



Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response: **What Has Changed?**



With the support of
Ford Foundation



Akwa Ibom State

Land of Promise

Uyo town roundabout

Akwa Ibom State

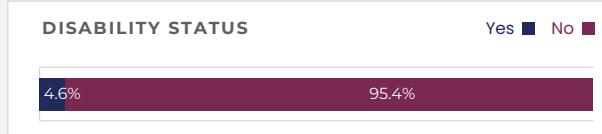
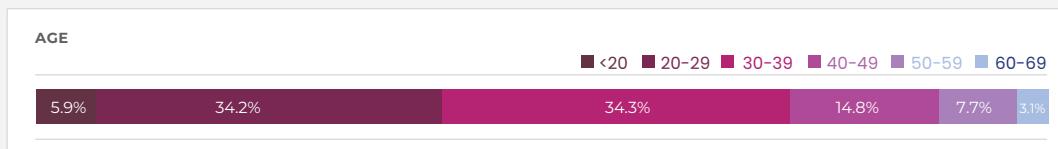
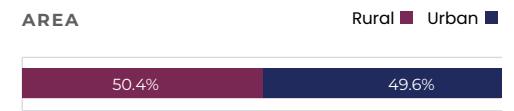
Population: 7,195,834

50% Female 50% Male

Overall Grade

80.0%

Respondents Demography (n = 1,084)



Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

BUDGET ALLOCATION

₦8.71bn

(This accounts for 0.9% of the total state budget)



BUDGET PERFORMANCE

₦6.73bn

(This accounts for 77.3% of total allocation to the ministry)



Capital ■ Personnel ■ Overhead ■



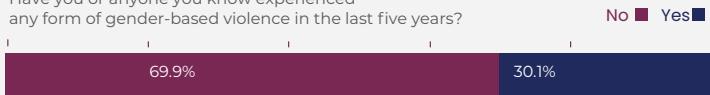
₦1,872.2

Per Capita Spending

Indexes	Indicators			Total Grades
Laws and Policies	LP ₁	LP ₂	LP ₃	—
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ ₁	ALJ ₂	ALJ ₃	ALJ ₄
Support Services	SS ₁	SS ₂	SS ₃	SS ₄
Information and Awareness	IA ₁	IA ₂	IA ₃	IA ₄
Budget and Spending	BS ₁	BS ₂	BS ₃	—

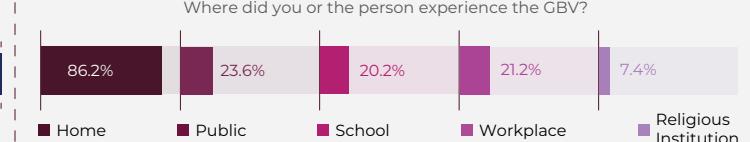
GBV Context 2025

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

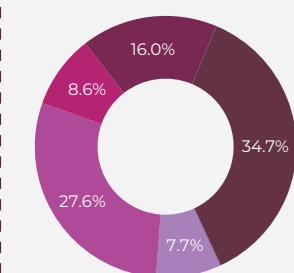


No ■ Yes ■

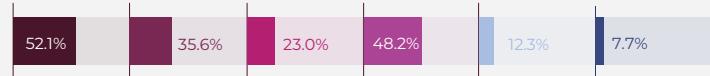
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



■ Family/relatives

■ Police/law enforcement authority

■ Friends/neighbors

■ Traditional/community leader or group

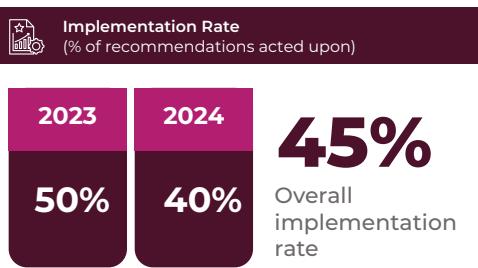
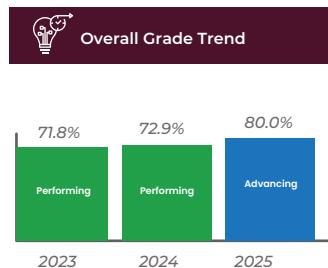
■ Lawyer

■ Religious leader (Pastor, Ulama, Imam, Deity)

■ I did not seek help

■ Employer/Work colleague/Labour group

■ Lawyer



Index	2023	2024	2025
Laws and Policies	LP 75.0%	LP 75.0%	LP 83.3%
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ 61.3%	ALJ 56.3%	ALJ 68.8%
Support Services	SS 61.3%	+1▲ SS 81.3%	SS 75.0%
Information and Awareness	IA 86.3%	IA 93.8%	IA 81.3%
Budget and Spending	BS 75.0%	-1 ▼ BS 58.3%	+1▲ BS 91.7%

What Has Changed

Positive Developments

- Residents unwilling to report GBV dropped from 7.9% (2023) to just 0.9% (2025), showing growing confidence to take action when violence occurs.
- Public perception that informal systems are more effective than formal services fell from 72% in 2023 to 45.6% in 2025.
- FIDA, the Ministry of Justice, and Legal Aid Council extended free legal services to all 31 LGAs, with trained paralegals and volunteer lawyers deployed statewide.

