



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



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Nasarawa State

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Farin Ruwa Waterfall

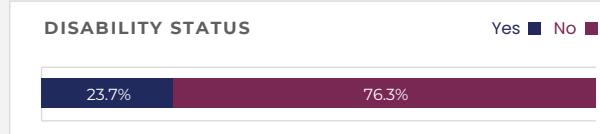
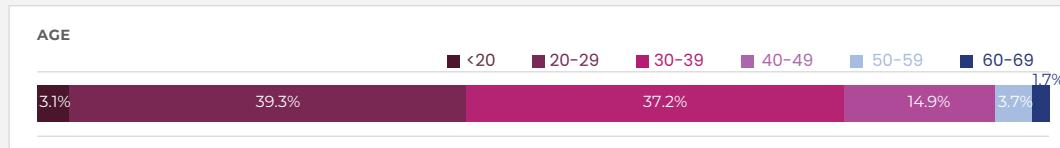
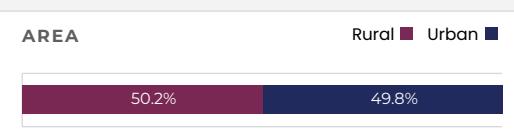
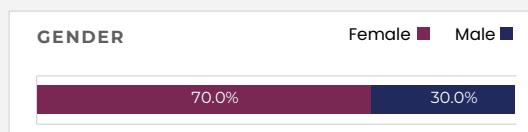
Nasarawa State

Population: 3,207,864

50.7% Female 49.3% Male

Overall Grade 52.1%

Respondents Demography (n = 993)



Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

BUDGET ALLOCATION

₦1.35bn

(This accounts for 0.38% of the total state budget)

BUDGET PERFORMANCE

₦363.09m

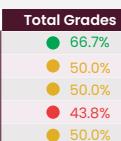
(This accounts for 27.0% of total allocation to the ministry)

27.0%



Per Capita Spending

₦223.21



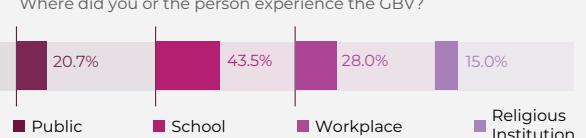
Indexes	Indicators	Total Grades
Laws and Policies	LP ₁ LP ₂ LP ₃	—
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ ₁ ALJ ₂ ALJ ₃	ALJ ₄
Support Services	SS ₁ SS ₂ SS ₃	SS ₄
Information and Awareness	IA ₁ IA ₂ IA ₃	IA ₄
Budget and Spending	BS ₁ BS ₂ BS ₃	—

GBV Context 2025

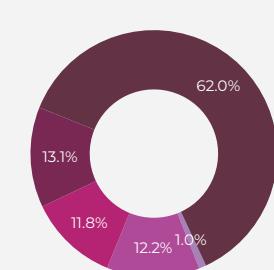
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?



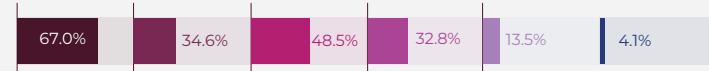
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



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

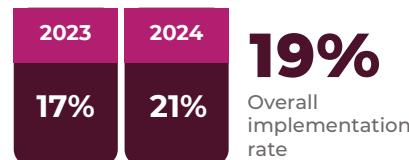
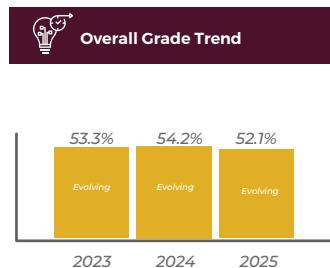
Traditional/community leader or group

Religious leader (Pastor, Ulama, Imam, Deity)

