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How Nigeria's justice system fails women as femicide suspects walk free (2)



In Nigeria, a chilling wave of gender-based violence is sweeping through communities, with domestic abuse spiralling into fatal attacks and intimate partners turning into killers. From the brutal slayings of women by their closest confidants to cold-blooded murders at the hands of strangers, the surge in femicides is a growing nightmare for countless women and girls. In this shocking report, VICTOR AYENI delves into the harrowing cases of femicides, exposing the terrifying reality of violence from those who should protect, not harm

AS Mrs Cordelia Okonye knelt before her daughter's gravestone on Monday, a wreath of fresh flowers in hand to honour her 23rd birthday, a wave of indescribable sorrow crashed over her.

The pain was raw and unrelenting as if Augusta Oseidion's brutal death had just occurred.

Sitting on the cold slab of the marble gravestone, Mrs Okonye closed her eyes, and in that moment, Oseidion was 17 again—vibrant, full of life, slipping a purple dress into her hands and laughing as she surprised her with a birthday cake.

But that cherished memory, once so vivid, had been eclipsed by an unbearable void. The dress she had once gifted her mother now hung on Mrs Okonye's frame like a second skin, steeped in the agony of loss. Every February 3 has become a day when love and loss intertwined, stretching beyond time. She made a vow to bring her daughter prime flowers every year, until they met again in the afterlife.

"I will forever mark your birthday with you in your temporary resting place. Just know that I love you forever," Mrs Okonye later wrote in an Instagram post.

Oseidion, fondly called Austa, had been more than a daughter—she was a star in the digital world, a social media influencer whose striking presence had graced multiple brands. But her life was cut short on July 13, 2023, at just 21, in an act of unspeakable violence.

Her boyfriend, Benjamin Nnanyereugo—infamously known as KillerBoi—allegedly plunged a knife into her in a fit of rage, leaving her lifeless in his apartment at Ori Estate, Lekki, Lagos State. They had been together for three years, a relationship that had spiralled into fatal chaos.

Days before her murder, Oseidion had called her mother in distress, speaking of a quarrel with Nnanyereugo.

Mrs Okonye had tried to mend the rift, reaching out repeatedly. But on July 11, her daughter's voice faded into silence. Calls went unanswered. Messages were met with a haunting void.

Panic set in. With no word from Oseidion, Mrs Okonye turned to her daughter's roommate, who helped her track down Nnanyereugo's residence in Ikota.

A chill gripped her as she spotted Oseidion's Mercedes Benz C30 parked in front of the building—the only sign that her daughter had been there. The apartment, however, was locked, eerily silent.

Fearing the worst, she reported the case to the police on July 15. When detectives from the Ajah Police Station forced open the door, a gruesome scene awaited them.

There, in a pool of darkened, congealed blood, Oseidion's lifeless body lay. The marks of violence—deep gashes, bruises, signs of struggle—spoke of a final, desperate fight for survival. The vibrant young woman who had once lit up screens was now reduced to a tragic statistic, her body carted away to the General Hospital mortuary in Yaba for autopsy and preservation.

A chilling note believed to be from Nnanyereugo, was recovered at the crime scene—a silent, sinister message that detectives treated as a crucial exhibit. But the man who once professed love for Oseidion had

vanished and slipped into the shadows.

As the investigation unfolds, one thing remains unshaken: a mother's grief, woven into every flower she lays, every tear she sheds, and every whispered promise of undying love at her daughter's grave.

Suspect escapes, changes identity

In a series of now-deleted Instagram stories posted on July 17, 2023, Nnanyereugo wrote that he got into an argument with Oseidion, which led him to "mistakenly" stab her, after which he fled out of fear.

"I intend to end my life now," the runaway suspect wrote. "I want to do the right thing and turn myself in."

In October 2023, the 26-year-old suspect said to be a blockchain developer, was declared wanted by the Lagos State Police Command for the murder of his girlfriend.

After his photo was posted on social media by Oseidion's family, someone in Sierra Leone identified the suspect, who was subsequently arrested by the country's authorities at a nightclub in Freetown.

To evade justice, Nnanyereugo had changed his name to Kanu Samuel and spent over \$25,000 to obtain a Sierra Leonean passport, concealing his identity.

"We have commenced the extradition process to bring KillerBoi into custody in Nigeria," Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, told *Saturday PUNCH* in October 2023.

However, after 15 months, nothing has been heard about the suspect's whereabouts, and the femicide case appears to have gone cold.

Last month, a video clip purportedly showing Nnanyereugo living large in a club in Doha, Qatar, emerged, sparking much outrage from netizens.

Hundeyin did not respond to a message sent by our correspondent inquiring whether there had been any developments in the suspect's extradition process.