Areas of Concern

- Public awareness of GBV convictions fell from 70% in 2024 to 35.1% in 2025, despite stakeholders reporting consistent prosecutions.
- Residents who consider customary and religious laws sufficient for addressing GBV increased from 40.9% to 60.9%, threatening formal justice gains.
- Public awareness of shelters and SARCs dropped from 39.4% in 2023 to just 13.7% in 2025.
- Fewer residents now feel safe participating in GBV investigations and trials, with demand for witness protection increasing as security provisions remain inadequate.



Key Actions



Laws and Policies

- Akwa Ibom State has translated the VAPP law into three indigenous languages (Ibibio, Oron, and Eket) and developed simplified versions for improved accessibility.
- Established multi-sectoral GBV response teams comprising government agencies, NGOs, and service providers.

Access to Legal Justice

- GBV units were set up in all 31 LGAs, coordinated by wives of local government chairmen or designated directors.
- FIDA deployed trained paralegals or liaison officers in each LGA to offer free pro bono legal services to survivors.

Support Services

- Four SARCs and one Shelters were established across the three senatorial districts: one in Ikot Ekpene, one in Eket, and two in Uyo.
- A unified referral pathway protocol was developed to coordinate services across the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice, NGOs, and partners

Information and Awareness

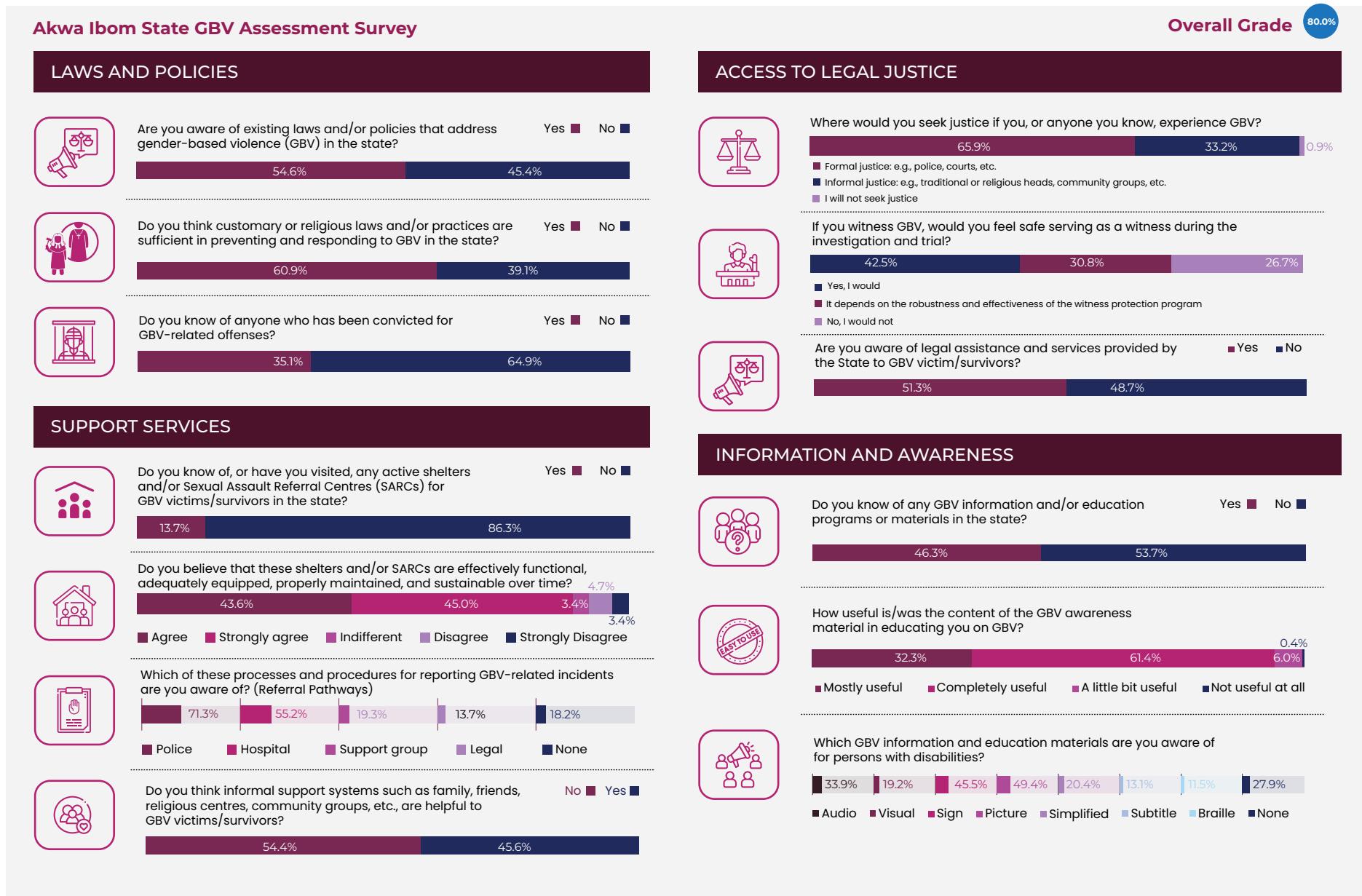
- Training manuals on GBV were developed through participatory processes involving teachers, lawyers, traditional leaders, survivors, and community members. These manuals, covering topics such as prevention, gender roles, and decision-making, were distributed to primary and secondary schools.
- Gender clubs were launched in several schools, providing peer-led platforms for GBV education and advocacy.
- Annual GBV Month campaigns are held every June, reaching all 31 LGAs through stakeholder trainings, media broadcasts, and printed awareness materials.