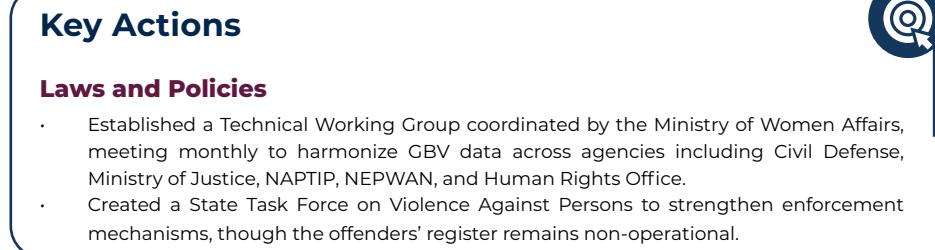
Employer/Work colleague/Labour group

I did not seek help

Lawyer



Index	2023	2024	2025
Laws and Policies	LP 75.0%	LP 75.0%	LP 66.7%
Access to Legal Justice	ALJ 61.3%	ALJ 56.3%	ALJ 50.0%
Support Services	SS 61.3%	SS 50.0%	SS 50.0%
Information and Awareness	IA 43.8%	+1 ▲ IA 56.3%	-1 ▼ IA 43.8%
Budget and Spending	BS 25.0%	+1 ▲ BS 33.3%	BS 50.0%



Access to Legal Justice

- Ministry of Justice established a dedicated Public Defender/Gender Based Violence department led by Barr. Justina Allu Alkali, making it easier for communities to approach the ministry with complaints.
- Expanded Family Support Units and GBV desks to all police divisions and outposts statewide, handling cases at primary and secondary levels before court referral.

Support Services

- Established one active government-funded Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) at the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital (DASH), along Lafia-Makurdi Road, Lafia, providing food, clothing, weekly psychological support, and medical care.
- Ministry of Women Affairs provides monthly financial support to ensure survivors receive free services at the SARC.

Information and Awareness

- Distributed IEC materials and presented community dramas in LGAs for focal persons, schools, counseling centers, and referral centers.
- Engaged sign interpreters for persons with hearing impairment during awareness programs, though materials for visual impairment and other disabilities remain unavailable.

Change Spotlight

The establishment and operationalization of Nasarawa State's first SARC at Federal University Teaching Hospital, Lafia stands as the state's most significant achievement during the assessment period. Inaugurated on May 7, 2023, by the Honourable Commissioner for Women Affairs, this facility transformed GBV response in the state. Before 2023, survivors had nowhere to turn for comprehensive care. The SARC now operates 24 hours daily, providing integrated medical, psychological, and legal support services free of charge through monthly funding from the Ministry of Women Affairs. According to the SARC Manager, they have a robust referral system there that connects survivors to obstetrics and gynaecology units, emergency services, pharmacy, and other essential hospital sections. The centre's success has sparked advocacy for expanding SARC services to all three senatorial zones, demonstrating how one strategic intervention can catalyze systemic change across an entire state.



Nasarawa State GBV Assessment Survey

Overall Grade 52.1%

LAWS AND POLICIES



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

Yes ■ No ■

44.2% 55.8%



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

Yes ■ No ■

71.2% 28.8%



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

Yes ■ No ■

48.2% 51.8%

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 ■

41.3% 58.7%



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

Yes ■ No ■

35.1% 56.8% 5.9% 0.2%

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



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

Yes ■ No ■

52.7% 53.8% 16.3% 12.9% 3.6%

■ 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 ■

56.5% 43.5%

ACCESS TO LEGAL JUSTICE



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

68.2% 30.4% 1.4%

■ 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?

66.6% 16.5% 16.9%

■ 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

35.0% 65.0%

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS



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

Yes ■ No ■

30.8% 69.2%



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

28.8% 3.9% 31.7% 35.6%

■ 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?

44.0% 32.0% 24.5% 18.1% 10.7% 18.1% 27.3% 24.7%

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

Nasarawa State GBV Context Trend (2024-2025)

Overall Grade 52.1%

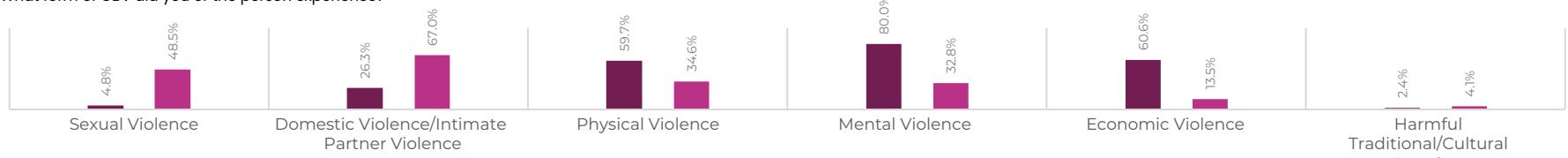
Have you or anyone you know experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?



