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Rape  
  
Why most suspects escape justice  
  
Hardly does a day pass without the rape or sexual assault of an adult, abuse of a minor or incest involving a “father” and “daughter” being recorded. More worrisome is that only a fraction of the perpetrators are jailed. Weaknesses in the judicial system, poor prosecution capacity and social challenges encourage rather than deter rape, reports JOSEPH JIBUEZE.  
  
SEVEN-YEAR-OLD Queen (not her real name) is seeking justice. She was allegedly sexually abused and assaulted by three ‘friends’, two of them aged 19, one aged 40. Queen lives with her aunt and husband in an estate in Alimosho area of Lagos. Her innocence was ripped from her by the men who are now facing trial, but will she get justice? Her family is alleging a plot to frustrate the case.  
  
Queen’s aunt, Mrs Ngozi Ugwu, said in January this year, she noticed blood stains on her niece’s pants. Curious, she asked Queen if she was injured. She was shocked when Queen alleged that three of their neighbours had been defiling her. In a chilling revelation, Queen narrated how one of the 19-year-olds first sexually assaulted her. When the second 19-year-old heard about Queen from his friend, he went after her. After abusing Queen, he allegedly told the 40-year-old about what they had been ‘enjoying.’  
  
While Ugwu was away on a business trip, the three would pay frequent visits to her home whenever they discovered that her husband had gone to work. They would allegedly threaten the infant with a knife, and after having sex with her, would warn her never to tell anyone. Queen said they would “put their wee-wee in her bum-bum”. The 40-year-old would buy her fruit juice and sausage roll and beg her not to talk.  
  
In another shocking sexual assault case, a mother of two, Mrs Mercy Osaghae, is in court over the alleged abuse of her two-year-old child by a married neighbour. On January 13, her daughter took ill. It was a very hot afternoon. As there was no one at home, she pleaded with the neighbour to look after the child while she went to buy the medication. It was not the first time she would leave her child with the man, even though his wife was away.  
  
Mrs Osaghee said it took her less than 10 minutes to fetch the drugs and return. On getting home, she knocked on her neighbour’s door. It was locked. She knocked again. Her neighbour answered from inside his apartment and said he was having his bath. She waited impatiently for about 10 minutes when the neighbour opened the door.  
  
The woman had the shock of her life when she took her child to her apartment and administered the drugs on her. The child vomited soon after. Thinking it was the high fever, she took her to the bathroom to douse her body with cold water. “I pulled off her clothes. As I pulled off her underpants, I saw what looked like sperm. I could not believe it. I began to wonder that may be I had overstressed myself. When it finally dawned on me, I screamed so loudly that another neighbour upstairs heard and came downstairs.  
  
“I told the neighbour to help me look at my baby. She asked: ‘How come?’ I told her what I suspected. The man I left my child with came in to my apartment and started asking angrily: ‘Are you people saying I raped the baby?’ Some of my other neighbours got angry and started to beat him.”  
  
Mrs Osaghae said when the man’s wife returned, she knelt, pleading with her to settle matter amicably. Soon, she realised that other neighbours, speaking in Yoruba, were asking the man’s wife to raise money to “settle” her.  
  
“I ordered everybody out of my apartment,” said Mrs Osaghae, after which she took the child to a private hospital. After conducting tests, the surprised doctor asked: “Who did this?” He then directed Mrs Osaghae to the General Hospital, where they can get a medical report acceptable in court.  
  
Bid to frustrate trial  
  
Mrs Ugwu and Mrs Osaghae have alleged a plot to frustrate the suspects’ trial. Mrs Ugwu reported Queen’s abuse to the police, and the three suspects were arrested. They were arraigned at an Ikeja Magistrates’ Court. The police prosecutor was said to have applied that Queen be taken to the Girls Correctional Centre at Idi-Araba.  
  
“I was later informed that on their way to the centre, the prosecutor threatened the girl to change her story or be locked up in a room for five days without seeing her family,” Mrs Ugwu claimed.  
  
Fearing that the police might be conniving with the suspects to frustrate the case, she applied to the Federal High Court in Lagos, seeking N100 million each from the defendants. Among others, she is seeking an order directing the Commissioner of Police to stop the prosecutor and the Area Crime Officer from taking further part in the investigation and prosecution of the accused persons. Her reason? The police want to frustrate the case. The matter has been adjourned till February 12 next year.  
  