Alarming wave of femicide

Oseidion's chilling murder at the hands of the man she loved is a grim reality that daily stares thousands of girls and women around the world—particularly in Nigeria—in the face.

The European Institute for Gender Equality defines femicide as the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender. This form of violence often takes different forms.

It frequently involves the murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence, the torture and misogynistic slaying of women, and the killing of women and girls by male family members in the name of

"restoring family honour."

According to a 2024 report by UN Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, approximately 85,000 women and girls were intentionally killed in 2023.

This estimate equates to the death of one woman or girl every 10 minutes—a stark reflection of how patriarchal societies systematically devalue female lives.

The report further revealed that 60 per cent of these victims were murdered by intimate partners or family members.

Among these chilling and heartbreaking tales of femicide was that of the late Mrs Ugochukwu Chima, a devoted mother of three, whose life once blossomed in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, before being cruelly cut short.

The 45-year-old was allegedly beaten with iron rods on September 25, 2024, at her home in Kpirikpiri by her husband of 16 years, Mr Eseni Chima. She eventually succumbed to her injuries on October 24.

According to an eyewitness, the couple had been grappling with irreconcilable differences long before the fateful night when their conflict erupted around midnight.

One of the couple's neighbours, a policeman, who heard the scuffle between them, reportedly rushed into their house to break up the fight. However, he was allegedly attacked by Eseni and sustained injuries.

"The man physically assaulted his wife. She was taken to the hospital but succumbed to the injuries inflicted on her. The man is in our custody," the Ebonyi State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Joshua Ukandu, disclosed.

At Ugochukwu's funeral on January 25, grief hung heavy in the air as friends and family struggled to hold back their tears.

With voices trembling and hearts burdened by sorrow, they painted a portrait of a gentle soul—an easygoing woman with a heart full of kindness—whose untimely passing was a wound too deep to bear.

Women in danger

On a fateful day in October last year, Felicia Namkywa, a trader in Agwatashi, Nasarawa State, set out to meet a client named Abubakar Ibrahim.

Tragically, she had no inkling that the man she sought to meet had woven a sinister plot—one that would cruelly steal her life away.

Before this horrific incident, Ibrahim owed Namkywa N40,000. When he called her, he lured her to a designated location in one of the settlements within Obi Local Government Area under the pretence of purchasing grains.

Ibrahim was not alone—he was joined by an accomplice, Isah



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Ayuba. Together, they allegedly led the unsuspecting trader into a forest, where they strangled her and discarded her body in a swamp.

Following a complaint lodged at the Obi Divisional Police Headquarters about Namkywa's disappearance, and after all efforts to trace her whereabouts proved futile, the suspects were tracked down and arrested by the police.

In another grim incident in Elesomoro, Lekki, a woman identified as Mrs Gloria and her son were allegedly murdered by their neighbour, Vincent Ukpal.

A dispute over whose responsibility it was to clean their shared compound escalated into a bitter argument on the morning of September 5.

According to Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hindeyin, Ukpal brutally attacked Gloria and her son with a weapon, ending their lives in a gruesome act of violence.

In the aftermath of the murders, he allegedly hid their bodies inside a large sack, commonly referred to as a "Ghana Must Go" bag.

Between January 1 and December 31, 2024, no fewer than 133 Nigerian women, including teenagers, were victims of suspected gender-related violence, according to a report by DOHS Cares Foundation, a non-governmental organisation.

"Femicide is a crime against life," the Founder of DOHS Cares Foundation, Olatade Ajayi, stated. "It should be regarded as a societal problem, even though each case is an individual woman's tragic story."

"It is worrisome that neither the Lagos State Law on Protection against Domestic Violence 2007 nor the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 has a provision for gender-motivated killings, which is a rampant occurrence in the country."

"This led to us drafting a bill that criminalises femicide, which was submitted to the Lagos State House of Assembly."

Ajayi explained that the draft contained sections guiding the principles of investigation and prosecution, statutory limitations, procedural legitimacy and restrictions, as well as preventive and precautionary measures.

Violence fuelled by misogyny

Misogyny, as defined by the Dictionary of Gender Studies, is "the contempt for or dislike of women," a concept that is evident in patriarchal cultures "which constrain women by regarding them as lesser beings than men."

A 2024 research study published in the Terrorism and Political Violence journal explained that misogyny predicts "violent extremist intentions, willingness to engage in interpersonal violence, and increased support for violence against women," particularly among men who "experience a sense of violated entitlement."

Perhaps it was this overwhelming sense of self-entitlement that led Ayomide Adeleye, a 200 Level Philosophy student at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ogun State, to kidnap and kill his supposed friend and fellow church member, Christianah Idowu.

Idowu, a 300-level student at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, had left her home in the Itaoluwo area of Ikorodu one August day, en route to her industrial training, when the rain began to fall.