75.9%

of Nasarawa State population have either experienced GBV or knows someone who have experienced GBV

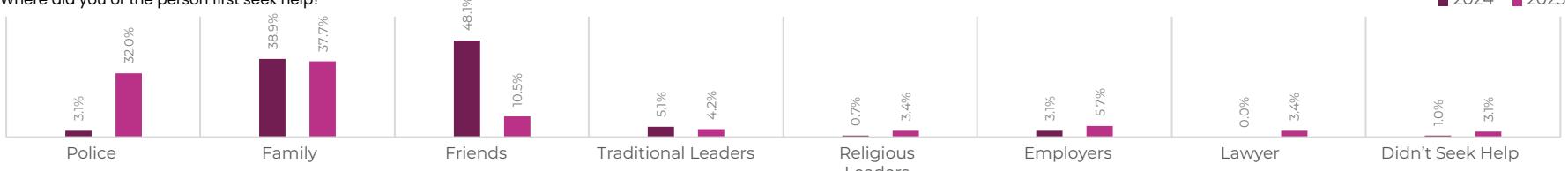
What form of GBV did you or the person experience?



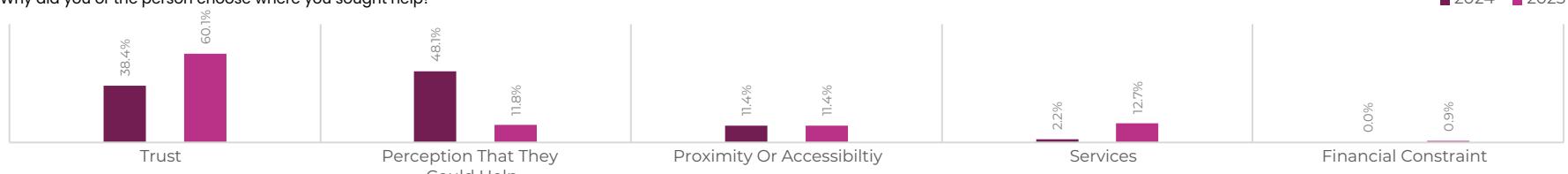
Where did you or the person experience the GBV?



Where did you or the person first seek help?