Change Spotlight

Akwa Ibom State achieved significant impact in GBV prevention through participatory development of training manuals involving teachers, legal experts, traditional leaders, survivors, and community members. These culturally appropriate, age-specific materials—ranging from comic books for primary students to comprehensive guides for older learners—have been widely distributed across schools and Sunday schools, equipping educators with structured tools to teach GBV prevention, gender roles, and decision-making while training them to recognize and appropriately respond to disclosures.

The program's life-saving potential was demonstrated when a young girl, after attending a training session using the manual, disclosed that her father was sexually abusing her and her two sisters with their mother's knowledge. The teacher's immediate report to authorities led to the perpetrator's arrest and the girls' rescue and support. This case illustrates how school-based GBV education creates critical ripple effects beyond awareness—building reporting pathways, strengthening teacher capacity to handle sensitive conversations, and ultimately saving children from ongoing abuse through early intervention.





Akwa Ibom State GBV Context Trend (2024-2025)

Overall Grade 80.0%

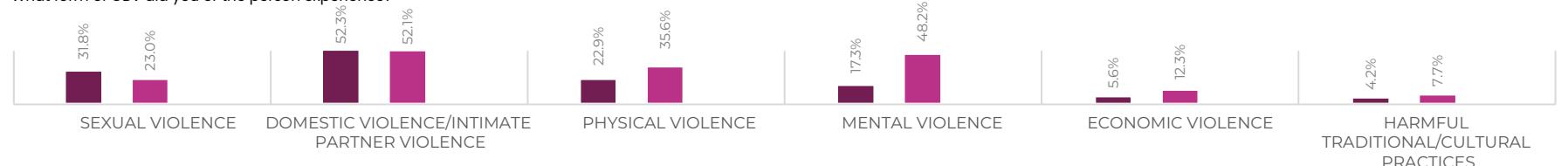
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?



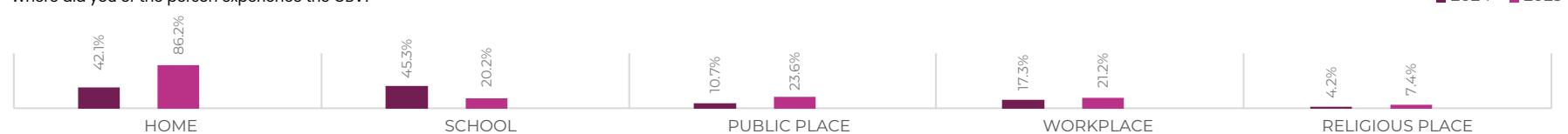
30.1%

of Akwa Ibom State population have either experienced GBV or knows someone who have experienced GBV

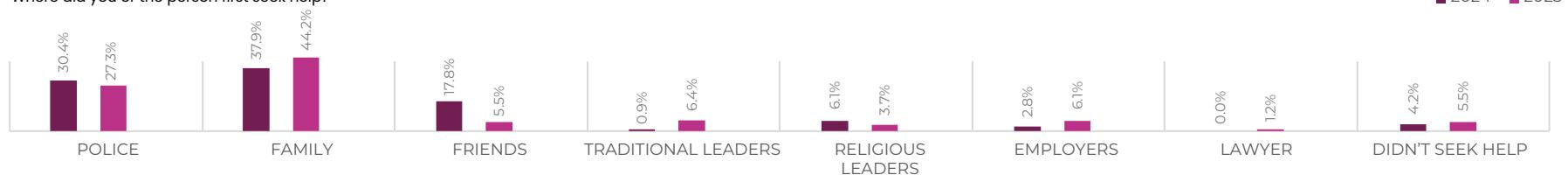
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



