Imo stakeholders protest rising rape, child abuse, demand regulatory agency

Date: 2024-11-10

Source: https://guardian.ng/news/imo-stakeholders-protest-rising-rape-child-abuse-demand-regulatory-agency/

Imo State Committee on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (ISCEVAWG) has expressed concern over the prevalent cases of human rights violations and sexual harassment, such as rape, child abuse, wife bartering, and other forms of gender-based violence in the state.  
  
The committee urged Governor Hope Uzodimma to intervene in what it described as “an ugly trend in the state” by urgently establishing a regulatory agency to help curb the menace.  
  
The committee, which made the call at its one-day check-in meeting held in Owerri on Sunday, disclosed that its objectives, among others, were to strengthen existing relationships, partnerships, and collaborations among key stakeholders, both state and non-state actors, toward addressing all forms of violence against women and girls in the state.  
  
The committee insisted that the agency, once established, would help protect vulnerable people, including women and girls, as well as ensure justice for victims/survivors of all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in the state.  
  
They affirmed that the prevalent cases of gender-based violence in the state were primarily due to the delay in establishing the regulatory agency, adding that the agency would also help in the enforcement and implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law (VAPP).  
  
Speaking at the meeting, Ms Blessing Duru, Programme Director of Alliances for Africa (AfA), said, “Until the government steps in urgently by establishing this agency, the effects of gender-based violence will continue to wreak havoc on the emotional, psychological, social, and physical life of Imo people.”  
  
Duru also stressed the need for a coordinated approach among the service providers in the state to enable the achievement of effective results toward ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) and other related issues in the state.  
  
Also, Mr Ernest Ogbu, Imo State Commander of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), appealed for sustained partnership and support, especially from the state government.  
  
Ogbu and other committee members, during deliberations, identified lack of adequate funding, delays in legal processes in court, frustration from the police, non-availability of data, wrongful charging of cases, improper filing of matters in court, and security challenges as factors hampering the fight against GBVs in the state.  
  
The committee, funded by AfA, comprises heads of Civil Society Organizations, the National Human Rights Commission, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the International Federation of Women Lawyers Association (FIDA), the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), and media practitioners.  
  
Members of the committee also included traditional rulers, representatives from the police, the PWDs community, the Imo State Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women Affairs, and the Ministry of Health, among other key state actors.