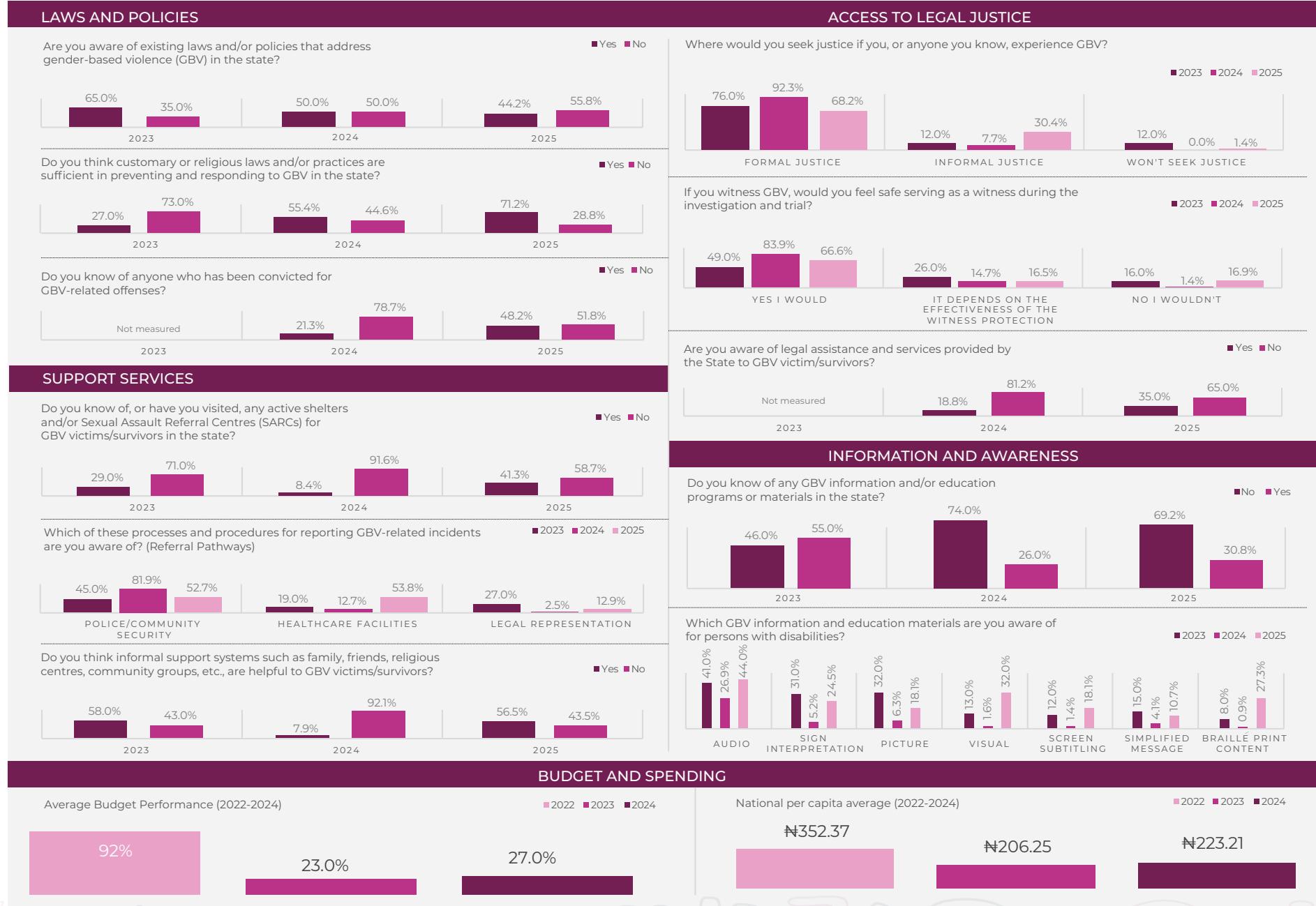


Why did you or the person choose where you sought help?



Nasarawa State GBV Trend (2023-2025)

Overall Grade 52.1%





KEY INSIGHTS

Laws and Policies

Current State in 2025

Nasarawa State has established a legal framework to address gender-based violence through the domestication of key legislation, specifically the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law and the Child's Rights Act, which serve as the state's primary statutory instruments. The Director of Public Defender described the VAPP Act as a comprehensive legislation covering multiple dimensions of abuse. However, when asked about enhanced provisions beyond the federal VAPP Act, officials confirmed "there is no additional clause added," indicating the state retained core elements without introducing relevant supplementary protections.

Despite this legal foundation, public awareness and effective implementation remain significantly limited. The 2025 Womanity Index data reveals that 44.2% of respondents are aware of existing GBV laws and policies in Nasarawa State, while 55.8% remain unaware. Among those aware, radio emerged as the primary information source (36%), followed by television (31.7%), and social media (24.4%). Notably, only 3% learned about these laws from traditional leaders, and a mere 0.5% from workplaces. Knowledge of GBV convictions stands at 48.2%, with 51.8% unaware of anyone convicted for GBV-related offenses. Justice officials attribute this awareness gap to limited judicial visibility, though they confirmed notable prosecution activity: "over 200 cases filed and more than 50 judgments secured during the review period."

The survey shows that 73.7% of respondents believe formal laws and policies are effective and sufficient in preventing and responding to GBV, while 26.3% disagree. On customary and religious laws, 59.3% of respondents are aware of such practices addressing GBV, and 71.2% believe they help prevent and respond to GBV in the state. However, stakeholders reveal a more complex reality. Officials from the state confirmed: "there is still Female Genital Mutilation practice widely across the state" and acknowledged that "there are a lot of efforts particularly against Female Genital Mutilation, but the issue is that most of the places are still doing it especially in remote areas of the state despite campaigns." Furthermore, critical implementation gaps persist, including the absence of an operational sex offenders' register and a fully functional Family Court.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Awareness of GBV laws in Nasarawa State has declined over time, from 65% in 2023 to 50% in 2024 and

further to 44.2% in 2025, showing a gradual reduction in public knowledge of existing protections. Knowledge of GBV convictions, first measured in 2024, stood at 55% but dropped slightly to 48.2% in 2025, suggesting inconsistent communication of judicial outcomes.

