Rising incidence of rape

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SIR: Uncontrolled rape incidences all over Nigeria have become a daily occurrence and a fundamental issue affecting women and girl child development in the country. Today, of all women’s fears, that of being raped is the darkest. Though a global phenomenon, appalling side to our experience of its menace here have to do with impunity of the perpetrators, lackluster response of justice administrators and absence of institutional supportive system to help the victims.  
  
The big question, of course, is why do men rape? Most experts believe the primary cause of rape is an aggressive desire to dominate the victim rather than an attempt to achieve sexual fulfillment. They consider rape an act of violence rather than principally a sexual encounter. This is the opinion of experts. But one is of the opinion that beside the desire to dominate, rape, can also be situated in the state of minds of perpetrators.  
  
The brazenly manner rape is often committed indicated that perpetrators still have a stone-age view of women as chattels who are to be used without independent thoughts. It also portrays some as pure lunatics. Or what do we think of such reported cases of one Mr. Temitope Alo who raped eight kids, whose ages range from eight to 15 years, at Koloba area of Ayobo in Lagos? The pedophile lured the children to his apartment where he defiled and threatened to kill them if they reported the matter. Nothing is more horrible than the terror, the suffering, and the revulsion of the poor girls, ignorant of facts of life, who find themselves raped by a brute.  
  
Most Nigerians would not have forgotten an incident that occurred last year when a woman, repeatedly asked her attackers to kill her as they take turns to rape her at a university dormitory at Abia state University in Abia State. Cases of security men especially police men‘re-raping’ rape victims have not lost in our memory either. Most often Police Officers ask rape victims irrational and discouraging questions.  
  
The voice against rape is criminally silent, the law against rape is ineffective, the institutions to render support is sick and culpable of the act and our leaders are helpless. We tend to reduce the problem to issue of indecent dressing as if the kids that”beasts” violated also attract them with indecent dress. Though one is against indecent dressing, but it could not be a justification for raping. Come to think of; is indecent dressing a ‘rapable’ offence?  
  
Dramatic changes have to take place in public attitudes toward rape if we are ready to stem the tide. Steps toward this direction are the public enlightenment and education campaign as well as institutional support being offered by Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation and Ministry of Justice through Office of Public Defenders (OPD) in Lagos State. Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (WAPA), recently trained health workers drawn from primary and secondary health facilities in the state on Women’s Rights, Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the management of GBV survivors.  
  
Documentation by health facilities can be useful as evidence to get a no contest order in criminal proceedings against perpetrators.  
  
Speedy dispensation of justice is also vital to the drastic reduction in cases of rape. It is important to commend the activities of some Non-Government Organisations, NGOs, in addressing gender violence such as rape. Project Alert, Constitutional Right Project (CRP) BAOBAB for women’s Human Rights and other similar groups are doing much in creating awareness and practically getting involved in ensuring justice for women where their rights are violated.  
  
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