Mrs Osaghae is facing a similar frustration. She said when she returned from the General Hospital, where she was given a medical report which confirmed that her child was sexually abused, she found relatives of the suspect waiting for her at home.  
  
“The mother, brother and a lot of them came to beg that we should not take the matter to the police station. The mother said: ‘Are you not friends? What are friends for? Let’s settle this case like family. It seems you are proving stubborn.’  
  
“I refused to listen to her. The woman held on to my clothes and said that if I refuse to back down, she would show me that she is a Yoruba woman from Ijebu and she would deal with me. I told her she is not God and cannot do anything to me. I held on to the man that violated my baby and insisted on going to the police station,” Mrs Osaghae said.  
  
She soon discovered that the police were unwilling to thoroughly investigate the matter. Suspecting a bid to cover up the case, Mrs Osaghae sought the help of a human rights group, the Access to Justice (AJ). The group has stepped in and has sought a diligent prosecution of the accused person, who pleaded not guilty at his arraignment at the Family Court in Ikeja.  
  
AJ’s Director of Programmes, Leonard Dibia, said: “Given the overt and covert efforts to sabotage the case and threats to the life of the family members by unknown persons, we have written to the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Lagos State to take over the prosecution of the alleged crime as provided for under section 211(1) (b) of the 1999 Constitution and its equivalent under the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Lagos State 2011 which gives him enabling powers thereof.  
  
“We expect that given the escalation of crimes of this nature in our society and the traumatising effect they have on society’s most vulnerable, the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in Lagos State would take over the case. This is to ensure that justice can be served in this matter and serve as a lesson to others that no person who takes pleasure in exploiting young children will be shielded from punishment.” The case has been adjourned till February 17 next year.  
  
Stories of rape and sexual abuse of minors are common, but how often are the perpetrators brought to book? Recently in Ondo State, men of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) arrested a 71-year-old man who allegedly sexually abused a seven-year old girl.  
  
The victim, a primary school pupil, said she was returning from school when the man sent someone to call her. She ignored them but she was dragged into the old man’s room, mouth covered, and violated. The girl was reported to have said that the man “cleaned her up as she bled”. Residents confirmed to investigators that the alleged perpetrator was a “serial rapist.”  
  
Child advocates and prosecutors admit that conviction rates remain low compared to the rising cases of rape and sexual abuses of children in Nigeria. They attribute this to weaknesses in the judicial system and the low capacity of the police to investigate and prosecute such cases.  
  
They also point to the society’s attitude towards rape and victims, and the fact that the system can be so frustrating that many victims and their families never show up to testify during trial, even as many victims do not report to the police. The consequence is that despite the existing laws, there appears to be no deterrent against rape, which experts believe is why the crime is on the rise: offenders are not punished.  
  
In effect, a weak judicial system, poor capacity to prosecute and investigate rape cases add to the pain of victims and their families, who at the end are subjected to even more ridicule. It is like being raped all over again.  
  
Rape, a global crime that leaves deep scars  
  
The Rome Statute, which defines the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, recognises rape, sexual slavery “or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity” as crime against humanity if the action is part of a widespread or systematic practice.  
  
Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse, which is initiated by one or more persons against another person without that person’s consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is incapable of valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, or below the legal age of consent.  
  
Statistics on rape and sexual assault are commonly available in advanced countries but not so common in Nigeria. A United Nations statistical report compiled from government sources showed that more than 250,000 cases of rape or attempted rape were recorded by police annually. The reported data covered 65 countries.  
  
Of a sample of 295 female students from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki in Southeast Nigeria, 36.7 per cent had experienced sexual harassment/victimisation at least once on campus. Of this, 32.4 per cent had been raped.  
  
This year, in a poll of 585 randomly selected adults from six geopolitical zones by NOI Polls, 34 per cent indicated ‘indecent dressing’ in their answer to the question: ‘What do you think is the most prevalent cause of rape in the society?’ Twenty-nine per cent said they personally knew a victim of rape.  
  
The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the principal factors that lead to the perpetration of sexual violence, including rape, are: beliefs in family honour and sexual purity; ideologies of male sexual entitlement and weak legal sanctions for sexual violence.  
  
Experts say there is no single scientific theory that conclusively explains the motivation for rape. Several factors have been adduced such as anger, a desire for power, sadism, sexual gratification, and mental depravity.  
  
