We’re coming after you – Coordinator, Akwa Ibom First Lady’s Office warns GBV perpetrators

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Following the recent incidents of Gender-Based Violence and other heinous crimes in Akwa Ibom State, the Coordinator, office of the First Lady, Akwa Ibom State, Helen Obareki, has warned that “it will no longer be business as usual” for perpetrators as she will intensify her efforts in ensuring that they are brought to book.  
  
Mrs Obareki, who is the chairperson, Akwa Ibom State Gender Based Management Committee, AksGBVMC, gave the warning on Tuesday, 11 February 11, while addressing a press conference in her office at Government House, Uyo.  
  
Mrs Obareki’s remark is contained in a press release on Tuesday from the media unit of her office.  
  
She condemned all acts of sexual assault, domestic violence and Gender-Based Violence.  
  
“We have called this press conference to address the recent and deeply troubling incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault, and Gender-Based Violence in our state. These acts are not only a violation of human rights but also a stain on our collective conscience as a society,” she said.  
  
The coordinator highlighted strides recorded by AksGBVMC in recent times, including the rescue of three human trafficking survivors, the arrest of six people for raping a 14-year-old boy, the initiation of legal proceedings against perpetrators, and the establishment of a reporting mechanism, among other efforts.  
  
Mrs Obareki called on the public to report cases of sexual abuse and domestic and gender-based violence, as well as urged victims to speak out immediately.  
  
She said, “While we acknowledge the progress made, we recognise that there is still much work to be done.  
  
“We remain committed to ensuring justice for survivors, holding perpetrators accountable and creating a safer environment for all. Let us break the culture of silence together. Let us stand united against GBV.”  
  
Over 1,410 GBV cases  
  
Responding to questions raised at the press conference, the Secretary of the State GBV Management Committee, Emem Etteh, clarified that the age of criminal liability in Nigeria is set at seven years, and any child accused of GBV crimes who falls within this age range will be placed in a rehabilitation facility.  
  
She said the committee has handled over 1,410 GBV cases, primarily involving intimate partner abuse.  
  
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She said they engaged with traditional rural councils, stakeholders, and communities, including markets and schools, to conduct sensitisation campaigns targeted at breaking the silence surrounding GBV, reducing stigma, and encouraging individuals to speak out.  
  
She also said bylaws have been adopted to address the increasing cases of GBV in rural areas, where customary punishment is often favoured.  
  
Among those present at the press conference were Helen Umana, the Chairperson of the International Federation of Women Lawyers; Nsikak Okon, the president of the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists; and Uduak Usanga, the president of the Medical Women Association of Nigeria, along with other members of the State GBV Management Committee.