‘Rape now epidemic within a pandemic’

Date: 2020-06-21

Source: https://thenationonlineng.net/rape-now-epidemic-within-a-pandemic-2/

‘Rape now epidemic within a pandemic’  
  
By Gboyega Alaka  
  
Rape in Nigeria is now an epidemic within a pandemic. This was the conclusion of host and panelists at a recent webinar held to outline the scourge of sexual violence currently pervading the country.  
  
Aptly titled, ‘An Epidemic within a Pandemic. Responding to sexual violence in Nigeria, What needs be done?’ the panelist were Itoro Eze-Anaba, lawyer and founder Mirabel Centre, Nigeria’s first sexual referral centre, James Obor, human rights lawyer and Principal Partner, Basic Rights Council based in Calabar and Anthonia Ojenagbor, a child sexual abuse survivor, sexual violence prevention advocate and Executive Director, Tonia Bruised But Not Broken.  
  
Noting that what looks like an upsurge was not new to the women and girls rights activist community, Effah-Chukwuma said, “While people were sad at the rape of the Benin student and the other in Ibadan, we at Project Alert were not sad but angry because it has always been there, which was why we came up with a report in 2015, in which we analysed 156 cases that we had seen over a one year period.”  
  
She added that this trend was also corroborated by the Mirabel Centre, when in the same 2015, it came out with a report, in which it stated that it had seen 1110 cases over its first two years of operation.  
  
When both reports were analysed, Effah-Chukwuma said two patterns were established: that most victims were children from age 0-17 and that perpetrators were not strangers but people known, loved and trusted by the victims.  
  
Eze-Anaba spoke about the issues of care and support offered by the Mirabel Centre, stressing that these are critical for survival of victims.  
  
She said the centre is a one-stop centre where survivors receive professional help and support and outline critical requirements for such a facility.  
  
She condemned a situation where the victim is always blamed, arguing that the perpetrator is always to blame. James Ibor spoke on enactment and enforcement of laws to protect survivors of sexual assault and punishing perpetrators, with specific reference to violence against and the child rights law.  
  
He singled out the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015 ( VAPPA) as one law that has taken the fight against sexual violence a step further by taking the scope of rape beyond basic penetration of the vagina by a penis.