Seeking shelter briefly at Adeleye's family shop, located outside his house, she planned to resume her journey once the rain eased. However, as the downpour grew heavier, the suspect reportedly invited her into his home for further refuge.

While in his house, Adeleye attempted to have his way with Idowu, but she resisted. This, according to his confession to the police, led him to kill the 21-year-old.

After collecting ransom from the lady's family, intelligence operatives were able to uncover Adeleye's location through the BVN and account details used in collecting the money, leading to his arrest.

The suspect confessed to burying his victim in a shallow grave within his compound. He has since been remanded in jail.

An unfortunate fate also befell 17-year-old Falmata in Bama, Borno State, this time at the hands of her paternal uncle, Awana.

According to her mother, Yakaka Aisami, the incident occurred during the Muslim Ramadan fasting period, when Falmata was

confronted by her uncle, who lived in the same compound.

"He came out of his room ranting," Aisami recounted. "He said, 'Stupid child. Is she not your mother? Why would you talk to her like that? Why would you be talking back to her? Wallahi, I will deal with you right now, you disrespectful brat,'" she was quoted as saying by HumAngle.

She explained that Awana had a history of hitting Falmata, leaving her with scars in the past, which prompted the teenager to respond angrily to him.

Awana reportedly went to the fireplace to pick up burning firewood and attempted to attack Falmata with it. The teenager, in defiance, also grabbed a piece of wood.

Despite attempts to separate them and keep Falmata safe from the rage of her paternal

uncle, Awana eventually killed Falmata.

Raped and murdered

For the Adekolure family, June 13, 2024, will forever be etched in their memories as a day that brought unimaginable anguish to their hearts.

Their daughter, Glory, who had recently graduated from the Department of Chemistry, University of Benin, Edo State, had left the house on the morning of the fateful day to process her clearance at the institution.

But to the horror of the family, later that day, the battered and lifeless body of the 22-year-old was dumped under a tree close to the family house in the Iyowa community of Benin City.

"Her lifeless body was deposited at UBTH mortuary on June 15, 2024, with the help of the Nigeria Police from the Ekiadolor Division. She was beaten, raped, and killed. Please, Nigerians, come to my rescue. The help I need now is just for my innocent sister; my mum can't hold herself," an X user, Softbaba, a brother of the deceased, wrote.

Fifteen days after the murder, an unnamed suspect in the crime was arrested in Asaba, Delta State, following an investigation by the police.

The suspect confessed to killing not only Adekolure but also eight other young women. A human rights lawyer and gender advocate, Gladys Emmanuel, pointed out that with the rising trend of femicide and gender-based violence across the country, a state of emergency needs to be called by all stakeholders.

"There is a need for digital literacy for girls and women because most of these persons are lured from the internet. They don't understand the red flags, and they don't know when to stop a conversation."

"Sometimes, the perpetrators of femicides are strangers. Other times, they are persons known to the individual. At the moment, it's so sad that we don't have a holistic hub that can address issues of gender-based violence

and femicide," she explained.

We killed her after she fed us

When the body of a popular caterer in Akure, Ondo State, Mrs Olakunbi Adene, was found dead inside her apartment after four days of being missing, no one immediately suspected who could have done it.

However, after her missing phones were tracked by detectives, the names of her two most trusted employees showed up—Precious, a driver, and Philip, a cook.

Motivated by greed and cruelty, the duo had visited Adene's residence on July 25, 2024, where they were warmly welcomed, and she had even given them sumptuous meals after their domestic work.

The driver, eager to start a "Yahoo-Yahoo" (Internet fraud), had planned to steal his boss's ATM card and recruited the cook as an accomplice.

After they were apprehended by the police, the domestic staff confessed how they descended on the woman and mercilessly stabbed her despite her desperate pleas for them to spare her life.

To cover up their crimes, the duo allegedly tried to set their victim ablaze, but the gas cylinder did not explode as they had planned.

"I was the one who took the body to the mortuary. They burnt part of the stomach, clothes, gas cylinder, and other apparatus were taken away by the police," the brother of the victim, Adebola Oyeneke, said.

Boyfriends from hell

On September 10, 2024, the Edo State Police Command paraded 12 suspects who were arrested over a range of crimes, from murder to kidnapping.

One of the suspects, Kingsley Paul, an 18-year-old, confessed to murdering his lover, an unnamed 38-year-old woman who sought the warmth of love in his deadly embrace.

Paul said he took the woman to a hotel in Benin City after an agreed fee of N2,000, which she paid him.

"There was no quarrel between us, I just suddenly took out a knife and stabbed her to death," the suspect added.

Unfortunately, his victim's side of the story or the truth of what transpired between them would never be known.