In contrast, awareness and reliance on customary or religious laws increased sharply from 27% in 2023 to 71.2% in 2025, indicating a shift toward community-based systems even as formal awareness wanes. This trend underscores the persistent influence of traditional mechanisms in shaping public perceptions and responses to GBV, despite the existence of formal statutory frameworks. Stakeholders observed this dynamic firsthand: "People are speaking out now unlike before." There is an inflow of complaints every day," suggesting growing willingness to report. Yet enforcement remains constrained as "It is the people themselves, the locals – they will be the one to bring a complaint when we file it to the court; they don't come to the court to testify or bear witness. Also, family and community are major challenges we are facing promoting the culture of silence for fear of stigmatization."

Access to Legal Justice

Current State in 2025

Access to legal justice in Nasarawa State shows measurable institutional progress as 68.2% of respondents now prefer formal justice channels, reflecting increased trust in state-led mechanisms, while 30.4% still rely on informal systems led by traditional or religious heads. Stakeholders confirm that specialized GBV infrastructure exists across all police divisions through Family Support Units and gender desks, supported by the Ministry of Justice's Public Defender/Gender-Based Violence department, which enhances complaint handling and prosecution. However, access gaps remain especially at trial since survivors or witnesses often fail to appear in court, leading to stalled prosecutions.

Awareness of legal assistance services remains limited (35%), with radio (34.5%) and television (28.7%) serving as the dominant information sources. While 66.6% of respondents would willingly serve as witnesses, over 16% would not, citing safety concerns and limited witness protection. Informal justice systems remain socially influential, with 74.6% viewing them as helpful, yet stakeholders reveal these structures often obstruct formal processes through premature settlements or intimidation. The Police Gender Desk Officer explained how traditional mechanisms undermine formal justice: "They handle it casually because they don't know the implications and as well as the VAPP law. Their judgement is final, and nobody challenges it. Sometimes, they threatened people if they went forward with the case, and they also attempted to deal with or disown the person from the Community." Recent

reforms such as FIDA's legal aid expansion, regular police GBV training, and judicial recognition of VAPP jurisdiction represent progress, but cultural interference, poor coordination, and inadequate resources continue to weaken timely and survivor-centered justice delivery..

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Between 2023 and 2025, access to legal justice in Nasarawa State showed mixed progress. Preference for formal justice rose from 76% in 2023 to 92% in 2024 but declined to 68.2% in 2025, while reliance on informal systems dropped from 12% to 8% before rising sharply to 30.4%. Those unwilling to seek justice fell from 12% to 1.4%, showing improved willingness to report. Awareness of state legal aid increased slightly from 19% in 2024 to 35% in 2025 but remains low, highlighting weak outreach. The period saw institutional strengthening, including the establishment of the Public Defender/Gender-Based Violence office and functional Family Support Units in all police divisions. However, as highlighted by FIDA representatives, limited coordination among justice actors, particularly the Legal Aid Council, continues to constrain prosecution outcomes and sustained confidence in the system.

Support Services

Current State in 2025

The state currently operates one fully functional 24-hour SARC at the Federal University Teaching Hospital, Lafia offering free medical, psychosocial, and legal services supported monthly by the Ministry of Women Affairs and one government-funded shelter along the Lafia-Makurdi Road. However, awareness of available support services remains low (37.7%), reflecting weak public sensitization and referral linkages. Also, only 41.3% of respondents were aware of or had visited active shelters or the SARC, despite 91.9% of those aware affirming that these facilities are functional and adequately equipped.