Why conviction rate remains low in Nigeria  
  
Statistics of rape convicts are hard to come by in Nigeria, but child right advocates and prosecutors say several factors are responsible for the low rate of conviction. One is victim blaming, holding the victim of a crime to be in whole or in part responsible for the crime. In the context of adult rape, the victim’s behaviour, such as possible flirting, or wearing sexually provocative clothing, is believed to have encouraged rape. In extreme cases, victims are said to have “asked for it”, simply by not behaving demurely. This mindset can be a drawback in the prosecution of rape suspects.  
  
Second, sexual violence, and rape in particular, is considered the most under-reported violent crime. Thus, the number of reported rape cases is lower than both incidence and prevalence rates. Sometimes, the difficulties victims are subjected to tend to discourage others from reporting. Rape is rarely reported due to the extreme social stigma cast on women who have been raped, or the fear of being subjected to public opprobrium.  
  
The attitude of the police often discourages victims from reporting rape. Advocates said a large percentage of police officers agreed with the assertion that “some women deserve rape”, while others hold the view that “the physical appearance and behaviours of women tempt men to rape.” It is not unusual for rape victims to hear a police officer ask: “Wetin you find go there? (What took you to where you were raped?).  
  
A report claimed that only one in 25 raped women make a report to the police. Gender rights activist, Shireen Motara, said women often do not report rape because of the reaction they get. Motara, who helps women who are victims of violence, said Africa’s violent culture and rampant misogyny often counteract the continent’s progressive laws.  
  
It has been noted that the police hardly apply forensic knowledge in prosecution of rape cases. Biological evidence such as semen, blood, vaginal secretions, saliva, and vaginal epithelial cells (typically collected by a rape kit) are used in other jurisdictions in rape and sexual abuse trials.  
  
Managing Partner at the Partnership for Justice, Mrs Itoro Eze-Anaba, whose organisation fights the cause of rape victims, blamed police inefficiency as the primary reason for low rate of conviction of perpetrators. She said the inefficiency begins at the police station, where a traumatised victim spends a whole day trying to make a report. When her statement is eventually taken, the perpetrator may be arrested, and then brought face to face with the victim. This, she said, discourages other victims from coming forward to make a report.  
  
Mrs Eze-Anaba also identified faulty or inclusive medical reports, such as where some doctors make categorical statements like ‘there was no rape’ as factors responsible for low conviction rate. The police rely on such medical reports and claim their hands are tied if there is no evidence of rape, especially if a victim has had a bath.  
  
The activist cited an instance of an 18-month old baby that was violated by a man the mother is living with. The mother went to the police to make a report, but ended up being treated as if she were the perpetrator.  
  
She was kept at the police station for hours when she ought to be at the hospital looking after her sick child. Her worst experience was that not even the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) believed her story. At the end, it took two days to convince the police that the abuse occurred and to get the incident included in the police report.  
  
“If a survivor goes through this, another survivor isn’t going to go back to the police in future. And where a victim fails to report, that is one case that has been lost. And you don’t even know if the perpetrator has violated more than 20 people. And so the perpetrator goes free because the police as a whole is not trained to handle cases of rape,” Eze-Anaba regretted.  
  
Another obstacle to effective prosecution of rapists is the police mentality that the medical report is a conclusive evidence of rape. Once a victim makes a report, she is asked to go to the hospital to get a medical report. Where the report is made three weeks or a month after the incident, the police feel that their hands are tied because the victim has had her bath and therefore cleared the evidence.  
  
A greater source of worry is that some medical examiners who issue the reports are not skilled in dealing with rape victims, or are not trained to look for signs of rape. Mrs Eze-Anaba believes prosecuting cases of rape does not depend on medical reports alone. “Generally it is believed that when someone is raped, the hymen is broken, but it’s not true. You can have intercourse with a man for years and your hymen is still intact. So, if a medical practitioner that is working with rape victims does not know that it’s not the broken hymen that determines rape, the persons will be looking for the broken hymen.  
  
“As long as it’s not broken, the person believes rape did not take place. So, there is a whole lot that needs to be done in order for prosecution of cases to be successful,” she said.  
  
An unhelpful legal system also frustrates prosecution of rape. Cases get thrown out for lack of evidence, mainly due to police inefficiency in investigation and documentation of evidence. The system is designed to believe there has to be physical injuries to prove rape.  
  
