Lagos govt pledges to address sexual, gender-based violence among PWDs

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• Advocates lament Nigerian girls still suffering GBV, forced marriages  
  
• UNICEF says sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over 79m cases of sexual assault  
  
Lagos State Government has pledged to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities concerning sexual and gender-based violence. Executive Secretary of Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (LDSVA), Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, stated this, yesterday, during a one-day engagement with Persons with Disabilities on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Lagos, organised by LDSVA and Centre for Women’s Health and Information (CEWHIN).  
  
She promised that the engagement would not be one off, welcoming ideas, recommendations and suggestions from participants on how to enhance prevention and remedial interventions, especially as it pertains to persons with deadlines.  
  
On her part, the Executive Director, CEWHIN, Atinuke Odukoya, said that it is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to create a world where everyone, regardless of their abilities, is safe and free from all forms of gender-based violence.  
  
RELATEDLY, advocates have lamented that years after Nigeria started marking the International Day of the Girl-Child, young girls in the country are still suffering a myriad of challenges and rank poorly on international development indices.  
  
Executive Director of the non-profit Sustainable Gender Action Initiative (SGAI), Dr Mufuliat Fijabi, said that this year’s theme of “Girl’s Vision for the Future” is very apt, adding that the future of young girls in Nigeria is riddled with uncertainty, hunger, illiteracy and sexual violence.  
  
Fijabi said that this year’s International Day of the Girl-Child should serve as a strong call and demand for action to protect and empower girls in Nigeria and all over the world by ensuring that their vision for the future is not disrupted.  
  
MEANWHILE, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has said that over 79 million girls and women and over one in five persons across sub-Saharan Africa have experienced sexual assault before turning age 18.  
  
The UN agency disclosed this in its latest estimates, yesterday, noting that an alarming 370 million girls and women have faced sexual violence, with the region bearing the highest number of victims.  
  
UNICEF Executive Director, Catherine Russell, said: “Sexual violence against children is a stain on our moral conscience. It inflicts deep and lasting trauma, often by someone the child knows and trusts, in places where they should feel safe.  
  
“Children in fragile settings are especially vulnerable to sexual violence. We are witnessing horrific sexual violence in conflict zones, where rape and gender-based violence are often used as weapons of war.”