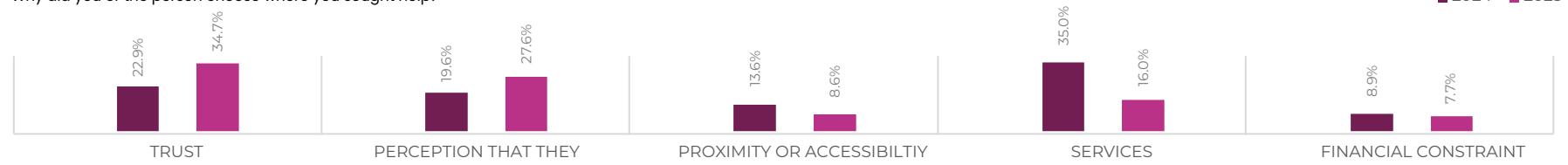
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

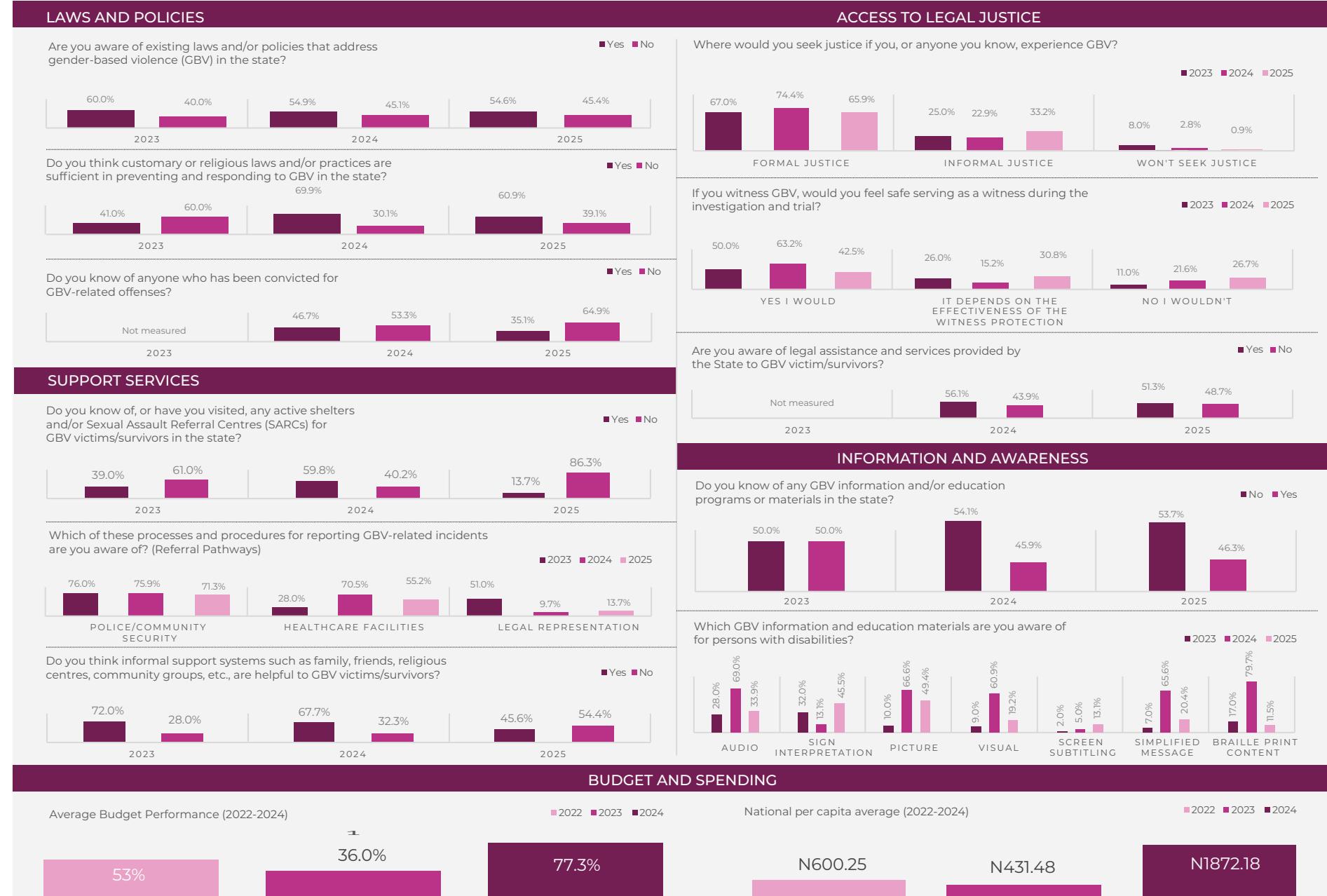


Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



State Data Trend (2023-2025)

