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As the Federal Government aims to curb all kinds of criminal activities that have bogged down Nigeria’s development and also projects her before the comity of nations as endemically insecure, rape is one crime that should get its serious attention.  
  
The rising incidence of rape in the country, especially minors, has reached an alarming rate. It is such that day after day, reports of sexual assault of the Nigerian child, both male, and female, are awash in both the traditional and new media.  
  
Although findings show that many cases of rape go unreported in the country, available reports indicate that this heinous crime is now common in worship places, schools and even homes as some ‘anointed’ men of God, teachers, caregivers, and even parents/guardians have been accused of defiling people they should ordinarily protect. For instance, in a major onslaught against rapists, operatives of the Lagos State Police Command recently announced the arrest of two men who allegedly raped their 19-year and 15-year-old daughters, alongside a pastor who impregnated a 15-year-old girl.  
  
  
  
The spokesman of the Command, Bala Elkana, had told journalists that one of the victims whose name he did not disclose, alleged that her step-father, one Akin Olatilu, had been sexually abusing her since when she was 14 years old. “She alleged further that she reported the matter to her mother but her mother did not take any action, adding that the abuse continued until she turned 18, with the suspect still having sexual intercourse with her in March 2019.  
  
“She said when she turned down his request in June, he lied against her to her mother and she was beaten up by her mother, which caused her to speak out,” he said.  
  
Elkana also said that another 68-year-old man, one Yisah Showunmi, residing in Imota area of Lagos, was arrested for allegedly raping his 15-year-old daughter. According to him, the victim, whom he did not also disclose her identity, had reported a case of defilement at Imota Police Station against her father on June 27 about 2:00 p.m. He said the victim had told the police that the last incident occurred on June 23.  
  
He also disclosed that the police arrested one Pastor Pope Paul for allegedly raping and impregnating a 15-year-old girl. The mother of the victim reportedly filed a case against the pastor on July 2 at Igando Police Station leading to the arrest of the pastor.  
  
Statistics released by Databod Nigeria on July 2018 showed that in 2017, a total of 2278 cases of rape were recorded in the country.  
  
  
  
Lagos State alone accounted for over 19.35 percent of rape in Nigeria with 441 reported cases. Kano State recorded 237 cases, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja recorded 132, Abia State recorded 98 cases while Borno State recorded 97 cases.  
  
According to the firm, these five states alone accounted for almost half of the total rape cases in the country in 2017. The states with the least rape cases recorded were Kogi with 11 cases, Edo with 10 cases, Rivers with five cases, Katsina and Osun with two cases each. It, however, concluded that rape incidents have been consistently on the rise in Nigeria.  
  
The claim is corroborated by the Mirabel Sexual Assault Referral Centre, which announced in March 2017 that no fewer than 2,252 rapes cases were reported at the center between July 2014 and February 2017 in Lagos, a period of two years and seven months. In Kaduna State, the center recorded 95 cases of sexual assaults from January to July 2018, of which 16 victims were males.  
  
A victim of rape, who narrated her ordeal to The Guardian on the condition of anonymity, said her brother-in-law raped her when she was 16 years old. “I was raped by my elder sister’s husband when I was 16. I lived with the family for three years before he pounced on me on a day my sister was not around. Afterward, he started pleading with me that it was the devil’s work. I told my mother and she asked me to leave that place and return home immediately. He then came to my mother to ask for forgiveness. It was a horrible experience that I have tried so much to forget but it keeps coming back to me. Sometimes I have nightmares. I am married but I have never told my husband. My elder sister isn’t even aware,” she said.  
  
  
  
Another victim, who also shared her story in confidence, said she was abused when she was 15 years old by her cousin but he didn’t succeed in raping her. “My mom brought him to live with us. In the night, while they were all sleeping in the same room, he woke up and started to remove my pant while fondling my body. When I woke up, he had already ejaculated on my laps. I reported the incident to my dad who didn’t hesitate to send him back to his parents.  
  
“That incident made me so conscious and cautious of my environment even while I am asleep. I am over 30 years now and married, but that incident still plays in my sub-conscious. There was a day I hit my husband so hard when he touched me while I am sleeping, thinking it was someone who wanted to rape me. It almost led to problems for me in my marriage, but I am somehow trying to overcome that fear. I am scared to lose my guard even in my sleep because I am sure there are still people like my cousin roaming the streets,” she stated.  
  
A male victim also told The Guardian that his sister’s friend abused him sexually when he was five years old and continued until he turned 11. He said she stopped the act after she got married and moved to another location.  
  
Thus, sexual assault comes in many shapes and forms. However, its pervasiveness of late has been generating concerns because of the very stern provisions of Nigerian laws against the crime.  
  
Under the Criminal Code, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPPA) of 2015, and Child Right Act, rapists are liable to life imprisonment, attempted rape gets up to 14 years imprisonment and gang rape, a minimum of 20 years imprisonment. VAPPA also states that a 12-year-old found guilty of rape can be sentenced to 14 years imprisonment.  
  
The Penal code sentences rape perpetrators to up to 14 years and seven years for gross indecency. So, why is the crime spreading like wildfire across the country? How can it be curbed? Some stakeholders analysed the issue in the reports below.  
  
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