Boko Haram: EU/British council build sexual abuse referral centre

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Boko Haram: EU/British council build sexual abuse referral centre  
  
The European Union in collaboration with British Council has built and donated a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to Borno State.  
  
The centre is expected to provide care for women children and other group of people that have suffered rape and other abuses due to the Boko Haram activities in the state.  
  
Borno First Lady, Mrs Nana Shettima, on Monday commissioned the centre which is the first of its kind in the region ravaged by the Boko Haram crisis.  
  
Mrs Shettima, expressed delight on the initiative which she said had come at the right time when cases of sexual abuse have become a disturbing trend in the state.  
  
“All hands must be on deck to cub this vices rearing its ugly head in the society”, she said  
  
The Centre which is located within the premises of the Umaru Shehu General Hospital, Maiduguri will now serve as management centre where victims of cases of abuse will report their ordeal for proper management and subsequent prosecution of the perpetrators unlike in the past where people were reluctant in reporting such cases to the law enforcement agencies.  
  
According to Borno state Commissioner for health, Dr Haruna Mshellia, “ this SARC facility would also function as a hub for collation of forensic evidence that will aid the possible prosecution of rapists and related sexual abusers” adding that, “the services of the centre would not only be restricted to only females but also to males who may have suffered one form of sexual abuse or the other”.  
  
In his remarks, the Managing Director Borno state hospital management board, Dr Ibrahim Kwayabura, said the establishment of the SARC by the state government in collaboration with the British Council came at a time when a 2014 WHO statistics indicate that one in every five women has either been raped or sexually abused in one form or the other.  
  
He said “records have shown that the culprits are usually very close associates or relatives”.  
  
Borno state Commissioner of police, Mr Damian Chukwu, is also worried over the high rate of cases of rape in the state especially minors which he said are on a “daily basis”.  
  
“You find a 60 year-old man defiling a four year-old girl. I call on people to change their attitude toward rape suspects and stop making unnecessary pleas to save them.  
  
“It is disheartening to see victims’ families asking the police to drop charges against rape suspects. Unless we change this attitude, we will continue to witness rape in the society,” he said.  
  
Mr. Chukwu noted that one of the biggest challenges of apprehending cases of rape is the unwillingness of victims to seek prosecution of perpetrators.  
  
He advocated for a possible “enactment of the sexual abuse law, and setting up of special tribunal for the trial of all offenders”  
  
The Project Manager of MCN, Professor Tabiu Mohammed, said that the SARC centre is part of the core programmes of the organization geared at promoting the involvement of women in peace-building and addressing the impact of violence on women and girls.  
  
He said, “ British Council, through its MCN project takes into account the large scale of violence directed at women, girls and boys in the course of the counterinsurgency and the likely escalation of such violence in the affected communities in the course of resettlement after the insurgency”  
  
Team Lead of the MCN in Borno state, Mrs Zara Goni, said it is in the best interest of relatives to encourage victims to visit the facility as soon as cases of rape is confirmed so that the girl could be provided with medical care that could prevent not only unwanted pregnancies, but all other kinds of diseases.  
  
She it is part of the MCN programme to establish SARC desk in police stations where cases of rape could be referred to the SARC facility for immediate medication and psychosocial support  
  
The SARC facility is expected to run an integrated service with various organs of government like the police, the military, the ministries of justice, ministry of Women Affairs as well as the Ministry of Health.  
  
With the Boko Haram displacing well over 2 million people, mostly women and children, several cases of sexual abuses – especially raping of young girls – have become order of the day within and outside the IDP camps in Borno state.