

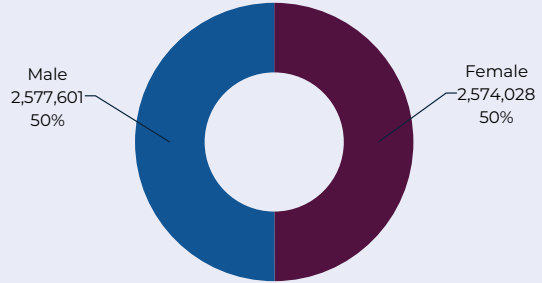


Akwa Ibom State

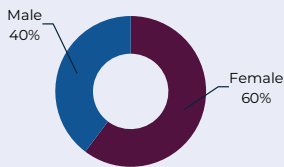




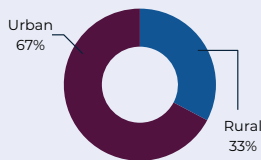
Total Population
5,151,629
5,151,629



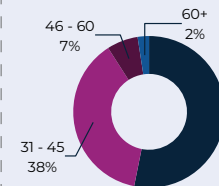
Respondents: 617



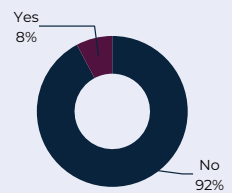
Location



Age Group



Disability Status



GBV Context



No. of GBV cases **264**



No. of active Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) **2**



No. of active shelters **1**



No. of Family Support Units (FSUs) **11**

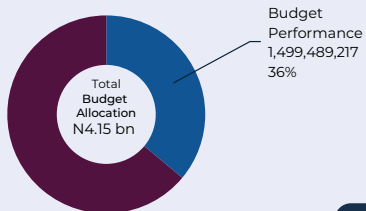


Index Grades

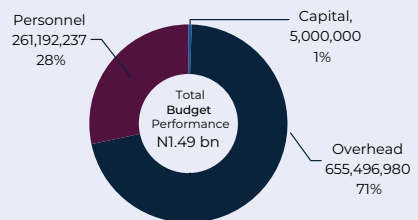
Laws and Policies	●
Access to Legal Justice	●
Support Services	●
Information and Awareness	●
Budget and Spending	●

Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

Budget Performance (2023)

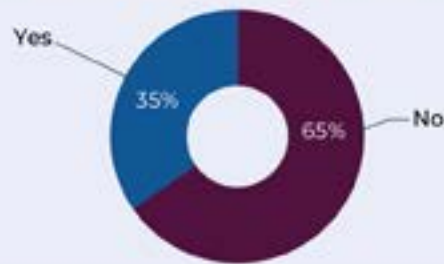


Budget Expenditure (2023)



Per Capita Spending **N291.1**

Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence (GBV) in the last five years?



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

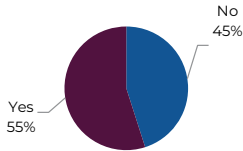


Why did you or the person choose where to seek help?

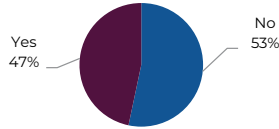


Laws and Policies

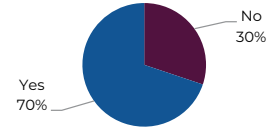
Are you aware of existing laws and/or policies that address gender-based violence (GBV) in the state?



Do you think customary or religious laws and/or practices are sufficient in preventing and responding to GBV in the state?

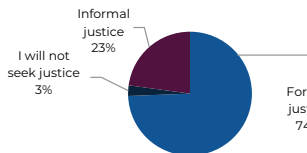


Do you know of anyone who has been convicted for GBV-related offenses?

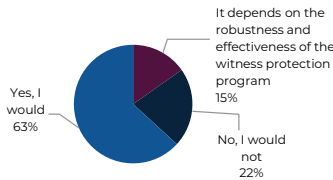


Access to Legal Justice

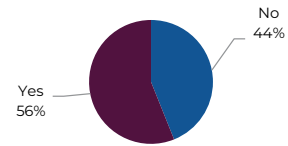
Where would you seek justice if you, or anyone you know, experience GBV?