Overall Grade  80.0%





KEY INSIGHTS

Laws and Policies

Current State in 2025

Akwa Ibom State has strong legal frameworks to address GBV, including the VAPP Law, which retained core elements of the federal VAPP Act 2015 while introducing context-specific additions. These include the creation of a state multi-sectoral GBV response team, specific guidelines for engaging traditional rulers and religious leaders in prevention campaigns, and protocols for school-based prevention.

The state has translated the VAPP law into three major indigenous languages (Ibibio, Oron, and Eket) and developed simplified versions to improve accessibility, particularly in rural areas. These efforts appear to be yielding results: a majority of residents (60.9%) believe the laws are effective tools for preventing and addressing GBV, and overall awareness of the specific laws remains moderate (54.6%).

Public awareness of actual GBV-related convictions is low, with only 35.1% of residents reporting knowledge of anyone convicted for GBV offences. Stakeholder interviews offer mixed figures, but suggest that actual convictions likely fall between 5 and 10 cases in the past year. This discrepancy highlights challenges in data coordination and transparency, as well as weak communication of enforcement outcomes, all of which can erode public trust in the formal justice system.

Customary and religious laws continue to influence how communities in Akwa Ibom respond to GBV. While 56.1% of residents are aware of these informal practices and 60.9% consider them effective, stakeholders have raised concerns about harmful customs. These include early and forced marriages, resolving sexual assault cases through monetary compensation instead of prosecution, and pressuring survivors to marry their abusers or accept traditional remedies. Such practices often prioritize family honor over justice, creating tension with formal legal systems and prevent survivors from accessing the justice and support they deserve.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, public awareness of formal laws addressing GBV remained relatively stable but moderate, with 59.8% of residents aware in 2023 and 54.6% in 2025. However, public knowledge of actual GBV-related convictions declined significantly over the same period, from 46.7% in 2024

to just 35.1% in 2025.

At the same time, more residents now believe that customary and religious laws are sufficient for addressing GBV. This perception increased from 40.9% in 2023 to 60.9% in 2025, raising concerns about a shift away from formal justice systems. This trend can be partly attributed to the visible presence of traditional and religious leaders in communities, compared to less visible formal justice outcomes. The state has attempted to address this by engaging traditional rulers through training and creating local government bylaws against GBV. However, the effectiveness of these interventions remains limited when influential perpetrators use their positions to obstruct justice. These shifts highlight an urgent need to improve the visibility of formal justice outcomes and strengthen public confidence in the formal legal system, which is increasingly being overshadowed by trust in informal mechanisms.

Access to Legal Justice

Current State in 2025

Public engagement with the formal justice system in Akwa Ibom remains modest, highlighting the need for stronger efforts to build trust and improve access. While a majority of residents (65.9%) say they would seek redress through official channels, a nearly equal proportion (64.6%) still view community-based mechanisms as helpful for securing justice for GBV survivors. This indicates fragile confidence in formal systems. This limited trust is further reflected in residents' willingness to serve as witnesses in GBV cases. Only 42.5% feel safe doing so. Others are either conditionally willing; that is, depending on the availability of witness protection (30.8%), or unwilling to participate at all (26.7%).

Stakeholders observed that while the GBV reporting and prosecution process is functional, it remains slow and burdened by financial barriers. Survivors often face out-of-pocket costs for medical tests and police transportation, despite official claims of free services. These challenges can discourage reporting and delay justice.

Legal aid services are available in all 31 local government areas. FIDA provides free legal support through trained paralegals or liaison officers in each LGA, while the Ministry of Justice has set up GBV units in every LGA, often led by the wives of local government chairmen or directors. However, only 51.3% of residents are aware of these services. This suggests that the main challenge is not availability but limited awareness and access, especially in remote areas like Ibiono, Obot Akara, Ikono, and Ini, where many survivors may not know where to go for help or face transport difficulties.

There is a clear need to increase public awareness and improve access to legal support in these communities.

