

Protocols!

Introduction

I am indeed delighted to share the joy of today's occasion with you all, as I deliver a paper on the topic "**Elimination of Violence Against Women**". The parley is not only timely; it underscores the importance ascribed to it by this august body. There is no gainsaying the fact that hitherto there existed huge challenges in our socio-economic environment. It is a thing of joy however, to note that the resultant despair and apathy for women and girls have gradually given way to a new dawn of peace and tranquillity.

The world over, women and girls experience various forms of violence both in public and private. In Nigeria, violence as experienced by women and girls, knows no boundaries, as it cuts across race; ethnicity; religious affiliation; educational level and social status. Women in the rural areas suffer thrice as much violence because of their nature or environment. This is worsened by the fact that they have little or no access to information on gender-based violence and as such do not know what it is, what to report, how to report, and who to report to. This in turn has contributed to the lack of accurate statistics on women that are victims of violence.

The importance of passing accurate information on violence against women as it affects women and girls with disabilities will help achieve the objective of inclusion and zero tolerance for all forms of violence.

Understanding Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW) are one and the same concept, often used interchangeably. GBV as defined by the United Nations is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".

Forms of GBV

There are various forms of GBV occurring at various levels, such as physical, sexual and psychological.

Physical Violence: according to Galting definition, these bare acts that result to physical injuries on any part of the body. Physical violence can occur in the home between family members, or outside the home between people with no family ties (neighbours, friends, colleagues and strangers). When it occurs in the home, it is called Domestic Violence. Physical violence against women in the home or outside, could lead to permanent disability or death. Examples are slapping, kicking, biting, pushing a woman off her wheelchair, strangling, pushing, using objects to hit her, stabbing, acid bathe etc. For instance, the celebrated banker's death in Lagos.

Sexual Violence: is the use of force to obtain sexual acts, unwanted sexual advances or comments or an attempt to obtain sexual acts. Examples are rape, gang rape, incest, sexual harassment, or any form of sexual assault, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion, exposure to pornography.

Psychological Violence: is an act done to attack a women's self-worth or mental integrity, through acts such as bullying, threat to life, depriving her of her mobility, or things to make her comfortable, denying her access to resources and financial independence by not allowing her to do work or business and not providing for her basic needs, blackmailing, insulting comments, preventing her

from communicating with her family or friend, forcing her children to watch while their mother is being abused.

Facts about GBV

- Around the world, as many as 1 in 3 women have been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way (psychologically, emotionally and financially) – mostly by someone she knows, love and trusts, including the husband and or other family members, friend, neighbour and colleague.
- According to the 2012 **Gender in Nigeria Report**, 1 out of every 5 Nigerian women and girls aged 15 – 24 years have been a victim of one form of violence or the other.
- VAW knows no boundaries, as it affects all categories of women or young girls – rich, poor, old, young, literate, illiterate, Christian, Muslim, and people from various ethnic backgrounds.
- Much of the violence perpetrated against women or young girls, are by people they know, love and trust, including boyfriends, husbands, other relatives, friends, neighbours, school mates, colleagues etc.
- Women and girls are more susceptible to violence during crisis and conflict situations due to increased insecurity.
- About 1 in 4 women are abused during pregnancy which puts both mother and child at risk
- In Nigeria, there are inadequate laws on gender-based violence, and where they exist, they are not fully enforced by our law enforcement agencies.
- More often than not, perpetrators of GBV go unpunished, which in turn has given rise to impunity.
- Domestic violence is considered a private matter which suggests the existence of an underlying normalisation of violence against the female gender and the prevalent culture of silence and stigma for victims.
- Religion and religious books are sometimes manipulated and misinterpreted to justify acts of violence against women and young girls.
- GBV is sustained by a culture of silence and denial of the seriousness of health consequences of abuse.

Sexual violence, also referred to as sexual abuse refers to any activity of a sexual nature, where consent is not obtained or freely given. As defined by the World Health Organisation, sexual violence is “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work”.

Coercion can cover a whole spectrum of degrees of force. Apart from physical force, it may involve a psychological intimidation, blackmail or other threats, for instance, the threat of physical harm, of being dismissed from a job or of not obtaining a job that is sought. It may also occur when the person aggressed is unable to give consent, for instance, while drunk, drugged, asleep or mentally incapable of understanding the situation.

Sexual violence includes '**rape**', defined as physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration (even if slight), of the vagina or anus using a penis, other parts of the body or an object. The attempt to do so is called '**attempted rape**'; while rape of a person by two or more people, is known and referred to as '**gang rape**'. '**Defilement**' is the sexual abuse of a child.

Anyone can be a victim of perpetrator of sexual violence, however, most victims of sexual violence are females (women and girls), while the perpetrators are typically males (men and boys). The perpetrators are usually someone known to the victim such as a friend, class mate, acquaintance, co-worker, neighbour, caretaker or family member.

