

Integrated care centers in Benin: a holistic approach to address gender-based violence survivors' mental health

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Introduction

Gender-based violence' public policies in Benin have focused heavily on repression. The legal framework contributed to tracking down a significant proportion of technology-facilitated gender-based violence perpetrators.

However, gender-based violence still affects 69% of women, while only 46% of them report it.

In addition, social constraints and the complexity of the judiciary facilitate impunity and worsen survivors' mental health.

Methods

To deal with these challenges, the government with the support of key technical and financial partners implemented an integrated approach to care for victims and survivors of gender-based violence in four provincial public hospitals to provide prompt, coordinated, appropriate, and sustainable solutions to the health, social, psychological, and legal needs of victims.

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Results

Preliminary results of the initiative indicate that the integrated care approach reduced stigma, bureaucracy, increased cases reporting and provided a more effective and cost-effective response for gender-based violence survivors.

Data revealed that 13,465 gender-based violence cases were reported in 2020, 12,120 in 2021, 16,261 in 2022, 16,623 in 2023, and 19,421 in 2024.

From 2020 to 2024, the cases by province were 3,372 in Alibori, 3,142 in Atacora, 6,078 in Atlantique, 6,392 in Borgou, 5,035 in Collines, 4,149 in Couffo, 2,393 in Donga, 1,504 in Littoral, 4,475 in Mono, 7,018 in Ouémé, 5,289 in Plateau, and 9,590 in the Zou.

From 2020 to 2024, the integrated care centers were able to support 26,983 survivors of which, 7,909 cases were sent to the courts and 3,871 received health care.

Discussion

Despite these achievements, the capacity of the four integrated care centers in covering the whole country is limited.

Future directions may include a generalisation of the integrated care approach for survivors of gender-based violence to improve accessibility as an essential step towards health for all.



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