Officials from the state reinforce this gap: according to the SARC Manager, the centre provides round-the-clock services and collaborates with security and justice institutions, yet awareness and utilization "depend largely on referrals." Referral pathways are dominated by police (52.7%) and healthcare facilities (53.8%), while links to legal and community-based support remain limited (12.9% and 16.3% respectively). Although 56.5% of respondents perceive informal support systems as more helpful, stakeholders emphasized that the religious organizations are always ready to support by involving in management and advocacy. The JNI and CAN are always involved in managing the cases. However, limitations such as the informal nature of some collaborations lead to inconsistent access to information and training. Not all individuals or groups have access to the VAPP Law, which can hinder effectiveness. Additionally, the lack of formal training and limited information can impact the overall efficacy of these collaborations.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Awareness and accessibility of support services in Nasarawa State have evolved notably since 2023. Awareness of shelters and SARCs improved from near absence (8%) in 2024 to 34.9% in 2025 following the establishment of the state's first SARC. Public perception of service functionality has remained strong, with 91.9% of respondents agreeing that the SARC is effective and adequately

equipped corroborated by the SARC Manager that the Lafia facility operates 24 hours with free, government-supported services, filling a gap that previously forced survivors to travel long distances or depend on informal mechanisms. Plans are also underway to expand SARCs to the three senatorial zones – Northern, Southern, and Western – marking a strategic shift from isolated service delivery to a more decentralized and survivor-centered approach. Awareness of comprehensive survivor support services (medical, legal, psychosocial, and economic) has fluctuated slightly around 38%, while knowledge of referral pathways, particularly legal representation fluctuated from 58% to 2.5% between 2023 and 2024, to 12.9% in 2025, and police moved from 85% in 2023 to 82% in 2024 to 52% in 2025.

Information and Awareness

Current State in 2025

Public awareness of GBV information and education programs in Nasarawa State remains critically low, with only 30.8% of respondents aware of such initiatives, primarily accessed through radio (32.4%), television (26.1%), and social media (20.6%). The perceived usefulness of existing materials is concerning, as 35.6% of respondents found them "not useful at all" and only 3.9% considered them "completely useful," indicating significant gaps in the quality and relevance of information dissemination.

Despite strong public support for formal education, with 84.6% advocating for GBV and Child Sexual Abuse education in schools, the Ministry of Education confirmed the absence of a standardized curriculum for GBV education. Accessibility for persons with disabilities remains limited, as data shows that only a small proportion of respondents use disability-friendly communication formats, ranging from 10.7% who use simplified messages to 44% who rely on audio content. This indicates that while some accessible options exist, their utilization is still low, underscoring the need to strengthen inclusive information delivery across all population groups.

State-led awareness efforts remain fragmented and insufficient in reach and consistency. The Ministry of Women Affairs utilizes mass media, community drama, magazines, and flyers distributed through local government focal persons, schools, and counseling centers; however, new Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials are still in development and not yet disseminated. The annual 16 Days of Activism campaign covered only three LGAs — Lafia, Akwanga, and Nasarawa Eggon, leaving most of the state without recent programming. This uneven coverage, combined with the lack of standardized educational content and user-friendly, disability-inclusive materials, undermines the effectiveness of awareness initiatives and limits the state's capacity to reach vulnerable populations.

Changes Over Time (2023–2025)

Awareness of GBV programs has declined significantly from 55% in 2023 to 29.5% in 2025. The perceived usefulness of materials remained problematic throughout, with 25% finding the materials completely useful, dropping to 7% in 2024 and 4% in 2025, even as support for school-based GBV education remained strong at 83.3% in 2025. Use of accessible materials among persons with disabilities showed minimal improvement, with reliance on audio content declining from 71% in 2023 to 26.9% in 2024 and increased to 42.3% in 2025, and the use of visual content also dropping

from 23% in 2023 to 1.6% in 2024 but recovered to 30% in 2025.

The Ministry of Women Affairs indicated that new magazine materials are in development as of 2025, suggesting ongoing efforts that were not mentioned in 2023 data. However, the Ministry of Education's acknowledgment that they do not have a standardized GBV curriculum has remained unchanged throughout the assessment period, reflecting persistent structural gaps in formal education systems despite strong public demand for comprehensive school-based programming.

Budget and Spending

Budget Analysis 2024

The State budgeted ₦1.35 billion for programs addressing gender-based violence (GBV), which represents 0.38% of the total state expenditure. However, the state only spent ₦363 million, achieving an execution rate of just 27%. This amounts to a per capita expenditure of ₦223.21, which is only 0.20% of the actual state spending. This indicates significant challenges in implementation.