Sexual violence forms and contexts

A wide range of sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings, including:

- Rape by acquaintances, colleagues, school mates
- Rape by strangers
- Rape within marriage or dating relationships
- Systematic 'war rape' during armed conflict
- Unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including but not limited to, demanding sex in return for favours
- Sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people
- Sexual abuse of children by family members, friends and neighbours
- Forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children
- Denial of the right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases
- Forced abortion
- Violent acts against sexual integrity, including genital mutilation and obligatory inspections of virginity
- Forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Myths and Facts about Sexual Violence

Myth 1: Women should not go out alone at any time, especially at night, as they are most likely going to be raped outside in dark alleys.

Myth 2: Women and girls who are sexually assaulted 'ask for it' by the way they dress or act. Rape only happens to young women and does not affect married women.

Myth 3: Everyone knows when a woman say no, she often means yes. Women secretly want to be raped

Myth 4: Women eventually relax and enjoy it, they secretly want to be raped

Myth 5: If a woman did not fight back and get hurt physically, it cannot be called rape

Myth 6: Men of certain races and backgrounds are more likely to commit sexual violence

Myth 7: Men who rape or sexually assault are mentally ill or monsters

Myth 8: The man just wasn't himself, he was drunk or under stress or drugs

Myth 9: Once a man is sexually aroused he cannot help himself, he has to have sex

Myth 10: Men who rape are sexually frustrated or do not have the opportunity to have sex with a willing partner

Myth 11: Women make up stories about being raped

Myth 12: If a victim isn't a virgin, it can't be considered rape

How to Reduce Sexual Violence Risk for Girls

- **Be aware** of your surroundings. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.
- Try to **avoid isolated areas**. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around.
- **Walk with purpose**. Even if you don't know where you are going, act like you do.
- **Trust your instincts**. If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be.
- **Try not to load yourself down** with packages or bags as this can make you appear more vulnerable.
- **Make sure your mobile phone is with you** and charged, and you have cab money
- **Don't allow yourself to be isolated** with someone you don't trust or someone you don't know.
- **Avoid putting music headphones in both ears** so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.
- Do not accept a drink already opened, this is very important when you go out with friends, classmates, colleagues etc. In addition, if you leave your drink and go to the restroom, **DO NOT TOUCH IT WHEN YOU RETURN**.
- Report any advances directed at you that you feel is inappropriate.

Remember women or young girls are prone to abuse (sexual or physical) from people they know, love and trust.

Things boys should know

- Be conscious of the language you use. We live in a society in which words often cut down or put down women. Avoid words like bitch, whore, freak, dog. Those words send a message that females are less than human. Seeing them in such a light makes it easier to treat them without respect or to ignore their wellbeing.

- Speak Up, you may never see a rape in progress, but you will hear jokes and language that is inappropriate and degrades women. When your best friend tells a joke about rape, or any form of sexual abuse, tell him it is not funny. Talk with your classmates and friends about the negative effects of sexual abuse, and the fact that the young girl being talked about is someone's sister or daughter.
- Support young girls who have survived any form of sexual violence. By learning to sensitively support survivors you know, you are helping affected boys and girls feel more comfortable about coming forward and talking about what has happened to them.
- Avoid use of alcohol and or other drugs, these substances may make you aggressive and impair your ability to think clearly or communicate effectively. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not a defence against criminal behaviour, and rape is a criminal act.
- Don't engage in any form of sexual harassment, such as wolf-whistling or unwanted touching. Women aren't public property available for male intrusions, neither are boys.
- Develop and awareness of the cultural supports for violence against women, inform yourself and develop the ability to recognise myths. When you see sex without consent on TC=V, remind yourself that it is rape.
- The girl child is more vulnerable to sexual abuse.
- Sexual abuse of children ages 0-17 years is very prevalent, with most of the abuses occurring in homes, with the perpetrators known to the children.
- Perpetrators of sexual violence are youths and mature people between the ages of 26-50 years of age.
- 99% of perpetrators of sexual abuse are men and young boys.
- Sexual violence occurs both in the public and private spheres, and includes almost all sites such as schools, places of work, police stations, religious centres etc.
- Sexual violence is more prevalent in the southern part of Nigeria.

Gender Based Cases From January 2018 Till Date

<u>Number Of Cases</u>	<u>Total Number Of Cases</u>	<u>Charged To Court</u>	<u>Under Investigation</u>
Defilement	118	113	5
Domestic Violence	48	25	23

Recommendations

What is the way forward? How can violence against women in Nigeria be curbed? The following strategies would go a long way to bring violence against women to the barest minimum in the country:

- Organising school sensitisation programmes for pupils, students, parents and teachers in primary and secondary schools across the country.
- Engaging high school student in mentoring programmes or other skill-based activities that address healthy sexuality and romantic relationships.

Every day we see images of male violence against women in the news, on TV shows, in movies, advertising and in our homes and workplaces. It is a fact of life for women of all ages, races and classes.

Reference:

1. I.OEDGAL (2018) "Stop the Stigmatisation of Ex-Drug Users & Victims of Human Trafficking"
2. www.projectalertnig.org
3. Yetunde Longe (2018) "Citizen Security".