What Happens When A Child Is Raped?

Date: 2021-03-28

Source: https://guardian.ng/life/what-happens-when-a-child-is-raped/

It’s been six months since Bolu\* was raped by a neighbour, she still has problems sleeping and limits her interactions with neighbours for fear of someone referencing her rape in a hurtful manner. Bolu is just 12 years old and is not equipped to manage this kind of stress.  
  
[ad]  
  
The age of consent in Nigeria is 18 years. But this doesn’t deter sex offenders from preying on young children.  
  
Why do people rape children?  
  
Experts still can’t point to one reason people rape children. There is also no pattern to it, sex offenders from different backgrounds and socio-economic groups.  
  
Here are a few reasons child rape still happens.  
  
1. They can repeatedly do it and never get caught because people rarely believe in children and would rather justify the actions of the molester.  
  
2. Shame is also another reason paedophilia continues to happen. The victims and their families are usually too ashamed to speak out, this shame that the paedophile should get is instead directed at the victims and their families, this emboldens other child rapists.  
  
3. Anger is also a reason, there’s a lot of hidden violence in our families and society, experts say. Some people experience violence and sexual abuse at home, in the community, and become callous to other people’s rights or feelings. People who were molested as children may grow up to become abusers themselves.  
  
4. Some experts also mentioned “emotional contagion” Recent research has revealed the mechanisms behind human communication and interaction: how we can pass on emotional cues to others, unconsciously. And how people learn vices quickly.  
  
What happens when a child is raped?  
  
On September 15th 2020, Bolu who shares a 1 room with her 70 years old single-parent father was at home because her father couldn’t afford her school fees.  
  
A report by LASEEDS shows that the official and estimated out-of-school children in Lagos are 1million.  
  
Christine Eziamaka, Deputy Chief Executive of Precious Gems Africa said: “There is no clear cut approach to education for the poor.  
  
This accounts for the increased risk of vulnerable children to rape. Poor children either drop out of school or travel long distances to go to school, this exposes them as well to sexual predators.”  
  
[ad]  
  
Precious Gems Africa is an NGO helping Bolu and other molested girls. “We deal with child molestation cases daily and see no end to this evil unless we all get involved and help victims,” Ms Eziamaka said.  
  
On that day Bolu’s neighbour, a 50-year-old man, assaults her. He sent her on an errand and when she returned, pulled her into his room and violently rape her.  
  
A neighbour forced the door open and told Bolu to keep the incident a secret. Another neighbour later took her to the police station when she observed the bloodstains on her clothes. This was not before members of the community tried to dissuade her, ‘if police arrests this man who will feed his family?’ some asked. Others thought inviting the police would expose ‘Bolu’s secret’.  
  
“People stop me on the way to ask me what I intend to gain by locking up a family man,” laments Bolu’s father.  
  
“The man’s wife does not talk to me anymore, and the children also say I am the one that threw their father in jail, other children make fun of me,” said Bolu. The neighbour who reported the incident is also being shamed for ‘not minding her business’.  
  
  
  
Numbers Don’t Lie  
  
A survey conducted by the Child Protection Hub shows that only 27 per cent of all respondents who admitted to having witnessed child abuse confirmed to have reported the case to the police.  
  
Some note that out of 283 cases of child defilement reported in Lagos in 2011, only 10 were prosecuted and convicted and studies suggest that “sometimes as much as 84 per cent of the female population has experienced sexual assault or defilement in childhood”  
  
Between 1973 to 2019 there have been less than 70 convicted rapists.  
  
What Can be Done About Child-Rape in Nigeria  
  
Christine Eziamaka says, ‘ Justice has to be swift, not only harsh. If justice is harsh but takes many years to happen, then it won’t deter paedophiles.’  
  
She also added that reviewing the school curriculum to one that includes teaching more functional things to children: from good touch-bad touch to the ability to say “no”. And our communities have to stop the culture of shaming victims and protecting child molesters.  
  
Conclusion  
  
Despite years of practice and professional training of detachment, experts still feel sadness and helplessness when cases drag for years with no hope of convictions.  
  
Child rape involves profound violence. It is essentially brutal, very brutal, so offenders should be punished and victims should secure the support of their communities.  
  
\*Name has been changed to protect the child’s identity  
  
[ad unit=2]