If you witness GBV, would you feel safe serving as a witness during the investigation and trial?

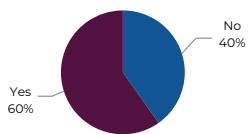


Are you aware of legal assistance and services provided by the State to GBV victims/survivors?

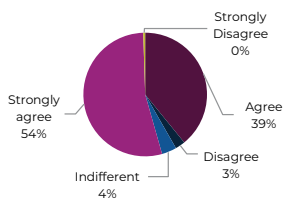


Support Services

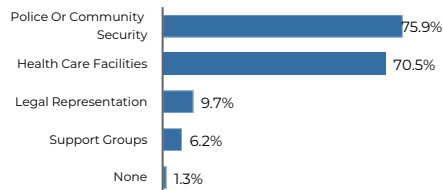
Do you know of, or have you visited, any active shelters and/or Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) for GBV victims/survivors in the state?



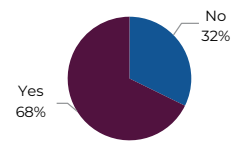
Do you believe that these shelters and/or SARCs are effectively functional, adequately equipped, properly maintained, and sustainable over time?



Which of these processes and procedures for reporting GBV-related incidents are you aware of? (Referral Pathways)

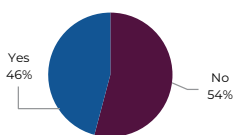


Do you think informal support systems such as family, friends, religious centres, community groups, etc., are helpful to GBV victims/survivors?

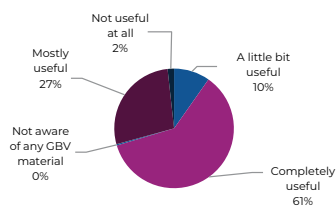


Information and Awareness

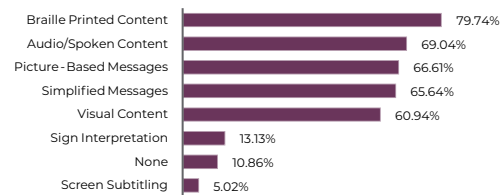
Do you know of any GBV information and/or education programs or materials in the state?



How useful is/was the content of the GBV awareness material in educating you on GBV?



Which GBV information and education materials are you aware of for persons with disabilities?



Key Insights

Laws and Policies

Laws and policies relating to gender-based violence exist in the state including the Child's Rights Law, Harmful Widowhood Law 2013, VAPP Law 2020, and the Gender Policy. These laws are used often, especially the VAPP Laws 2022, which are very holistic and detailed, although there is an undefined penalty/sanction for those who aid or procure rape or help rapists hide in the VAPP Law. In 2023, the Child Rights Law was amended, and children between the ages of 16 and 18 are now captured in the recent review. To strengthen the VAPP Law, several key gaps need to be addressed. These include expanding the definition of incest in Section 2 to include grandaunts and granduncles, providing a comprehensive definition of harmful traditional practices in Section 51(1), and incorporating provisions for "intent to cause distress" in Section 31. Additionally, the scope of Protection Orders should be broadened to apply beyond state borders, as outlined in Section 35. Finally, the law should explicitly establish coercion as a criminal offence, thereby ensuring a more robust framework for combating gender-based violence.

Of the 617 residents sampled, 55 % are aware of the existence of the laws and policies that address GBV in the State, though efforts such as creating the simplified version of the AKS VAPP Law translated into four local languages of Akwa Ibom State -Ibibio, Annang, Oro, and Eket which is now widely distributed among the relevant communities. 67% find them effective in preventing and responding to GBV. From January to October 2024, 264 Cases of SGBV were reported, and 19 convictions have been secured. There is ongoing modernisation of GBV-related customary laws to make them formal and align with the state's GBV laws. It has been outlawed with the Akwa Ibom State VAPP Law 2020. The seven communities created seven (7) by-laws. This could scale across the 329 political wards of Akwa Ibom State with the support of donor agencies.

