DSVA’s one year report card

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DSVA’s one year report card  
  
The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSRVT) metamorphosed into the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) in September, 2021. ADEBISI ONANUGA and OYEBOLA OWOLABI report that the agency, which primary mandate is to guarantee and protect the rights of survivors of domestic and sexual violence, recorded many successes within one year of its operation  
  
Day Alausa went purple  
  
Last Thursday, the Secretariat, Alausa, Ikeja and most part of Lagos went purple as stakeholders and public servants joined the Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) to mark this year’s awareness month against sexual, domestic and other forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in the state. The month of September, of every year, has been designated as advocacy month against the vice in the state.  
  
The state’s Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Moyosore Onigbanjo (SAN) had at a briefing last week said it was expedient that they continue to embark on advocacy walks against domestic and sexual violence. Onigbanjo had proposed an advocacy walk tagged “Turn Alausa Purple Advocacy Walk” with the theme, “Its On Us To End SGBV”.  
  
Public servants were encouraged to wear a touch of purple, in solidarity with the month.  
  
4,860 cases recorded in one year  
  
During his interaction with the media on the one year of the DSVA, Onigbanjo disclosed that the state recorded 4,860 cases of domestic violence involving adults and children from September 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022.  
  
LGAs prone to domestic, sexual violence  
  
He said Alimosho Local Government Area, the most populous of the 20 local governments in the state, recorded the highest number of domestic violence.  
  
According to the Commissioner, other local governments with highest cases include Ikorodu, Kosofe, Eti-Osa, Oshodi-Isolo and Ifako-Ijaiye.  
  
The media parley had in attendance the DSVA Executive Secretary, Mrs Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, the Director Public Prosecution (DPP) Dr Jide Martins and representative of the Lagos State Command. Nigeria Police Force, DSP Bimbo Williams  
  
Assault recorded for adults and children  
  
Onigbanjo lamented that five deaths which arose from the vice were recorded. He said the youngest of the victims was eight months old, the oldest woman was 75 years while the oldest perpetrator was an 89-year-old man.  
  
According to him, the agency received 4,860 cases via the Gender based Violence Virtual and Referal Setvices (VRRS) and Physical report which includes Domestic Violence, Rape, Lack of Parental care, threat or life sexual Assaults by Penetration, Emotional Abuse, Child Neglect/abandonment, child labour, Sexual Molestation and Non-GBV cases perpetrated against adults and children.  
  
Data highlights  
  
He said out of the 4,860 cases, 2,029 directly involved domestic violence, 65 were rape cases, 40 sexual assault, 10 attempts to commit rape, five sexual assault by penetration, and 73 threat to life.  
  
Others were 113 child abuse and physical assault, 194 defilement cases, 15 involved defilement /molestation by minor to minor, 105, child labour, 145 sexual harassment and 488 cases relating to separation, neglect, custody of the child.  
  
He further said a total of 1,578 children experienced emotional abuse as a result of exposure to domestic violence within the home within the period under review, adding that 55 per cent of these children were taken through counseling programmes to ensure they are able to psychologically deal with the events they have witnessed without it having a permanent and negative impact on them.  
  
Disables not left out of GBD  
  
Onigbanjo also said that during same period, the agency has provided services to nine persons with disabilities who were experiencing one form of gender- based violence or the other.  
  
Convictions  
  
He said the DSVA recorded 150 court convictions during the period under review.  
  
Domestic, sexual violence in marriages  
  
The Commissioner for Justice reported that an analysis of cases under the year in review revealed that at least 60 per cent of survivors that reported to the agency, experienced domestic violence in the first five years of their marriage. He said these survivors disclosed they saw the signs of their abusive partner during courtship, but yet still proceeded with the wedding ceremony.  
  
He noted regrettably that 50 per cent of the reports were made after 10 years of the subsistence of the marriage.  
  
He identified factors preventing women from reporting to include their financial dependence on the abuser, wanting to remain in the abusive relationship because of their children as well as other socio-cultural factors among others.  
  
He said an analysis of the data revealed that third party interference and lack of communication between couples were some of the key contributory factors, attributable for intimate Partner Violence.  
  
Compulsory pre-marital counseling for intending couples  
  
He said these findings have now informed the agency’s collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs with a view to introducing compulsory pre-marital effectiveness preparatory counselling for intending couples in other to tackle the issues of domestic violence before the marriage.  
  
He said a curriculum has also been developed to marriage registrars and other professionals to provide the counselling for intending couples so as to make an informed decision before saying “I Do”.  
  
When violence occurs at home  
  
According to Onigbanjo, research shows that majority of the violence occurs in the evening than during the day when other people can quickly wade in and prevent ugly incidences.  
  
Violence in schools  
  
In view of DSVA’s role in ensuring full implementation of the Executive Order on Safeguarding and Child Protection, all reports of Child Protection concerns in schools were duly responded to. From September 2021 to July 2022, the attention of the taskforce saddled with the responsibility for implementing the Executive Order on Safeguarding and Child Protection, which comprises representatives from the Office of Education Quality Assurance, Department of School Social Work of the Ministry of Youth and Social Development as well as DSVA has been drawn to incidents of Child Abuse in 42 schools.  
  
He said all erring schools were jointly investigated. All the sexual violence-related cases are being prosecuted by the Directorate of Public Prosecutions, five cases are in court, one school was shut down as a result of infractions. Four of these cases were defilement whilst one was physical assault.  
  
Supportive services  
  
The Attorney General said the Office of the Public Defender(OPD) and the Lagos Public Interest Law Partnership (LPILP) provided free legal representation to 110 survivors of Domestic Violence, ranging from Judicial Separation, Divorce, Maintenance, Custody of children and Settlement.  
  
He said all the survivors of sexual assault received medical attention from comprehensive Primary Health Care Centres, General Hospitals and Sexual Assault Referral Centres like Mirabel Centre, Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) as well as Idera Centre.  
  
Intervention from partners  
  
He also disclosed that through the established Gender Based Violence Virtual and Referral Service, VVRS, which is supported by the EU funded Spotlight Initiative and United Nations Population Fund, the virtual system provided legal, psychosocial, referral as well as emergency services to 1,366 adults and 219 children; making a total of 1585 cases.  
  
Rescue missions  
  
He said an integral mandate of the agency is to conduct preliminary investigations, rescue and provide support to survivors. The agency conducted a total of 140 rescue missions of survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence in Lagos State.