“The fact that there is no injury does not mean there is no rape. There is need for forensic medical training to show that you don’t need to have physical wounds or evidence to prove rape. Some believe if you’re being raped, you fight, you struggle, and there would be wounds on the perpetrator. It’s not true,” said Mrs Eze-Anaba.  
  
A victims’ advocate, Dr Princess Olufemi-Kayode, said the criminal justice system is very frustrating for rape victims seeking justice. As the Executive Director of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Media Concern Initiative for Women and Children (Mediacon), a crisis response and sexual violence resource centre, she has seen first hand how rape victims are denied justice.  
  
“We have been discouraged many times by the criminal justice system,” she said, adding that the slow pace of justice delivery is as bad as not getting justice at all. She recalled the case of an eight-year old girl molested by two neighbours, a teenager and an adult. The girl reported that the two had been penetrating her. The men were arrested, but the case has been in court for five years.  
  
Mrs Olufemi-Kayode gave another instance of a father of a rape victim who recently told the court that they were “withdrawing” from the case because “they’re tired.” The victim was four when she was raped. The case has gone four years in court. The family has spent scare resources prosecuting the case, but there is no indication that it will end any time soon.”  
  
She was involved in a case where a father was accused by his daughter of engaging in incest with her over time. The man was charged to court. During his arraignment, he pleaded guilty. “I did it, but it was the work of the devil,” the accused persons said in open court. Everyone in court expected life imprisonment for the man, but the magistrate sentenced him to a two-year jail term. “I think that is a very ridiculous judgment two years. We have had about two of such cases,” Mrs Olufemi-Kayode said.  
  
“When we began to ask why a magistrate would give two years for a man who had been abusing his child for several years, we were told that the magistrates’ courts have levels, which determines the punishment they can give. But if the law says punishment for rape is life imprisonment, why would a magistrate give a two-year jail term?  
  
“Why would the police take the case to the court that cannot give the maximum punishment? Why can’t we restructure the system so that the court that can give the full judgment? It’s a question I also have for them.”  
  
A lawyer and programme officer at the Project Alert, an NGO involved in prosecution of rape and sexual abuse cases, Oluwatobi Asekun, said conviction remains low because victims get frustrated by the system and back out. “Police is always giving excuses that the complainant is not willing to go on. Generally, cases take so long,” she said, adding that pressure from relatives can also lead to cases being dropped.  
  
Asekun gave an example. “There is a 22-year-old lady who was raped. The alleged rapist is also in his 20s. The guy’s relatives kept begging the survivor. They even offered her money. She refused. Eventually, the boy was arraigned, but the trial was stalled and with so much pressure on the lady, she withdrew from the case. She said she was tired, emotionally drained. She didn’t think she could go on.  
  
“Apart from the pressure, she reported that she paid for the taxi that conveyed the police officers to where they arrested the boy. She was spending money at every stage yet, feeling that the case was not moving forward.  
  
“The police are always slow at times in investigating such cases maybe because of lack of funds. The victim has to pay for certain things for the police to act. There is this case of two victims defiled by the owner of an orphanage in Ogun State. They had to pay the transportation fares of two officers from Zone 2, Onikan to Ota for the suspect’s arraignment. Even before the arraignment, the officers had to be given transport money to go and investigate. The police may want to work, but they may not have the resources,” Asekun said.  
  
According to her, there are instances where a victim who has no money to “settle” the police would be denied justice. “A victim who doesn’t have money to finance the investigation may not get justice, unless the victim meets a good officer who would ensure that the case goes to court,” she said.  
  
Asekun identified gaps in the laws as a problem. Citing sections 218, 221, 223, and 224 of the Criminal Code as instances, she said the law provides that to prove rape, there has to be corroboration, which may be impossible in the Nigerian context, except in an armed robbery case where there are other witnesses. A section of the law, she said, specifies that prosecution must be commenced within two months of the rape. A shocked victim who does not report within the period stands being denied justice.  
  
A lawyer, Oge Agbo, said the fact that rape has to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt makes proving someone guilty even more difficult. “Rape is a criminal matter and must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. But it is the hardest thing to prove beyond a reasonable doubt. The law looks at whether penetration was with the female’s consent and that is hard to prove.  
  
“There may be no bruises or scars but the truth remains that she was raped. Whenever there is an iota of doubt in a criminal matter, the doubt is settled on behalf of the defendant/suspect. So, even if a girl was raped, it is a question of the ability to prove it. The court does not deal with speculation. He who asserts must prove. And most times without scars or bruises, it’s difficult to show coercion.”  
  