Access to Legal Justice

Victims of GBV report cases at police GBV desks, the Ministry of Justice, or the Ministry of Women Affairs. The SGBV Department petitions the police to investigate, and cases are forwarded to the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) for court prosecution. Survey results show that 73.47% of respondents would seek formal justice. Specialized police Family Support Units (FSUs) assist victims but face resource shortages. Pro bono legal aid, provided by the state and NGOs, includes filing petitions, securing court orders, and representing victims. However, witness protection under the VAPP Law remains limited, with no formalized program. Even though there is no legal framework for a structured witness protection program in Akwa Ibom State, the SGBV Department, in practice, provides witness protection with a budget line for that purpose.

Informal justice systems, such as traditional and religious councils, should refer GBV cases to formal mechanisms. Efforts to modernize informal practices are underway, with some communities adopting codified by-laws. Notably, 60.9% of respondents believe informal systems contribute to ensuring justice for victims. Advocacy continues for appointing dedicated GBV judges and enhancing resources for the police family unit.

Support Services

The state has one active government-owned shelter, the State GBV Center, a 60-bed facility commissioned in 2022, and a functional shelter owned by FIDA. In the 2023 budget, N25 million was allocated to a safe shelter for survivors, and further allocations for the furnishing and skill acquisition programs in the Transit Camp Shelter Afrique Uyo amounted to N10m. This reflects efforts the state is making to improve its support services. Additionally, two functional SARC centres operate across the senatorial districts, providing medical care without requiring police reports, skill acquisition programs, and accommodation for victims. These facilities play a vital role in offering support and care to GBV victims and survivors. Also, N1.2 million allocation was made for response to SGBV in 2023, N20mn for the Establishment of Trauma Centres in the 3 Senatorial Districts for GBV survivors and facilitators, and the furnishing of three newly established Rape referral centres at Ituk-Mbang Ikot Ekpene N15m was allocated. If these budgetary efforts are fully

implemented, then Akwa Ibom will become one of the postal states with a strong support system for GBV cases in the south-south region.

The state employs a unified referral pathway tailored to the nature of GBV cases, involving security agencies, SARCs, legal representation, and shelters as front liners. Informal support systems, including traditional councils and family groups, are restricted to managing minor cases and are mandated to refer serious cases to formal mechanisms. 68% of the survey population believes informal support systems are more effective than formal ones in addressing GBV. There is no information on forensic lab availability or usage for prosecuting GBV cases. The state allocates budgetary resources for GBV case prosecution. It requires enhancement to meet the growing demands of GBV interventions.

Information and Awareness

The state has developed a simplified version of the VAPP law translated into three major dialectical groupings, though in limited quantity. A GBV training manual has been disseminated among primary and secondary schools, alongside the launch of a unified GBV response protocol and referral pathway targeting schools, traditional leaders, and religious groups. Comprehensive sex education, enhanced by the GBV manual, is part of the curriculum.

Public sensitization includes weekly radio and TV programs across multiple stations and monthly social media campaigns. IEC materials, such as billboards, flyers, and handbills, are used in awareness programs. These materials are PWD-sensitive, featuring sign interpretation, audio content, simplified messages, and screen subtitling, with braille content under production. Despite these efforts, no specific events target PWDs. Survey results reveal only 43.88% of respondents are aware of GBV information and awareness programs, highlighting gaps in outreach and accessibility of sensitization efforts. More than half of the budget is underutilized, and minimal funding is available for capital projects essential for effective GBV interventions. This indicates limited prioritization.