Nearly three-quarters of the designated GBV funds went unspent, which left critical protection services and intervention programs severely underfunded. The challenge to execute the budget undermines the modest commitment that the initial allocation represented.

Changes Over Time (2022 to 2024)

Nasarawa State did not include any gender-based violence (GBV) specific line items in its 2022 and 2023 budgets. In 2024, however, the state introduced GBV-specific items into the approved budget, earning full marks for that indicator. Of these items, only two recorded actual spending, with performance rates of 74% and 8%, while the remaining items had no expenditure.

Budget performance within the Ministry of Women Affairs fluctuated sharply during the period. In 2022, the ministry received ₦586.82 million and achieved a high implementation rate of 92% (₦539.81 million). The allocation increased substantially to ₦1.43 billion in 2023, yet performance dropped dramatically to just 23% (₦325.58 million). In 2024, the allocation fell slightly to ₦1.30 billion, with actual performance recorded at only 27%. Per capita spending stood at ₦223.21 in 2024, ₦206.25 in 2023, and ₦352.37 in 2022. The downward trend from 2022 to 2024 indicates a reduction in per capita investment over the period, reflecting diminishing fiscal attention to GBV-related interventions.

Human Angle Stories

19-year-old Ali lives with his uncle, who constantly beats him. One of those beatings made him lose his ability to hear in one ear. A good Samaritan referred him to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, where he was offered medical help and sheltered for two nights.

When asked if he was satisfied with how his case was handled, he said, "Yes and no. I got help, but I still returned home later."

He wished his community understood that violence isn't correction, that it's not just women who suffer. He wished people knew boys could be victims too.

KEY GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Index	Key Gaps	Recommendations
Laws and Policies	The state has domesticated the VAPP Law and Child's Rights Act without additional enhancements.	Review and amend the domesticated VAPP Law and Child's Rights Act to include state-specific provisions, enforcement mechanisms, and budgetary allocations that strengthen implementation and accountability.
	Critical enforcement infrastructure remains non-operational including the absence of a sex offenders' registers and a non-functional Family Court.	Establish and operationalize a sex offenders' register with digital integration across all law enforcement agencies. Operationalize the Family Court through specialized training for judges, police, and civil defence officers on VAPP Law application and trauma-informed case management.
	Female Genital Mutilation continues "widely across the state," especially in remote areas despite campaigns and legal frameworks.	Strengthen enforcement against FGM through targeted investigations, prosecutions, and community-level monitoring systems in identified hotspot areas.
	Awareness and reliance on customary/religious laws surged from 27% (2023) to 71.2% (2025), overshadowing formal legal mechanisms.	Develop a harmonization framework that engages traditional and religious institutions in GBV prevention while clearly delineating criminal matters that must proceed through formal justice channels.
Access to Legal Justice	Despite increased reporting willingness, prosecutions stall because complainants do not appear in court. Over 16% of respondents unwilling to serve as witnesses cite safety concerns.	Establish a comprehensive witness protection program including safe houses, identity protection, court escort services, and psychosocial support throughout the trial process
	Preference for formal justice declined from 92% (2024) to 68.2% (2025) while informal system reliance jumped to 30.4%. Yet, there is ineffective access to formal justice mechanisms, particularly the undue interference of informal actors, weak enforcement in rural areas, and limited reach of formal justice institutions.	Enact laws penalizing interference with formal justice processes, establish structured dialogue platforms with traditional and religious leaders to clarify jurisdictional boundaries, and deploy mobile courts and circuit prosecution teams to rural areas to increase access to formal justice.
Support Services	Legal aid services concentrated in Lafia (the state capital), Keffi, Karu, and Akwanga, with uncertainty about other LGAs.	Expand Legal Aid Council presence to all 13 LGAs with dedicated GBV desks, full-time staff, and performance monitoring through partnerships with FIDA, NBA, and law school clinics to provide pro bono representation in underserved areas.
	Only one operational SARC exists statewide at Federal University Teaching Hospital Lafia, serving fewer than 50% of LGAs.	Fast-track establishment of SARCs in the three senatorial districts (Northern, Southern, Western) with defined timelines, budget allocation, and staffing requirements.
	While technical working committee meets monthly, "political interference and third-party interference" disrupts service delivery as "families, cultural intervention, and religion" pressure survivors to withdraw after government intervention.	Develop survivor-centered case management Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with confidentiality protocols and strengthen the technical working committee with enforcement and accountability measures.
Information and Awareness	Awareness of GBV programs collapsed from 30.8% (2023) to 8% (2024). Materials are perceived as largely ineffective: 35.6% found them "not useful at all" and only 3.9% "completely useful." New IEC materials remain "in the process."	Finalize and distribute IEC materials in multiple languages, conduct needs assessment, and increase budget for quarterly campaigns.
	Despite 84.6% public support for school-based GBV education, the Ministry of Education confirmed absence of standardized curriculum.	Develop age-appropriate GBV prevention curriculum for schools, train teachers and counsellors, and establish school-based GBV focal persons and confidential reporting mechanisms.
	Disability-inclusive materials awareness declined (audio: 44% to 26.9%; visual: 32% to lower levels).	Produce GBV information in all accessible formats (braille, audio recordings, large print, easy-read pictorial materials, sign language videos, and screen-reader compatible digital content).
Budget and Spending	The state left 73% of allocated GBV funds unspent in 2024, with actual expenditure dropping to just 27%, down from 92% implementation in 2022, revealing a systemic breakdown in fund release and execution capacity.	Establish quarterly fund release schedules with the Ministry of Finance and conduct a rapid diagnostic of bottlenecks preventing the Ministry of Women Affairs from accessing and deploying approved GBV budgets.