The state has Family Support Units (FSUs) in some police formations, but no dedicated GBV courts. Because regular courts are too busy, cases take a long time, placing additional strain on survivors and highlighting the need for specialized courts to ensure faster, more supportive legal processes.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

A positive shift observed over the three-year period is the significant drop in the number of residents unwilling to seek justice, from 7.9% in 2023 to just 0.9% in 2025. This indicates improved willingness to take action when GBV occurs. However, this shift has largely moved toward informal systems, with reliance on such mechanisms rising from 25.2% to 33.2%. Meanwhile, the proportion of residents preferring formal justice channels remained relatively stable, from 66.9% in 2023 to 65.9% in 2025. These trends highlight the need for stronger collaboration between formal and informal systems to ensure survivors receive fair and consistent support.

Concerns about safety during the justice process have grown. Fewer residents now report feeling safe participating in investigations and court proceedings, while more are willing to engage only if strong witness protection measures are in place. The lack of adequate security arrangements for witnesses (and legal professionals) undermines confidence in the system.

Awareness of state-provided legal aid for GBV survivors has not improved meaningfully, remaining at 56% in 2023 and dropping slightly to 51% in 2025. This decline, despite reported expansion of services by stakeholders, highlights the urgent need to strengthen legal aid outreach and accessibility.

Support Services

Current State in 2025

Akwa Ibom State operates four SARCs across its three senatorial districts, along with one shelter. These include a government-run SARC at Ikot Ekpene General Hospital, a philanthropist-supported center in Eket, and two facilities in Uyo: an NGO-run SARC and a combined shelter/assault center. However, only two of these centers are described as "fully operational," while others struggle with funding constraints that limit their effectiveness.

Despite these facilities, awareness remains low as only 13.7% of residents report knowing about or visiting a SARC or shelter. This low awareness is particularly concerning given that stakeholders describe a well-established referral pathway involving the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice, NGOs, and partner agencies. However, knowledge gaps persist, particularly in rural communities. While a majority of residents are familiar with reporting through the police (71.3%), and just over half are aware of hospital-based reporting (55.2%), knowledge of support groups (19.3%) and legal representation (13.7%) remain poorly known. Underserved LGAs identified include Ikono, Ini, Obot Akara, Ibiono, Eastern Obolo, and Mbo, where both services and information about services are limited.

Broader awareness of GBV support services, including medical, legal, psychosocial, and economic

assistance, is higher, with just over half of residents (51.3%) aware of their existence. While this suggests some progress, the low level of direct engagement may indicate that these services are either not easily accessible or that information about them is not reaching the wider public.

This limited access and awareness may explain why nearly half of residents (45.6%) still believe informal support systems such as family, religious institutions, or community groups, are more effective than formal services. However, stakeholders report that these informal networks, while emotionally supportive, often lack the structure, accountability, and comprehensiveness required for survivors' long-term recovery and access to justice

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, public engagement with shelters and SARCs declined significantly from 39.4% in 2023 to just 13.7% in 2025, despite reaching a peak of 60% in 2024. This sharp drop may point to reduced visibility, limited accessibility, or declining public confidence in these facilities.

At the same time, while informal support systems such as family networks, religious centres, and community groups remain a key part of the support landscape, public trust in their effectiveness appears to be waning. The proportion of residents who viewed these informal systems as more helpful than formal services dropped from 72% in 2023 to 45.6% in 2025. This growing recognition of informal systems' limitations presents an opportunity for strengthening formal services, if adequate resources and political will are mobilized.

Information and Awareness

Current State in 2025

Akwa Ibom State continues to implement robust public sensitization campaigns, with its annual GBV Month observed every June serving as a major awareness platform. The June 2025 GBV Month was described as a "statewide program" that reached "almost all the local government in the state," with sensitization delivered through stakeholder trainings for village heads and youth councils, radio jingles, television programs, flyers, posters, and even town criers in some communities. These campaigns are implemented in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Justice, FIDA, and other civil society organizations. Despite these efforts, only 46.3% of residents report having been exposed to GBV-related programs, highlighting the need to extend outreach to underserved communities and deepen public engagement.

In the education sector, school-based GBV initiatives have made meaningful progress. A participatory process involving teachers, legal experts, traditional leaders, survivors, and community members led to the development of contextually relevant and legally sound training manuals. These materials have been distributed across primary and secondary schools, and cover key topics including GBV prevention, gender roles, and decision-making. An official reported that "if you count up to 2,000 schools in Akwa Ibom State, 1,800 should have" the training manuals, indicating wide coverage.

To reinforce this learning, gender clubs have been set up in several schools, providing peer-led spaces where students can discuss sensitive topics and promote prevention messages among themselves. These interventions are showing promise, particularly in creating safe spaces for children to disclose

abuse. However, their long-term sustainability is at risk. While public support for integrating GBV and child sexual abuse education into the formal school curriculum is very high (95.9%), these topics remain outside the official curriculum. As a result, current progress is heavily reliant on external partners and donor-funded programs. Schools not reached by these efforts are less likely to have access to standardized materials and teacher training, leaving gaps in awareness and protection.