Budget and Spending

In 2023, Akwa Ibom State allocated N4.16 billion to its Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare. However, only 36% (N1.5 billion) of this allocation was spent. While significant funds were directed towards personnel (N261 million) and overhead (N655 million) costs, capital projects and GBV interventions received minimal funding. Despite budget provisions for crucial GBV interventions like trauma centres, rape referral centres, and shelters, amounting to N70 million, the actual spending remains significantly low. With a population of 6.96 million, the per capita spending on GBV issues is a mere N291.1. To effectively address the state's GBV challenges, there's an urgent need to optimize budget allocation and utilization.



Human Angle Story



"After experiencing the trauma of being raped, I was able to take swift action by ensuring the perpetrator was arrested. Though a certain NGO attempted to mediate, I firmly declined and instead sought help from the Gender-Based Violence Department at the Ministry of Justice. Their response was immediate and thorough. Not only did they ensure the suspect was promptly remanded, but they also provided continuous support, offering me shelter when I faced threats from the perpetrator's family. Their intervention has given me renewed hope for justice, and I am profoundly grateful for their dedication. The department has truly restored my faith in the possibility of justice and safety, and for that, I say thank you." - Peace from Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Akwa Ibom State


Indexes	Key Findings	Recommendations
Laws and Policies 	The state has key laws like the VAPP Law (2020) and Free Medical Care Law (2022) that protect GBV victims and define various forms of abuse.	A well-structured implementation mechanism would ensure the effective achievement of the provisions outlined in these laws.
	The VAPP Law lacks strict penalties for aiding offenders, witness protection, and measures against false accusations	The VAPP Law should be amended to introduce stringent penalties for aiding offenders, comprehensive witness protection, and clear provisions for addressing false accusations.
	Community leaders often mediate rape cases outside formal legal channels, undermining the rule of law and potentially enabling impunity for perpetrators.	Community leaders need ongoing training on GBV laws and response to strengthen their understanding and commitment, promoting accountability and support for survivors at the grassroots level.
Access to Legal Justice 	There is a lack of a comprehensive witness protection program in the State, leaving witnesses vulnerable and potentially discouraging them from testifying in GBV cases.	Develop and implement a robust witness protection program that guarantees safety, confidentiality, and support for witnesses in GBV cases.
	The state government has allocated budgetary provisions for free legal assistance to support GBV victims, ensuring they have access to justice.	To encourage more victims to seek justice, the public, especially in rural areas, should be more aware of the availability of free legal assistance.
	The state has no dedicated GBV judge;	The state should prioritise appointing and training new judges as GBV-dedicated judges to ensure specialised and efficient case handling.
	Internal issues within the police force, including interference with GBV cases, bribery, extortion, and the release of wealthy perpetrators, undermine the pursuit of justice for victims.	The state must reinstate a dedicated GBV desk within the police, implement robust accountability measures, and provide regular training to ensure prompt and proper handling of GBV cases.
	Delegating GBV-related assignments to lower-ranking officers who cannot handle such cases	Assign GBV cases to only trained officers and provide ongoing specialised training for all personnel.
	Customary law systems are not aligned with formal justice processes, hindering effective handling of GBV cases.	Strengthen the customary law system by modernizing it to align with formal justice processes, improving its response to GBV cases and promoting justice for survivors.
Support Services 	The state has established two functional SARC centres across the three senatorial districts.	Strengthen and expand the reach of the SARC centers by increasing public awareness, improving staffing, and ensuring access to necessary resources for comprehensive victim support and care.
	The state has provided a 60-bed facility shelter, which provides welfare and accommodation and serves as a skill acquisition facility.	The state should increase skill acquisition opportunities, ensure long-term support for survivors, and expand its resources to accommodate more population.
	The state has established a GBV Management Committee tasked with coordinating and responding to GBV-related issues.	Strengthen the Committee by providing more resources to ensure timely and effective responses to GBV cases across the state.

