Agency to community leaders: stop shielding SGBV offenders

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Agency to community leaders: stop shielding SGBV offenders  
  
By Elizabeth Eze and Eunice Ainetor  
  
Community leaders have been admonished to stop covering up for cases of gender based violence and defilement that happened within their domain.  
  
Head, Case Management of Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSiVA), Mrs Tumininu Oni and Head Commmunity Engagement, Dare Adewusi gave the advice at a one-day training organised for community leaders in the state to educate them on their role in the matter.  
  
Mrs Oni told the community leaders to desist from such practices, stressing that domestic violence, rape, defilement are offences against the law and should be reported.  
  
She said community leaders are not empowered to decide those cases but should report them to the agency and law enforcement agencies for necessary action, insisting that such cases should not end with community leaders.  
  
She noted that victims of gender- based violence are not limited to women, adding that sexual assault and violence can also be committed against men and minors alike.  
  
“Gender-based violence is an issue that affects every person, male, female, young or old,.  
  
“It is a violence that targets individuals or group on the basis of their gender. It could be mentally, sexually, physically, psychologically, emotionally”, she said.  
  
“There is no reason or justification for domestic and sexual violence. Your education, mode of dressing, education, rich or poor, if we continue to give reasons for such, it will keep going on and on. So, all cases should be reported from anywhere”, she further stated.  
  
Read Also: Agencies partner on SGBV awareness month  
  
Mrs Oni, who took time to enlighten the community leaders on various types of sexual assault, also told them that ignorance is not an excuse “because they are crimes against the law and the state.  
  
“There is no excuse for rape. You must name and shame the perpetrator” she said, noting that most of these perpetrators are not strangers but are families, friends and relatives.  
  
Mrs Oni also educated them on the importance of Consent.  
  
“Consent is like F’R’I’E’S, Freely given, and also reversible, informed.”  
  
She explained that the aim of the training is to show how relevant the community can help in cases of domestic violence because they are the closest to the grassroot.  
  
The head of community engagement of Domestic and sexual violence agency, Damilare Adewusi, also in his speech made it clear that cases of domestic violence are not meant to be handled within.  
  
“ We want you to go to the communities and be the flag-bearers because most times when such cases happen they tend to go throu gh the parctice of keeping it in the community, meaning that we don’t want it to go outside of our CDA, let’s settle and end it within”  
  
He recalled: “There was a case whereby it was the CDA chairman that was telling the survivor that, with my position as the CDA chairman, this case you won’t see it in court or get it to the police” we don’t want them to use their powers to seat on cases, that’s why we are engaging them, letting them understand where the law comes in and where their powers ends.  
  
Alhaji Amusat Azeez Chairman, Lagos State Community Development Advisory Council in his acknowledgment, appreciated the state government for holding such training and stated the relevance it will hold in their communities.  
  
“This training is of great importance to community members, particularly because it exposed many things people don’t know about sexual harassment, sexual abuse, domestic violence within our conversation communities.  
  
“Many people always think SGBV relates to women alone, whereas it is vice-versa both to the men and women, children, adults and the younger ones.  
  
“This programme was intended to educate you about what the law says, what we should be doing and what should not be done.  
  
“We would disseminate this information particularly to our communities because we are holding the state meetings in a few days’ time and this information will be passed from the CDC Chairman, representatives to all the CDAs in the 57 Local Government and LCDA in Lagos State”, he said.  
  
Lagos Assembly: we must get to root cause SGBV  
  
In a related development, the Lagos State House of Assembly hasjoined the Turn Lagos Purple campaign to commemorate the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Month.  
  
The Rt. Hon Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Rt Hon. (Dr.) Mudashiru Obasa appreciated the Hon. Members and the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) for the annual awareness month. He said there was need to address the root causes of Domestic and Sexual Violence and to find lasting solutions to the issues.  
  
He added that members of the public should be timeously and routinely engaged whilst underscoring the importance for research to be commissioned to understand the root causes which would turn, aid in addressing the issues holistically.  
  
Laying the issue on the floor of the House as a matter of urgent public importance, Hon. Princess Olumegbon informed her fellow members of the various forms of SGBV , even as she stressed that the state had declared zero tolerance and the need to address the root causes of Gender Based Violence remains germane.  
  
Hon. Ladi Ajomale whilst supporting the motion, stressed that cultural norms and some religious factors consciously or unconsciously encourage the perpetration of SGBV in our communities, whilst emphasising the negative impact domestic violence can have on the physical, mental and emotional well being.  
  
He, therefore, encouraged the state to strengthen its resolve in ensuring prevention campaigns are carried out and the male folk encouraged to join the fight against GBV.  
  
Hon. Oshafile whilst commending the State Government on the efforts made thus far, advocated for the need to strengthen the laws that regulate criminal conduct, ensure men and boys are adequately engaged, improve and enhance our data collection to better understand the issues. Furthermore, according to her, there is a need to \* ensure decentralization of services and more community involvement in the State.  
  
Hon. Ogunleye whilst lending his voice to the cause, commended Her excellency , Dr. Mrs. Ibijoke SanwOlu for the Boy-child Campaign and re- emphasized the need to strengthen family systems and to ensure children are brought up with the right values.  
  
Hon. Tobun lending his voice to the cause, highlighted other forms of abuse including siblings battery, femicide, etc, The need for values, norms to be introduced and inculcated into our children and schools curriculums, engagement of religious leaders were also underscored.  
  
On his own part, Hon. Oluwa highlighted the fact that GBV cuts across both gender, and there was a need for advocacy take cognizance of this fact. He also stressed on the need to strengthen law enforcement agencies in order to ensure perpetrators are held accountable whilst survivors must be protected and encouraged to speak up.  
  
Hon. Yishawu harped on the prevalence of Domestic and Sexual Violence , he re-emphasized the importance of breaking the culture of silence, and the need to ensure cases are escalated to appropriate quarters. He further underscored the importance of the State in investing in infrastructure, establishment of shelters and other support services.  
  
The Distinguished members of the Lagos State House of Assembly were all adorned with purple ribbons, symbolizing domestic violence Awareness.