



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



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INDEX
2025 Edition

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Federal Capital Territory

Center of Unity

City Gate

FCT Abuja

Population: N/A

N/A Female Male N/A

Overall Grade 55.8%

Respondents Demography (n = 1,027)

GENDER

Female Male



AREA

Rural Urban



AGE

<20 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69

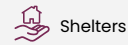


DISABILITY STATUS

Yes No



2



6

Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

BUDGET ALLOCATION

N/A

(This accounts for 0% of the total state budget)

BUDGET PERFORMANCE

N/A

(This accounts for 0% of total allocation to the ministry)

Capital Personnel Overhead



Per Capita Spending

N/A

Indexes	Indicators				Total Grades
Laws and Policies	LP ₁	LP ₂	LP ₃	—	66.7%
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ ₁	ALJ ₂	ALJ ₃	ALJ ₄	68.8%
Support Services	SS ₁	SS ₂	SS ₃	SS ₄	68.8%
Information and Awareness	IA ₁	IA ₂	IA ₃	IA ₄	75.0%
Budget and Spending	N/A	N/A	N/A	—	N/A

GBV Context 2025

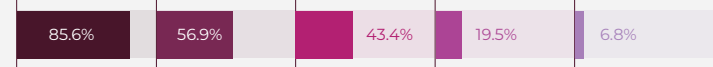
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?

No Yes

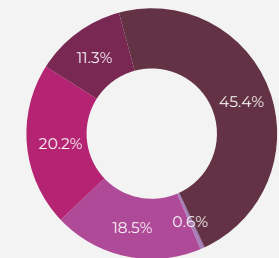


Where did you or the person experience the GBV?

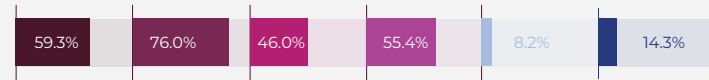
Home Public School Workplace Religious Institution



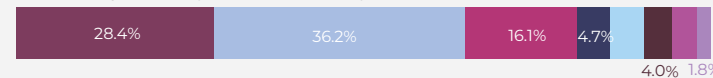
Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



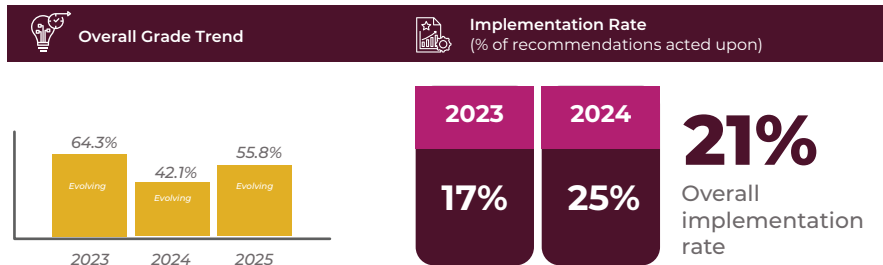
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



Where did you or the person first seek help?



Domestic Physical Sexual Mental Economic Cultural practices Family/relatives Police/law enforcement authority Friends/neighbors Traditional/community leader or group Religious leader (Pastor, Ulama, Imam, Deity) I did not seek help Employer/Work colleague/Labour group Lawyer Financial constraint Perception that they could help Proximity or accessibility Services Trust



Index Grade Trend

Index	2023	2024	2025
Laws and Policies	LP 48.3%	LP 41.7%	+1▲ LP 66.7%
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ 61.3%	ALJ 50.0%	ALJ 68.8%
Support Services	SS 61.3%	SS 50.0%	SS 68.8%
Information and Awareness	IA 86.3%	-1▼ IA 68.8%	+1▲ IA 75.0%

What Has Changed

Positive Developments

- Preference for formal justice systems more than quadrupled from 16.4% to 77%.
- Increased convictions under the specialized SGBV courts, including two life sentences.
- Recognition of police pathways increased from 49% in 2023 to 89.3% in 2025, while hospital pathways also grew from 9% in 2023 to 42% in 2025.
- Quality and usefulness of GBV materials improved sharply in 2025.

Areas of Concern

- Even with increased engagement with formal mechanisms, residents viewing customary laws as sufficient more than doubled, from 30% in 2023 to 69% in 2025.
- Awareness of legal assistance services stagnated at 47%.
- Knowledge of SARCs and shelters remained critically low.
- Reliance on witness protection nearly doubled, from 15% in 2023 to 28% in 2025, while the framework remains weak.

