Paedophiles on the prowl

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Sexual abuse is on the rise. Unfortunately, not much is said about cases of little boys left to cry and dry their tears after being sodomized. Grace Obike reports on tales of hapless boys raped by older men.  
  
Travails of male children raped by homosexual adults  
  
Kano centre admits 573 sexually- abused boys in three years  
  
About two years ago, Adamu(not real name), a seven-year-old indigene of Kano State, had to deal with the trauma of being repeatedly raped by a man who was in the habit on grabbing him on his way to school. Adamu became severely sick and had to be hospitalised when his mother found that maggots were coming out of his anus.  
  
Three years old Mohammed(not real name) did not seem to understand why his mother was fussing over him, or why she was taking him to see the doctor at the Waraka Sexual Assault Referral Centre unit of the Murtala Muhammad Specialist Hospital Kano, who might give him an injection. But his mother, Hindattu Adam, had just discovered that her brother-in-law had been abusing her innocent son. According to the poor boy, his uncle was making him to fondle his manhood. He would put his manhood in the little boy’s mouth to suck and push it into his anus whenever his mother was not around.  
  
For four-year-old Ahmed(not real name), his parents felt that allowing him go to the mosque with his older brother at 4 pm for prayers was quite safe since the mosque was located around the corner from their house in the city of Kano. Unknown to them, a paedophile that has been trailing the young boy took the opportunity to perpetrate his act.  
  
“He grabbed me as I was going to the mosque, pulled down my pants and put it (manhood) into my anus, then I saw mucus coming out.” Ahmed explained to a social worker at the Waraka Centre.  
  
All Sadiq(not real name) wanted after his evening prayers at about 9 pm was a hot meal before crawling up to sleep in the place he shares with his fellow Almajiri’s. Unfortunately, fate was not ready to smile on the 14-year-old that night. As he waited for his teacher to return from where he had gone to after their prayers at the mosque, a man he knew as a friend of Alhaji Ibrahim, a man he sometimes goes to clean his house and fetch water for a token, walked up to him and asked if he was hungry, to which he said yes. Alahaji Ibrahim asked Sadiq to follow him to the house of his rich friend around the Murtala Muhammad hospital, who would give him food.  
  
Sadiq grudgingly agreed. But he soon began to worry when the man’s friend caught up with them as they were going. And instead of going to the rich man’s house, they took him into a dark part of the hospital. The man proceeded to hold him down, removed his trousers and started touching his private parts and causing Sadiq to protest.  
  
“I asked him, what is this, Mallam? You said that you were going to give me food, why are you touching me?” he recalled.  
  
Sadiq, a native of Asiri in Jigawa State who had lived as an Almajiri in Kano for six years, explained that as the man was raping him, another man appeared with a bright torchlight, catching them in the act and taking them to the security men. The hapless young boy, whose face was badly bruised and swollen from severe beating at the time of he was being interviewed by The Nation correspondent, said the man must have targeted him because he must have heard about what his friend, Alhaji Ibrahim, was doing to him. Alhaji Ibrahim had formed the habit of taking him into his room each time he went to the compound to fetch water and clean his house, removing his trousers and raping him.  
  
Sadiq said: “Each time I tried to protest, he would threaten that if I shouted, he would report me to the police. I am afraid of the police so I keep quiet and he puts his manhood in my anus.”  
  
But on this occasion that they were caught in the hospital, they were taken to the police station. And just like he had always feared, the police turned on him. They asked him to tell them the truth, which he did, but they did not believe him. They said he was lying; that he enjoyed what was being done to him.  
  
Sadiq was beaten mercilessly until the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of the station got wind of their actions and asked the policemen that were manhandling him to take him to the Waraka Centre because he was a minor and had been sodomized.  
  
Three years ago, another victim, Salim(not real name), was sodomized repeatedly by his teacher, who was eventually caught and jailed. Unfortunately for the nine years old, his nightmare had just begun. He eventually fell ill and it was found that he had been infected with HIV.  
  
His mother had died a couple of years before, leaving the poor boy behind with his father and stepmother. His illiterate parents, hearing of his afflictions, kicked the young boy out of the house. He was made to sleep outside with goats. He was also not allowed to share the family utensils. Hence he was served his pap in a shovel.  
  
The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kano got wind of the poor boy’s condition, took him away from the home and, according to FIDA, he was being cared for by a good Samaritan and was doing well in his new home in Kano city centre.  
  
In Sokoto State, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) announced that it apprehended 30 years old Lawalli Bala for sodomizing a 12-year-old boy whose parents had sheltered in their house.  
  
Last year in Jos, Plateau State, a call was placed to the child helpline of the Cece Yara (save the children) Foundation. The caller reported that a three-year-old boy was being sodomized by a 15-year-old boy who was a distant relation of the young boy’s maternal grandmother.  
  
The foundation said it investigated and realised that the 15 years old had not only been sodomizing the three years old but had also begun doing the same to the boy’s nine months old baby brother. The case was transferred to the child welfare unit of the Ministry of Women Affairs in Jos.  
  