Ignorance of the law is also a problem. The Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Lagos State (ACJL) (2011) was, among others, designed to regulate the hauling of crime suspects into court before investigation. But a DFID-funded study as part of the Justice for All (J4A) programme by AJ said the law has failed due to the pervasive ignorance of its relevant provisions by security agencies, especially the police.  
  
The study, presented in Lagos, showed that only 29 per cent of police officers in Lagos are familiar with the law or have received any formal training on its provisions.  
  
Seeking solutions  
  
Worried by the shabby treatment rape victims receive at police stations, with its attendant negative impact on prosecution, Mrs Eze-Anaba set up The Mirabel Centre, located at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH). The centre offers medical examination for rape or sexual assault survivors, counseling, help in reporting incidents to police, information on legal system and referral to other agencies for help not provided by Mirabel. All services, provided in a compassionate and caring manner, are free.  
  
It took Mrs Eze-Anaba 10 years to get the centre set up. It was she who drafted the Domestic Violence Bill and led the campaign for its passage into law by the National Assembly and 12 states in Nigeria, including Lagos. In the process of the campaign, she met a girl who was raped consistently over time by her father.  
  
The girl had reported to her pastor, but he did not believe her. The pastor told her it could not have happened. It occurred to Mrs Eze-Anaba that one of the vital ingredients for a survivor of rape or sexual assault to heal is a safe place where she can tell her story and be believed. A survivor, she said, needed a place where she had confidence in, where there was privacy and where her story would be kept confidential to avoid stigmatisation. It was what police stations across Nigeria lacked.  
  
Since the centre’s opening on July 1 this year, no fewer than 140 survivors from Lagos Mainland had come forward to report being raped between July and November.  
  
Mrs Eze-Anaba is happy at the positive response the centre is getting, but sad that rape is so prevalent in Nigeria’s commercial centre. “I’m sad that 140 people have been raped between July and November in Lagos. This 140 is just a tip of the iceberg. There’s only one such centre in Lagos State, which is the Mirabel Centre at LASUTH.  
  
“So, you can imagine what is happening in Ikorodu, what is happening in Badagry, Lekki area or Island or Alagbado, or other areas where people may not have easy access to the Mirabel Centre. Ideally, for Lagos State we should have at least three of such centres. We should have one at the Island and one at Ikorodu because these areas are far from Ikeja.  
  
“Each state should have a Mirabel Centre because there is nowhere you don’t have cases of rape. We need people who have been trained to handle these cases. If you do a survey, you will see that a lot of secondary school girls are undergoing horrendous experiences in their homes. A lot of them are victims of incest and rape,” Mrs Eze-Anaba said.  
  
To improve prosecution of rape, the activist said more enlightenment is needed in schools on what victims should do when raped. According to her, majority of rape cases involve school-age girls of 11 to 15, and 0-11 year-olds. “We need to do a lot with the schools. There is also an increase in gang rape. Some victims report that they were raped by 3-7 people. We need to direct our effort towards areas like Oshodi, Ikeja, Ketu and Mile 12 where we have higher number of people reporting. There’s need for probably more policing, more community work. Ultimately, the community itself has a responsibility to stand up and say: ‘We do not want rapists in our community.’ They need to take action,” Mrs Eze-Anaba said.  
  
For Mrs Olufemi-Kayode, it is important to study the dynamics of crime and design responses that will help victims get justice. “We have a system where people are grieved and hurt, and a criminal trial process that grieves them even more,” she regretted.  
  
Beyond conviction, the prison system must be more reformatory to avoid a situation where a person gets convicted, is jailed, and comes out to molest someone else because there was no programme to re-orientate him.  
  
She further suggested a review of the laws. She wants the laws against rape enlarged to include sexual offences not covered by existing laws. “We need to sit down, for posterity sake, and review the process of law and maybe enlarge or expand the interpretation of sexual offences because it has gone beyond the dynamics of when those laws were made,” she said.  
  
Mrs Olufemi-Kayode believes more people should also specialise on child sexual abuse. She said: “A gynaecologist is not a forensic doctor. He has not been trained specially to know what to look for, particularly in a case of child sexual abuse, in the case a child who has been tampered with for a long time. It’s not only that hymen is not broken. So we need to look for experts. The world has gone beyond ‘I’m a gynaecologist’.”  
  
