Succour for rape victims

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In Nigeria like in some other parts of the world, rape and child abuses are on the rise. A recent survey by a NOI Polls, Nigeria revealed that three in 10 Nigerians admitted knowing a rape victim. Many of victims are left with bruises and scars that they have to live with for life.  
  
As part of global efforts give the victims succor and help them come out of the traumatic situation, MediaCon, a Non Governmental Organisation with interest on women and children in Nigeria, has an initiative called the Crisis Respond Programme through which it provides emergency and crisis attention to rape victims and other child abuse cases.  
  
Established since 2005, MediacCon is comprised of highly trained professionals who work tirelessly to ensure that victims and families are attended promptly and adequately.  
  
Founder of the NGO, Princess Olufemi Kayode outlined a number of services the organisation offers in a bid to care for these victims.  
  
First of such services is the Victim Advocate – through this, victims and families are linked up to access medical, legal and other psychosocial needs. “We provide support, care counseling for victims, families and friends and ensure victims / survivors get optimum care right from the moment of reporting and monitoring the case during litigation working in partnership with professionals in criminal justice system and other important stakeholders.  
  
‘We stand by the victims and family through the process while providing necessary information and going all the way with them from the moment of reporting the case. The Victim Advocates have worked with over 350 victims and families since 2005 supporting them all the way, explaining each step and providing comfort and reducing re-traumatization of victims and families/guardians,” Kayode explained.  
  
The NGO also has a 24 hours and seven days a week confidential help lines where calls are made to report cases of child sexual abuse, rape and suspicion. “Confidential counseling is also provided on these lines and face-to-face. The lines work at national and international level. Referrals are also made available to calls of enquiries on prevention and other sexuality issues and SMS are attended to and receive response,” she added.  
  
With over 200,000 individuals attended to since inception, the founder says, “total number of sexual violence cases reported last year was 1,898 making it the highest ever recorded in a year. Calls came from different states within Nigeria and abroad. Reports of sexual violence were higher than other forms over 75 per cent. Helplines received request for prevention information. Others calls include health, riot, armed robbery, commendation, partnership request, inquiry if line is working, threat to life, widow victimization, abandonment, rent, financial support, conflict, assault and child custody related matters.”  
  
Another service provided by the NGO is the Trauma Management Counseling to help deal with the experience and avoid further stress and trauma to victims. According to Kayode, so far over 250 survivors of rape have accessed this service through during one-on-one contact, phone and social media like Facebook, online (skype, whats app) and email.  
  
The NGO also provides Post Emergency Prophylaxis (PEP) within the first 72 hours of rape to prevent HIV, Access to adequate and timely medical services such as Emergency Contraceptives (EC) to prevent unwanted pregnancy within 72 hrs, other Vaccination against Hepatitis B, and treatment for other Sexually Transmitted Infections.  
  
Victims are also supported in the area of litigation. “Referral for legal assistance – Since matter is criminal, we petition the Lagos State Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) on behalf of victims to prosecute matters. Currently, we are working on 22 matters with this department. We have also recorded three convictions. Overall over 50 cases,” the founder said.  
  
Psychosocial support for victims and their families include relocation of family and victim, accessing Emergency Protection Order for State Protective Custody, support for education – tuition fees and provision of school uniforms etc. The organisation also takes care of the feeding, clothing, skill acquisition, transportation to court and payment of medical bills of victims.  
  
A major aspect of the organisations’ quest to provide assistance, particularly to cases of child abuses is the Forensic interviewing, which is the first step in most child protective services (CPS) investigations. “This was newly introduced in 2011 at a pilot scale and working with the Police we were able to attend to about 20 victims and accused perpetrators. The comprehensive facility is to be concluded by August and another phase of the piloting will kick off and we are hopeful that this will assist traditional investigation of these cases,” Kayode stated.  
  
SUCCOUR FOR RAPE VICTIMS  
  
By Justice Ilevbare  
  
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