Indexes	Key Findings	Recommendations
<p>Information and Awareness</p> 	<p>The state has developed, launched and disseminated the Akwa Ibom state GBV response training manual for schools.</p> <p>No specific event or workshop targeted at PWDs, though they are invited to GBV programs</p>	<p>Ensure expansion of reach and organise frequent training programs for teachers and students. In addition, a system should be created to monitor progress and impact.</p> <p>The state should create a targeted awareness program specifically made for PWDs</p>
<p>Budget and Spending</p> 	<p>Budget provisions were made for three trauma centres, the furnishing of newly established rape referral centres, and provisions for shelters and transit homes across the state, all amounting to N70mn in the 2023 budget.</p>	<p>Proper utilization of funds provided to implement these support systems in the state. The state government must also ensure up to 100% disbursement of allocated funds to achieve this.</p>

WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER
2023 Policy Recommendations
Akwa Ibom State

S/No.	Recommendations	Implementation Status	Remarks
Laws and Policies			
1	The state should incorporate witness protection in the laws.	Not Implemented	Either the ACJ Law 2022 or the VAPP Law 2020 be amended to incorporate witness protection or an Akwa Ibom Witness Protection Bill be sent to the House of Assembly for legislation and assent by the Governor. For now, witness protection is missing in our laws.
2	There should be an amendment of the Child Rights Law to accommodate all children under the age of 18.	Fully Implemented	Fully implemented. It was amended in 2023, children between the ages of 16 and 18 are now captured with the Amended Child Rights Law 2023.
3	The government should continue to outlaw informal practices that perpetuate GBV in communities.	Fully Implemented	It has been outlawed with the Akwa Ibom State VAPP Law 2020. Seven (7) by-laws created by the seven 7 communities. This could scaled across the 329 political wards of Akwa Ibom State with support of donor agencies.
Access to Legal Justice			
4	More passionate lawyers need to be recruited in the SGBV Response Department of the Ministry of Justice.	Partially Implemented	The Ministry of Justice, through its SGBV Response Department, needs to recruit more passionate lawyers to match the increasing number of cases reported to it
5	There should be trained and dedicated GBV judges and Special GBV Courts where GBV cases are heard.	Not Implemented	Though, request has been made to the Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State; we recommend that the judges that will be posted to Akwa Ibom State by the National Judicial Commission, at least 2 should be assigned as dedicated GBV judges for speedy dispensation of justice.
6	There should be a structured witness protection program in the state.	Partially Implemented	Even though there is no legal framework for a structured witness protection program in Akwa Ibom State, the SGBV Department in practice provide witnesses protection, with a budget line for that purpose.
Support Services			
7	SARC/shelters need to be established in all the local government areas in the state.	Partially Implemented	SARCs are established in 3 of the Senatorial Districts in Akwa Ibom State -Uyo, Eket, and Ikot Ekpene LGAs.
8	Sensitization programs should be carried out to enlighten the public of the reporting and referral pathways.	Partially Implemented	This is done through collaboration with CBOs and NGOs at the grassroots.
9	The public should be sensitized and encouraged to equally report GBV cases to the formal authorities.	Partially Implemented	This is done.
Information and Awareness			
10	The VAPP Law should be translated to the three major dialectical groups of the State - Ibibio, Annang, and Oron - and widely distributed among the relevant communities.	Fully Implemented	Excellently done; the simplified version of the AKS VAPP Law translated to four local languages of Akwa Ibom State -Ibibio, Annang, Oro, and Eket.

WOMANITY INDEX IMPLEMENTATION TRACKER
2023 Policy Recommendations
Akwa Ibom State

11		There should be sustained effort in the dissemination of the state's GBV Response Training manual for schools by the GBV Management Committee.	Partially Implemented	All the Principals of the Public Secondary Schools have copies of the Manual for their schools but this hasn't been replicated to Private Schools
12		Private radio and TV stations should support or subsidize the cost of the campaign.	Partially Implemented	Some private stations in the State are doing well in this regards but other private stations are yet to comply
13		Target campaigns should be conducted for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).	Not Implemented	



Womaniity
INDEX
2024 Edition

invictus
AFRICA

www.invictusafrica.org