Efforts have also been made to promote disability inclusion in GBV communication. Sign language interpreters are recognized by 45.5% of respondents, and picture-based messages by 49.4%, indicating these formats are increasingly used in training and public events. However, other accessible formats remain significantly underutilized: only 11.5% are aware of braille printed content, 13.1% of screen subtitling, 19.2% of visual content, 20.4% of simplified messages, and 33.9% of audio/spoken content. While representatives of disability associations are sometimes included in programming, stronger efforts are needed to ensure consistent and accessible messaging across all formats.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Awareness of GBV programs over the three years has remained average: 50% in 2023 and 46.3% in 2025. Stakeholders report that political discontinuity undermines long-term awareness gains and creates gaps in coverage, particularly in rural communities that depend on government outreach rather than NGO programs concentrated in urban centers. Between 2023 and 2025, awareness of accessible GBV materials improved notably. Audio content rose from 28% in 2023 to 69.0% in 2024, then decline to 33.9% in 2025. Visual content increased from 10% in 2023 to 60.9% in 2024 before declining to 19.2% in 2025. Picture-based messages grew from 9% in 2023 to 6.6% in 2024, then declined to 49.4% in 2025. However, braille awareness increased from 17% in 2023 to 79.7% in 2024 and reaching only 11.5% in 2025.

Budget and Spending

2024 Budget Analysis

Akwa Ibom demonstrates exceptionally strong performance in addressing gender-based violence, both in terms of budget allocation and implementation. The state allocated ₦8.71 billion to GBV initiatives, representing 0.94% of its total state budget, and achieved an impressive 77.3% execution rate with actual spending of ₦6.7 billion (0.92% of total actual expenditure). This translates to a per capita GBV spend of ₦1,872.18, which is the highest nationally and significantly above the national average, indicating substantial financial commitment to GBV prevention and response programs. The strong budget-to-actual ratio suggests effective implementation capacity and genuine political will to address gender-based violence in the state.

Changes Over Time (2022–2024)

Over the past three years, Akwa Ibom State has consistently increased its GBV-related budget allocations, rising from ₦3.83 billion in 2022 to ₦4.16 billion in 2023 and ₦8.71 billion in 2024. Actual budget performance, however, has fluctuated. The state achieved 53.0% in 2022, which declined to 36.0% in 2023, before rising significantly to 77.3% in 2024. The state included only one GBV line item in its 2024 budget: "Purchase of Furniture for Transit Camp Shelter Afrique, Uyo." This line item also appeared in the 2023 budget with an allocation of ₦5 million in each year.

Despite its recurrence, no actual spending was recorded for this budget line. Additionally, under the Ministry of Justice, a budget line exists for "Office of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence Respond Department" (sic), with allocation of ₦1.2 million in 2024, yet no corresponding budget performance was reported. Per capita spending on GBV-related interventions stood at ₦1,872.18 in 2024, ₦431.48 in 2023, and ₦600.25 in 2022. The sharp rise in 2024 indicates a significant surge in investment, contrasting with the fluctuations recorded in the preceding years.

Human Angle Stories

Edima was raped by her neighbour, but didn't report it for fear of being blamed. Through her own learning, she came across the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law and understood that rape carries severe punishment. Her awareness shows that progress is being made in sensitizing people about the law. Yet the stigma and fear that kept her from seeking justice reveal that awareness alone is not enough. Survivors still need a system that protects and supports them when they speak up.

