion_Document.pdf

Hartmann, M.A., Browne, E., Mutangabende, S., Mungwari, P., Stotesbury, D., Woollett, N., Kågesten, A., Roberts, S.T. and Hatcher, A., 2025. Prevalence of technology facilitated and other gender-based violence among adolescent girls in Gqeberha, South Africa and its association with probable common mental disorders. *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, 6, p.1546901. [doi:10.3389/fgwh.2025.1546901](https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2025.1546901).

Hinson, L., Mueller, J., O'Brien-Milne, L. and Wandera, N. 2018. *Technology-facilitated Gender Based Violence: What it is and how it's measured*. Washington D.C, International Centre for Research on Women.

Jamieson, L. and Mathews, S. 2022. *Laws and policies to prevent and respond to violence against women and children in South Africa*. Policy Brief. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2019. *Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/oecd-legal-0449>

Department of Justice and Correctional Services. 2013. *Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013*. <http://www.gov.za/documents/protection-personal-information-act>

South African Government. 2020. *National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP) 2020-2030*. Available at: <https://gbvf.org.za/publications/nsp-2020-2030/>

South African Police Service. 2025. *Crime Statistics Integrity*. Available at: <https://www.saps.gov.za/services/crimestats.php>

Statistics South Africa. 2020. *Crimes against women in South Africa. An analysis of the phenomenon of GBV and femicide*. [Presentation]. Available at: https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/1_Stock/Events_Institutional/2020/womens_charter_2020/docs/30-07-2020/A_Statistical_Overview_R_Maluleke.pdf

Zungu, N.P., Petersen, Z., Parker, W., Dukhi, N., Sewpaul, R., Abdelatif, N., Naidoo, I., Moolman, B., Isaacs, D., Makusha, T., Mabaso, M., Reddy, T., Zuma, K. and SANSHEF, Team. 2024. The first South African National Gender-Based Violence Study, 2022: A baseline survey on victimisation and perpetration. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council. Available at: <https://repository.hsrc.ac.za/handle/20.500.1191>