Key Actions

Laws and Policies

- Expansion of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act to broaden the definition of rape to include conflict-related sexual violence under Federal High Court jurisdiction, and recognition of all forms of genital mutilation with extended protections for men

Access to Legal Justice

- Expanded provision of legal aid and pro bono services by the Legal Aid Council, FIDA, and NGOs, including psychosocial support and referrals to SARCs and shelters.
- Establishment of six specialized Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) courts across Kuje, Zuba, Jabi, Apo, Kwali, and Maitama.
- Appointment and training of GBV-designated judges to strengthen judicial capacity.

Support Services

- Expansion of shelters from four in 2023 to six in 2025, and SARCs from one in 2023 to two by 2024, sustained into 2025.
- Improved collaboration among service providers (police, FIDA, NGOs, healthcare institutions) to deliver medical, psychosocial, legal, and vocational support.

Information and Awareness

- Legal Aid Council, FIDA, and NGOs intensified outreach in schools, markets, and rural communities, collaborating with traditional and religious leaders to bridge statutory frameworks and cultural norms.
- Increased engagement with schools through gender clubs and assemblies.

Change Spotlight

Between 2023 and 2025, six specialized courts for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) were established in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to address delays and accountability in handling GBV cases. These courts responded to demands from survivors and advocates for a justice system prioritizing GBV issues. By 2025, they achieved four convictions, including two life sentences, increasing survivors' confidence in reporting cases.

Trust in the formal justice system rose significantly, from 16.4% in 2023 to 76.8% in 2025. This development not only improved legal outcomes but also fostered cultural change regarding GBV accountability in the FCT.

FCT GBV Assessment Survey

Overall Grade **55.8%**

LAWS AND POLICIES



Are you aware of existing laws and/or policies that address gender-based violence (GBV) in the state? Yes ■ No ■



Do you think customary or religious laws and/or practices are sufficient in preventing and responding to GBV in the state? Yes ■ No ■



Do you know of anyone who has been convicted for GBV-related offenses? Yes ■ No ■



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? Yes ■ No ■



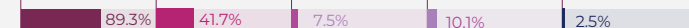
Do you believe that these shelters and/or SARCs are effectively functional, adequately equipped, properly maintained, and sustainable over time?



■ Agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Indifferent ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree



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



■ Police ■ Hospital ■ Support group ■ Legal ■ None



Do you think informal support systems such as family, friends, religious centres, community groups, etc., are helpful to GBV victims/survivors? Yes ■ No ■



ACCESS TO LEGAL JUSTICE



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



■ Formal justice: e.g., police, courts, etc.
■ Informal justice: e.g., traditional or religious heads, community groups, etc.
■ I will not seek justice



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



■ Yes, I would
■ It depends on the robustness and effectiveness of the witness protection program
■ No, I would not



Are you aware of legal assistance and services provided by the State to GBV victim/survivors? ■ Yes ■ No



INFORMATION AND AWARENESS



Do you know of any GBV information and/or education programs or materials in the state? Yes ■ No ■



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



■ Mostly useful ■ Completely useful ■ A little bit useful ■ Not useful at all



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

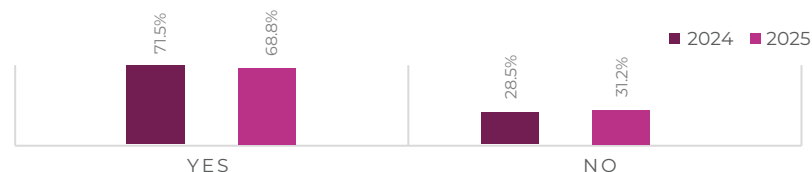


■ Audio ■ Visual ■ Sign ■ Picture ■ Simplified ■ Subtitle ■ Braille ■ None

FCT GBV Context Trend (2024-2025)