KEY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Index	Key Gaps	Recommendations
 Laws and Policies	Stakeholder data suggests 5-10 GBV-related convictions have occurred in the past year, but this information is not reaching the public. Only 35.1% of residents are aware of any convictions.	Establish a centralized GBV data system to track/publish quarterly conviction reports via the Ministry of Justice website, community bulletins, and radio to boost transparency and trust.
	Many residents (60.9%) now consider customary and religious laws sufficient for addressing GBV (up from 40.9% in 2023), while awareness of formal laws remained stagnant at 54.6%.	Strengthen enforcement of formal laws by mandating that all GBV cases reported to traditional or religious leaders must be referred to police within 24 hours, with penalties for non-compliance.
 Access to Legal Justice	Only 42.5% of residents feel safe serving as witnesses in GBV cases, while 30.8% would do so only with protection measures.	Establish a witness protection program that provides security escorts for witnesses and confidential reporting channels. Publicize these protections through community outreach to build confidence.
	Despite expansion in legal aid, only 51.3% of residents are aware of these services (down from 56% in 2023). Rural LGAs including Ibiono, Obot Akara, Ikono, and In I remain underserved.	Launch a statewide legal aid awareness campaign using radio programs in local languages, community town hall meetings, posters at health centers and police stations, and toll-free hotlines. Deploy mobile legal aid clinics to underserved LGAs quarterly.
 Support Services	While four SARCs exist across senatorial districts, only two of these centers are described as "fully operational." Public awareness of these facilities dropped from 60% in 2024 to 13.7% in 2025.	Allocate dedicated annual budgets to all government-run SARCs for staffing, medical supplies, and operational costs. Launch statewide awareness campaigns to inform the public about their location and services.
	Many residents (45.6%) still view informal systems as more effective than formal services, yet stakeholders confirm these systems lack medical care, trauma counseling, legal representation, and long-term economic support.	Build bridges between formal and informal systems by equipping community champions with referral directories and emergency contacts and require them to refer survivors to SARCs or the police without delay.
 Information and Awareness	Only 46.3% of residents report exposure to GBV programs, largely unchanged from 50% in 2023. Stakeholders attribute this to political discontinuity, with programs losing momentum when administrations change.	Institutionalize GBV awareness programming by allocating permanent budget lines independent of administration changes and designating GBV focal persons in every LGA to ensure continuous community engagement.
	Despite wide coverage of training manuals across schools and strong public support (95.9%), GBV and child sexual abuse education remain outside the official curriculum, and current school programs depends entirely on donor funding.	Work with the Ministry of Education to integrate GBV and child sexual abuse education into the official school curriculum, ensuring sustainability beyond donor-funded programs.
 Budget and Spending	Akwa Ibom leads nationally in per capita GBV spending and 77.3% budget execution in 2024. However, the Transit Camp Shelter (₦5 million annually since 2023) and SGBV Response Department (₦1.2 million) recorded 0% implementation despite repeated allocations.	Ensure earmarked funds for Transit Camp Shelter and SGBV Response Department are disbursed and spent. Strengthen line-item monitoring to match overall execution performance with specific program delivery.

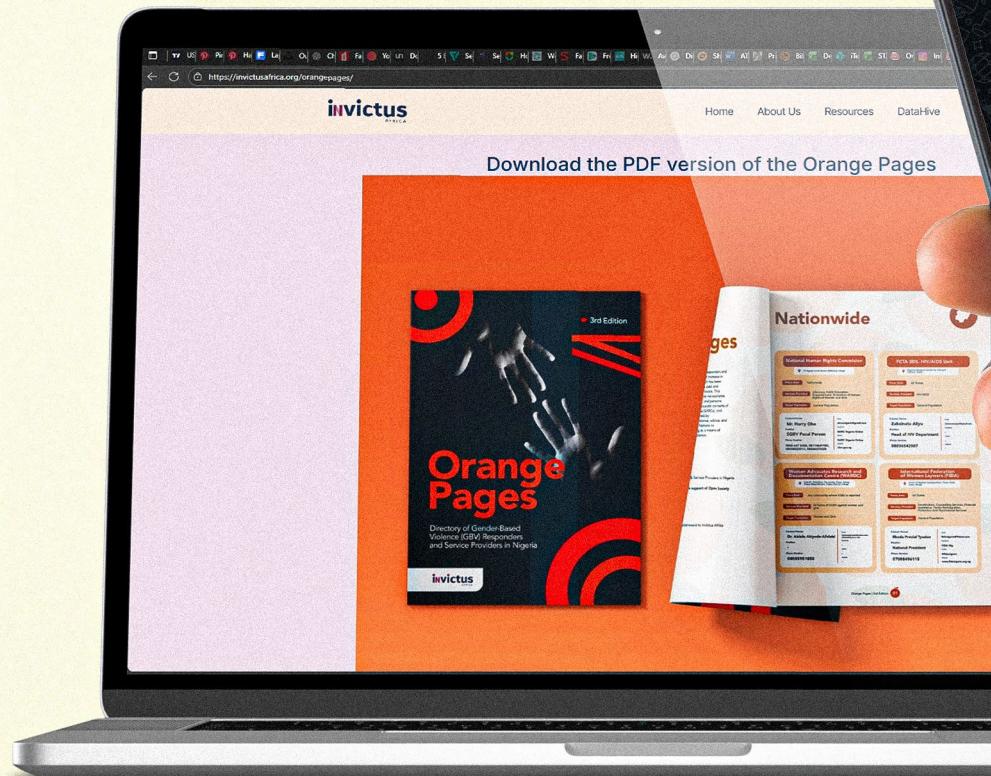


invictus
AFRICA

08033197588



www.invictusafrica.org



Let's interact
with the directory