That same month, another 38-year-old lady, Naajatu Ahmad, was allegedly killed during an argument by her fiancé, Abimbakur Kuma, in the Nomansland area of Fagge Local Government Area of Kano State.

In October 2023, a 300-level student of Biological Chemistry at the University of Port Harcourt, Justine Nkang, was killed by her boyfriend, Damian Chinemere, a 400-level engineering student at the same university.

Sunday PUNCH gathered that the duo had been lovers for about three years but were on the brink of a break-up before the incident happened.

The late Nkang was first reported missing by her family members, who tried to find her whereabouts in the Etche Local Government Area of the state.

Barely a week later, Chinemere was apprehended by security operatives, who also found Nkang's mutilated body in his house.

In July of the same year, a 54-year-old murder suspect, Nkeruewen Etuk, confessed to the police how he beat his girlfriend to death because she allegedly burnt his food and nearly set their house ablaze.

"When I asked her why she behaved that way, we started arguing, and then I beat her up. I never intended to kill her, unfortunately, our altercation escalated, resulting in her tragic demise when she slumped during the fight," Etuk recounted.

From battering to femicide

Findings by Saturday PUNCH showed that domestic violence is often the first installment that eventually culminates in femicide.

"If I had not left that marriage, I would have died," Olabisi, a domestic abuse survivor, told our correspondent. "The signs were all there right from the start, but I interpreted them as love."

"He was always jealous and possessive, always wanting to know who was calling me and why—even calculating the time and distance and questioning why I returned home late from any outing."

"By the time we got married, this man began to hit me. At first, I rationalised that it was my fault and tried to obey his dictates. My pastor asked me to pray and fast for God to change his heart, but the abuse continued. One day, he showed me a knife and said he would kill me; the next day, I ran for my life."

In an interview with Saturday PUNCH, a mental health expert at the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Calabar, Cross River State, Dr Victor Essien explained that batterers often reveal themselves through patterns of control, isolation, disproportionate anger, and even verbal and physical aggression.

"Their behaviour may manifest as excessive jealousy, rigid authority, and unpredictable outbursts, often paired with subtle emotional manipulation that gradually erodes a victim's self-esteem."

"Early signs include isolating a partner from friends and family, constant surveillance of activities, and exaggerated reactions to minor conflicts. Recognising these red flags is critical for timely intervention."

Leave to live

If the late Olamide Alli—who expressed her reservations to her friends about her fiancé, Chris Ndukwe—had known that her gut instincts were right, she probably would be alive today.

According to a WhatsApp voice message from 2018, Alli could be heard telling one of her friends that her wedding to Ndukwe had been scheduled for October of that year. However, she admitted that she did not know the man enough to be joined in wedlock with him.

The woman said although she had known the 39-year-old for years and they had two children together, she did not want the two boys to be the only reason she was getting married to him.

Due to her reluctance, the wedding was reportedly postponed from October 2018 to August 2020.

Unfortunately, two months before the wedding, Ndukwe murdered the 25-year-old in cold blood and subsequently took his own life, leaving behind their sons, aged seven and three.

According to the police, on the evening of June 21, 2020, their bodies were recovered from their Victory Park Estate home in Lekki, Lagos. Alli was found in a pool of blood with deep cuts on her head, while the man's mouth was foaming with a whitish substance.

Sources said the man tied her up and covered her mouth with duct tape before he proceeded to pull out her braids from the roots with a plier and stabbed her multiple times.

Shedding some light on what women trapped in abusive relationships could do, the chairperson of the Nigeria Association of Social Workers, Lagos Chapter, Mrs Olubunmi Lamilisa, stated that survivors need to speak up and seek help before it is too late.

"Victims must be willing to be helped," she told Saturday PUNCH. "If the victim doesn't report the abuse, a neighbour can always report."

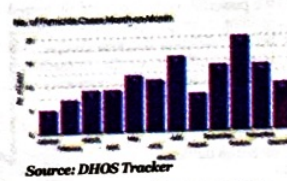
Now, we have agencies outside the Ministry of Youths and Social Development, and the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, which also has a response team. The state ministries also provide shelters and therapy for battered women.

"There are also NGOs that help survivors. However, there needs to be more training for our law enforcement officers. Some women refuse to report the abuse. So, as social workers, we emphasise continuous advocacy and sensitisation for women at the grassroots to know that they need to leave abusive relationships."

Essien also explained that women experiencing abuse need to prioritise their safety.

"Documenting incidents meticulously can serve as vital evidence while establishing a safety plan—including identifying safe contacts and escape routes—offers a strategic way to navigate danger."

"Seeking support from trusted friends, family, mental health professionals, or domestic violence services can provide both immediate relief and long-term protection. Early intervention not only empowers the individual but also disrupts the cycle of violence, creating a path toward safety and recovery," the mental health expert added.



Source: DHOS Tracker