Overall Grade **55.8%**

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



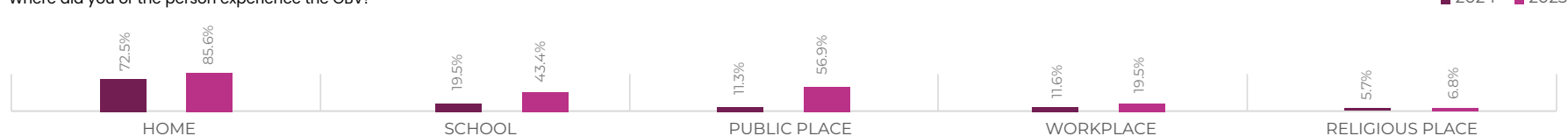
68.8%

of Federal Capital Territory population have either experienced GBV or knows someone who have experienced GBV

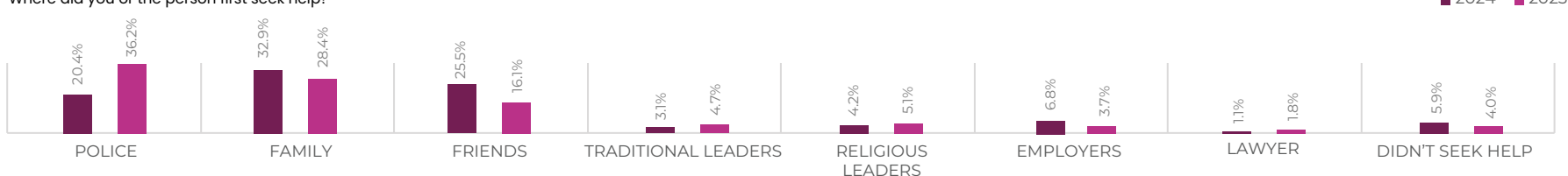
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



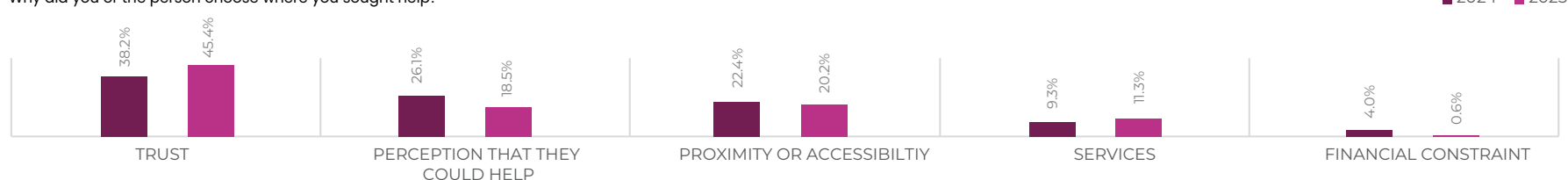
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?



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



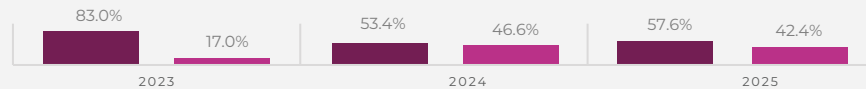
State Data Trend (2023-2025)

Overall Grade **55.8%**

LAWS AND POLICIES

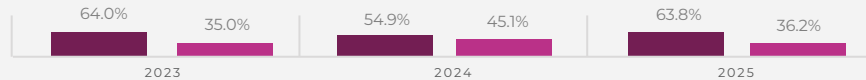
Are you aware of existing laws and/or policies that address gender-based violence (GBV) in the state?

■ Yes ■ No



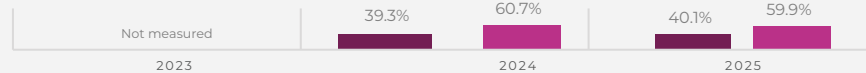
Do you think customary or religious laws and/or practices are sufficient in preventing and responding to GBV in the state?

■ Yes ■ No



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

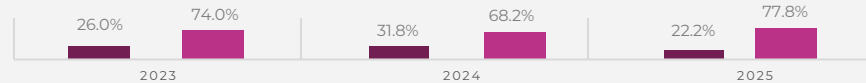
■ Yes ■ No



SUPPORT SERVICES

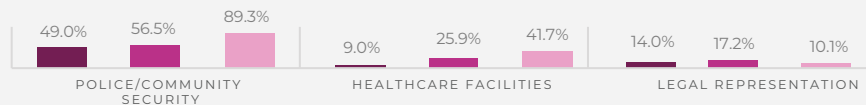
Do you know of, or have you visited, any active shelters and/or Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) for GBV victims/survivors in the state?