She also wants more emphasis on rape prevention. “Prevention is the best cure, but we don’t have any prevention programme at national or state level or in the educational sector. And in the society everybody blames the victim. The victim is blamed from the very first time they open their mouth to say ‘this happened to me.’ The system traumatises everybody.”  
  
The trial of rape suspects, she said, is sometimes delayed because of the very long time it takes the Directorate of Public Prosecution to issue a legal advice, at times coming long after an accused person had been arrested. Mrs Olufemi-Kayode thinks the DPP should work with the police in determining whether to prosecute. She suggested that victim advocates and social welfare workers must work together with the police to draw a framework that will help victims get justice.  
  
Asekun said the welfare of the police has to be improved so that they can deliver on their constitutional role without expecting victims of crime to fund investigations. There is need for more public awareness in terms of the law and where to get support when abused or raped, she said. According to her, outdated laws on rape need to be reviewed to make it easier to prosecute suspects. Even the process of reporting rape to the police, she said, has to be structured and simplified. She suggested a system where preliminary report on rape can be made in one place so that the victim does not have to relate her experience more than once.  
  
Further, the culture of silence caused by fear of stigmatisation has to be repudiated. “Part of the awareness should be that rape is not the victim’s fault. The practice of blaming the victim should stop,” Asekun said.  
  
A lawyer and columnist, Gabriel Amalu, believes the laws which make it impossible to convict rapists must be amended. “The common cliché is that law is an ass. While that may be right, it may, however, be more appropriate with respect to the provisions of the predominant laws on rape in Nigeria – the criminal and penal codes; and also the case laws, to say that, the law on rape is a horse.  
  
“Otherwise, if one is gender fair-minded, how can one appreciate the highly technical hurdles as have been held by some courts, as necessary requirements for the proof of rape, under our criminal justice system? Worse still, how can one explain or justify the ordeal and rape on human dignity, otherwise called legal trial, that, a prosecutrix (a rape victim) undergoes, under our adjectival legal system, to secure the conviction of a rapist?  
  
“These challenges, in my humble view, encourage the incidents of rape, and the time for action is now,” he said.  
  
Wanted: Application of forensic science  
  
“You can’t prosecute without forensic knowledge,” was Mrs Eze-Anaba’s summation. “The police need to learn how to carry out investigation at a crime scene. Do they know that the human body is also a crime scene the persons that have been violated and raped that the body is a crime scene? Do they have the skills and equipment to do that? No, they don’t.”  
  
According to her, even senior police officers would claim that is difficult to secure conviction where rape victims cleaned up before undergoing medical test. “No, it’s not, because it’s not just the medical examination that determines if there was rape. In the first instance, even the medical examination, to a large extent, determines whether there was consent or there was no consent.  
  
“There is forensic camera that can be used to record incidence of rape that took place a month after because you’ll still be able to get marks if there were marks. The police need to be trained on forensic medical examination. If we do not have trained forensic medical examiners, it’s going to be difficult to prosecute cases of rape,” Mrs Eze-Anaba said.  
  
In other jurisdictions, adults raped in their teens have been able to get justice even after decades have passed. Their abusers are made to face to the law, years after the act was done.  
  
“For the 30 doctors and nurses that we trained at the Mirabel Centre, they were shocked to learn that the hymen does not need to be broken when one is raped. When you have that mindset that all you’re looking for is a broken hymen, and you get there but the hymen is not broken, and you write that the person was not raped, then you’re raping that person the second time because for someone to come out and say ‘I was raped’, there must be an element of truth. Give the person the benefit of doubt and do your job they way you ought to do it,” Eze-Anaba said.  
  
A way out, she said, is for the office of the Attorney-General of the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) to take over prosecution of rape, rather than the police. “Can we start considering having the Attorney-General’s office prosecute rape cases? That would help.”  
  
For Olufemi-Kayode, there is the need for a thorough look at the process of investigation and prosecution. “The laws are there. The Criminal Code says if a child is defiled, that persons is to go to jail for life, with caning.  
  
A senior police officer, who did not want to be named, said most of the problems attributed to the police, which account for rising cases of rape and low rate of convictions, were true, even as he said efforts were being made to re-orientate the rank and file.  
  
Police spokesman Frank Mba could not react to the issues raised by press time. When contacted, he replied via text and said: “Sir, whenever you are ready for the interview, call me. I am ready to speak to you on all the issues.” When he was subsequently called severally, he did not answer his calls. He also did not respond to a text message reminding him of his promise.