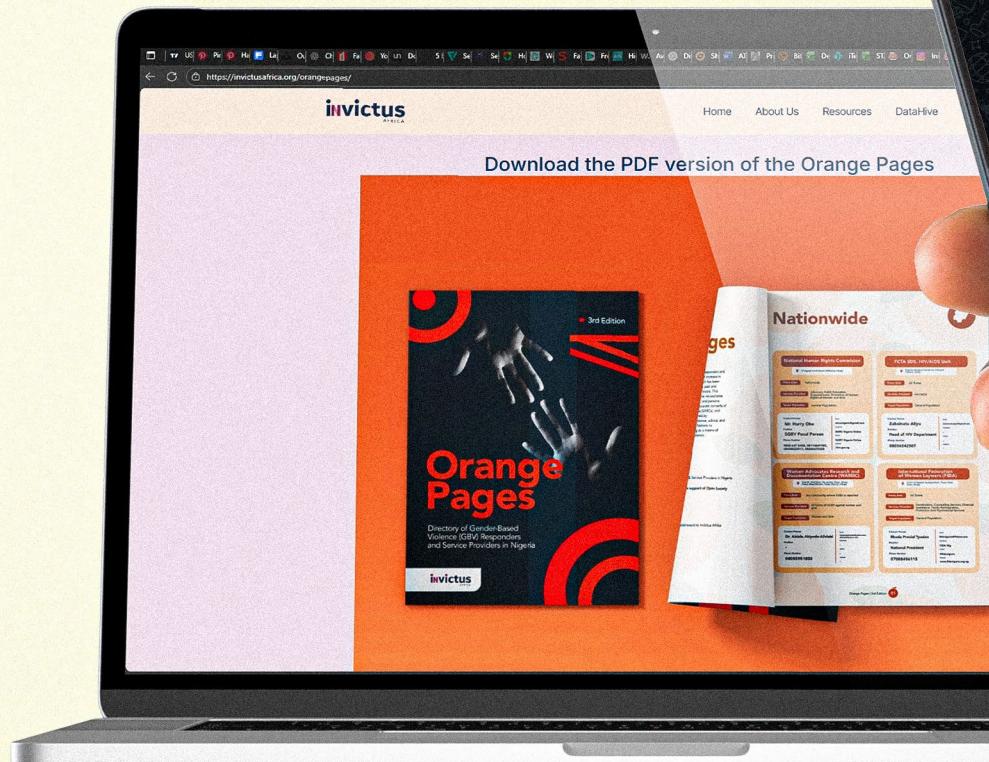


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