■ Yes ■ No



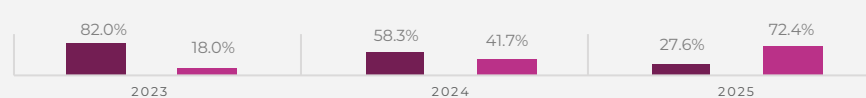
Which of these processes and procedures for reporting GBV-related incidents are you aware of? (Referral Pathways)

■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025



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

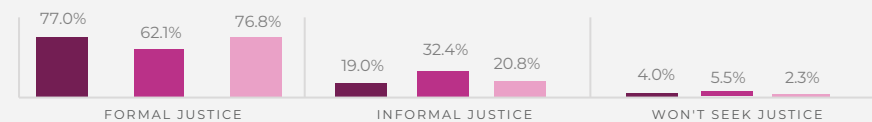
■ Yes ■ No



ACCESS TO LEGAL JUSTICE

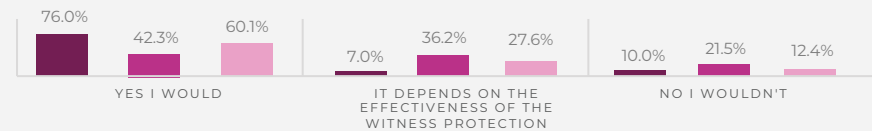
Where would you seek justice if you, or anyone you know, experience GBV?

■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025



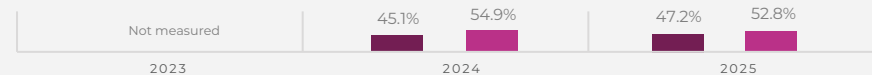
If you witness GBV, would you feel safe serving as a witness during the investigation and trial?

■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025



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

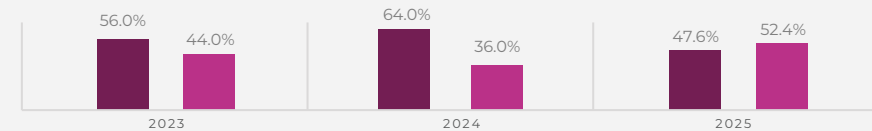
■ Yes ■ No



INFORMATION AND AWARENESS

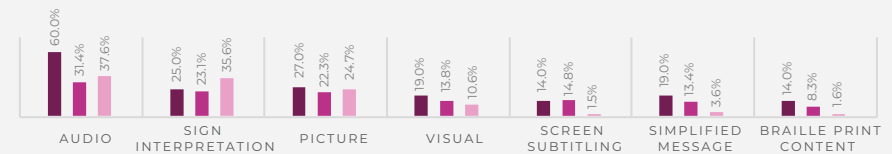
Do you know of any GBV information and/or education programs or materials in the state?

■ No ■ Yes



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

■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025





KEY INSIGHTS

Laws and Policies

Current State in 2025

The VAPP Act remains the primary legal framework, with its expanded scope covering conflict-related sexual violence, genital mutilation, and broader definitions of rape. However, awareness remains uneven: 57.6% of FCT residents knew about laws protecting against GBV, while 42.4% did not. As a stakeholder observed, “many communities remain unaware of how these laws apply to them,” particularly in rural councils.

Six specialized SGBV courts were established in Kuje, Zuba, Jabi, Apo, Kwali, and Maitama to fast-track cases, and at least four convictions, including two life sentences, were secured in the past 12 months, marking concrete progress toward accountability. However, stakeholders highlighted persistent delays in the justice system. The Legal Aid Council noted that “our legal system is slow, with frequent adjournments and instances when the court does not sit,” which delays justice delivery and frustrates survivors. Additional challenges include corruption and weak follow-through, which continue to undermine trust.

While harmful customary and religious practices persist in some communities, they are not widespread. Enforcement of the VAPP Act is strengthening, with targeted training and legal provisions aimed at discouraging interference by traditional and religious leaders in GBV cases. Practices such as the Aliku system and breast ironing still occur, but stakeholders noted they are declining due to ongoing public sensitization and increased legal awareness.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

While awareness of GBV laws dropped from 83.0% in 2023 to 53.4% in 2024 before recovering slightly to 57.6% in 2025, the proportion of people who believe customary and religious laws are sufficient moved from 64% in 2023 to 54.9% in 2024, before increasing to 63.8% in 2025.

Despite more people now knowing that the formal system secures convictions, people still express confidence in the effectiveness of informal justice mechanisms. For these residents, customary systems continue to offer faster, more accessible, and culturally familiar alternatives, even when they may not deliver meaningful justice or protection. This suggests that while formal systems are gaining ground, they have yet to fully meet community expectations or overcome long-standing

barriers to access.

Access to Legal Justice

Current State in 2025

While most FCT residents (76.8%) say they would prefer to seek justice through formal legal systems, significant gaps in awareness and protection continue to limit their ability to do so effectively. Many survivors are unaware of where to access legal support, which often leads them to rely on informal mechanisms, not out of preference, but due to lack of information. The Legal Aid Council confirms this trend, noting that survivors frequently turn to community structures first simply because formal options are inaccessible.

The Legal Aid Council operates four offices in the FCT, while FIDA has extended its reach to all six Area Councils through paralegal networks. However, geographic distance still poses a challenge, especially in remote areas like Kuje, where support is often limited to phone consultations rather than in-person assistance. These logistical barriers complicate access to justice for vulnerable populations.

Although most residents were willing to serve as witnesses, a substantial proportion made their participation conditional on witness protection. Court officials acknowledge that this framework remains weak, and FIDA has emphasized that fear of reprisals continues to discourage survivors—even when legal aid is available.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

The period shows a clear shift toward formal justice systems. Preference for formal mechanisms more than quadrupled, while those saying they would not seek justice at all dropped significantly. This suggests that efforts to strengthen courts and formal reporting pathways are beginning to change how communities view their options. While confidence in testifying recovered in 2025 after a sharp drop in 2024, reliance on witness protection nearly doubled over the period, indicating that survivors increasingly view their safety as dependent on protections that remain inadequately developed. Overall, willingness to engage with formal systems is growing, but it comes with clear conditions that the system has not yet fully met. Awareness of legal assistance services barely improved, and many survivors still do not know that help exists or how to access it.

Support Services

Current State in 2025

By 2025, the FCT has two SARC, one government-owned at Bwari General Hospital and another managed by an NGO, Cece Yara, in Wuse II. There are also six shelters, mostly run by NGOs. Although these services exist, many residents had never visited or even heard of a SARC or shelter (77.8%). Rural and remote area councils like Kwali and Abaji are especially underserved. Survivors in these areas face serious challenges, including long travel distances and poor transport options.

To improve access, the Primary Health Care Board has trained gender focal persons in 62 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) across the FCT. Each of the six Area Councils also has a gender desk officer to help coordinate services. These PHCs offer medical care, psychosocial support, legal referrals through partnerships with the police and civil defense, and vocational training to help survivors rebuild their lives.

The Ministry of Justice confirmed robust referral pathways connecting medical services (hospitals and SARCs), legal services (FIDA, NAPTIP, Legal Aid Council), psychosocial support, and shelter placement. This coordination helps ensure that survivors receive the full range of support they need, as long as they are aware of where to go.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, there were notable shifts in how people in the FCT engaged with GBV services and support systems. Awareness of shelters and SARCs remained low and showed no significant improvement (26% in 2023 and 22% in 2025), a trend attributed to overreliance on mass media awareness, thereby limiting localized outreach. However, awareness of formal reporting channels improved significantly, though this represents knowledge of entry points rather than specialized facilities.

Residents increasingly know that police and hospitals can help with GBV cases but remain largely unaware of where specialized SARCs and shelters are located or what services they provide. A civil society actor and court officials noted that while police and hospital linkages are stronger in urban areas, survivors in remote councils often “have nowhere to turn.”

Trust in informal support systems such as family and religious leaders, to provide comprehensive support declined sharply, from 82% to 27.6%, pointing to a shift in attitudes and a growing realization that informal structures are unable to provide comprehensive support services needed by GBV survivors.

Information and Awareness

Budget Analysis 2024

The FCT have adopted a multi-channel approach to GBV awareness, combining both digital and offline strategies. The Education Secretariat uses school magazines, signage, and WhatsApp

platforms to reach students and staff, while FIDA complements this with detailed radio discussions on the VAPP Act. However, these mass media approaches have not adequately reached grassroots communities. In 2025, just over half of respondents (52.4%) reported awareness of GBV sensitization programs, while 47.6% had no exposure.

Campaigns were mostly tied to major events such as the 16 Days of Activism, International Family Day, or Children's Day. While these create spikes in visibility, they limit consistent, community-based sensitization, helping explain why almost half of respondents had no exposure.

Schools have shown potential as channels for raising awareness through gender clubs and assemblies, GBV topics are discussed as extracurricular activities. As one stakeholder noted, ‘learners now speak out and also serve as GBV vanguards in their respective schools.’ However, GBV and child sexual abuse education remain outside the formal curriculum, despite strong public demand for its inclusion (99.4%).

Changes Over Time (2022–2024)



Awareness of GBV education programs increased modestly from 44% in 2023 to 52% in 2025. In contrast, perceptions of the quality and impact of the content rose sharply, from 53% to 90% over the same period. Government sources attributed this to better-targeted messaging and increased involvement of schools and youth groups.

Inclusivity for persons with disabilities remained limited. By 2025, awareness of sign interpretation and audio content improved, but awareness of braille, subtitling, simplified messages, and picture-based content remained very low. A civil society group acknowledged these gaps, explaining that while some organizations introduced ramps and sign interpretation, many lack expertise to develop fully disability-inclusive programming.

Human Angle Stories

Between the ages of nine and eleven, Mrs. Christiana was repeatedly sexually abused by a relative of her aunty's husband. As a young girl, she lacked the awareness of the right authorities to report to; she also feared the consequences her report would have on her aunt's marriage. Instead, she chose to keep quiet and endure the burden on her own. As a young victim, there was no support to help her navigate the horrifying situation.

KEY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Index	Key Gaps	Recommendations
 Laws and Policies	Awareness of GBV laws dropped from 82.1% (2023) to 53% (2024), recovering slightly to 58% (2025), indicating inconsistent sensitization.	Develop sustained, year-round legal awareness campaigns including community dialogues, school programs, and localized outreach in rural councils.
	Residents viewing customary and religious laws as sufficient more than doubled from 30% to 69% (2023-2025), despite increased formal convictions.	Organize joint awareness sessions with traditional and religious leaders, and legal professionals. These sessions should help the public understand the benefits of formal justice systems while respecting cultural values.
 Access to Legal Justice	While 76.8% prefer formal justice systems, only 47% are aware of legal assistance services. Survivors approach community structures first because they do not know where to find formal support.	Establish visible legal aid desks at police stations, hospitals, and community centers, with clear signage and trained personnel to guide survivors through available services and referral pathways.
	Legal aid services are available but remain concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural councils underserved.	Expand legal aid to rural areas through mobile clinics, stronger coordination with CSOs, and dedicated state funding to scale up pro bono services.
	Reliance on witness protection nearly doubled (2023-2025), yet the framework remains weak, and fear of reprisals continues to deter survivors.	Strengthen witness protection by allocating resources for safe houses, relocation, psychosocial support, and confidential communication channels. Ensure survivors are informed at first contact.
 Support Services	Awareness of shelters and SARCs remained low and showed no significant improvement (22.2% in 2025), despite the increased number of facilities.	Increase public awareness through targeted campaigns, digital service directories, and stronger coordination between shelters, SARCs, and health facilities.
	Shelters and SARCs are expanding but remain concentrated in urban centres, leaving rural women underserved.	Strengthen mobile outreach services to provide interim support in rural and underserved areas while infrastructure expands.
	Recognition of police pathways rose to 89.3% and hospital pathways to 42% (2025), but awareness of legal and psychosocial referrals remained low.	Standardize referral protocols across police stations and hospitals. Train frontline officers and healthcare workers to actively connect survivors to SARCs, legal aid, and psychosocial support.
 Information and Awareness	Only 52.4% reported awareness of GBV sensitization programs (2025). Campaigns remain event-based, limiting sustained sensitization.	Shift to continuous, community-embedded awareness programs through town halls, market outreach, and partnerships with local organizations.
	GBV materials remain poorly inclusive for persons with disabilities: braille (1.6%), simplified messages (3.6%). NGOs lack expertise in disability-focused programming.	Develop materials in accessible formats (braille, pictorials, and simplified texts). Train NGOs, CSOs, and government agencies on inclusive communication, and allocate dedicated funding to support disability-focused programming.



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