“May last year in Lagos, the centre received a report of a father, sodomizing his two sons who were both less than 10 along with his friend, the centre took up the case, investigated and realised that the report had some truth to it but had to be satisfied with just counselling the boys because the mother of the boys was not ready to testify against her husband so the case was transferred to the adequate authority.”  
  
A similar case was reported in Benin City last year. The centre’s attention was drawn to the incident of a 30-year-old man who sodomized a 10-years-old boy. As Cece Yara began investigation, it realised that the man had done same to four other boys in Benin, and when the police tried arresting him, he absconded.  
  
Suppressed menace  
  
With the advent of the social media and several rights organizations giving people the voice to speak up, the society is constantly being flooded with news of rape and sexual offences. Unfortunately, not much is being said about sodomy. Most men raped by their fellow men or women tend to keep the secret more to themselves than speak up, says the Director General NAPTIP, Dame Julie Okah-Donli, in an interview with our correspondent.  
  
“I would tell you that cases of sodomy are very many but people don’t report. We cannot shy away from the fact that it happens every day. It is probably even higher than that of girls now. But people don’t report, and that is the predicament and one of the challenges that we have.”  
  
She added that so far, NAPTIP in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) had only handled two cases of sodomy and both of them were still in court. Unfortunately, most of the non-governmental organisations in the FCT could not provide better information on such cases in Abuja. But The Nation investigation revealed that Abuja is not left out in the hideous act.  
  
A visit to Life Camp, the seat of the government of the FCT Minster reveals horrifying cases of boys whose innocence have been defiled by men that should know better.  
  
Behind Efab Estate, close to the Kado Fish Market in Life Camp, are arrays of shanties spread around different locations. As one drives towards the estate, one is confronted with the sight of a set of shanties with a carpenter shop beside it.  
  
A carpenter who gave his name as Gayah said: “Four boys, all below age 12, recently reported that they were raped by one man who always comes in the afternoon to hang around the area when most people must have gone to work. We believe that he might have done it to more boys in the area, but these are the ones we know of.  
  
“We reported the case to the police, but the perpetrator absconded and they have not seen him since then.”  
  
Another man who claims to be a big player in the music and movie industries in Abuja, is suspected to be engaging young boys in the horrible act. Confronted by our correspondent, he denied the allegations, insisting that he is a musician with a music video on YouTube. Asked to prove his claim, he brought up a Hausa/English Christian gospel music by another artist titled “Yesu na gode” in which he can be seen jumping around in the background.  
  
“I don’t do anything with children or anyone else. I only spread love around because I like to see people happy. But if you see anyone looking for people to act in a porn film between men, I will be interested, because I am an actor,” he said.  
  
Statistics on sexual abuse of male children  
  
According to UNICEF Nigeria, 10 per cent of boys in Nigeria have been victims of sexual violence. And of the children who reported violence, fewer than five out of a 100 received any form of support.  
  
In Kano, the Waraka Centre reports that 573 sexually abused boys were brought to their centre from January 2017 to March 2020. The office of the Attorney General/Commissioner for Justice in the state reports handling 95 cases in 2018, 94 in 2019 and 20 in the first few months of 2020.  
  
The Nana Khadija Sexual Assault Referrals Centre (SARCs) in Sokoto reported that since the centre started in March 2020, it has provided medical care and psychosocial support to 29 male victims of sexual abuse. NSCDC reported that it handled 18 cases of sodomy while NAPTIP reports 25, all in Sokoto.  
  
Enugu State Tamar SARCs said it has so far handled eight cases. The Mirabel Centre on its part reports 102 cases of male sexual abuse between January 2017 and July 2020 in Lagos State.  
  
Cece Yara foundation said it had received quite a number of cases. Data analyst and centre manager, Abuja, Oludayo Ogunbiyi, in a chat with The Nation, revealed that although it did not have a comprehensive data on the subject, it had recorded 21 cases from Lagos, Ogun, Plateau, Benin and Abuja.  
  
Wanda Adu, the Director of Wanda Adu Foundation, explained that a lot of sodomy is going on in the country, but most times, such cases are covered up. She said her foundation had handled a case of a father in Benue State who defiled three of his sons. But when it was reported to the police, they said it was a family issue since he was the father. All they did was to caution and warn him that he should not repeat it.  
  
She said that speaking from experience as someone that works with men who have sex with men, cases of sodomy is common in every part of the country, with high number in Cross River, Benue and other states.  
  
“In June this year, my foundation received a case of a teenage boy in Abuja who reported being defiled by a priest, but his parents decided not to talk about it for fear of offending God even though the boy wants justice,” she said.  
  
Chairperson Kano State FIDA, Huwaila Ibrahim, explained that FIDA has handled quite a number of cases. “The number of cases we had last year scared me. It was more than 50 and all little boys,” she said.  
  
She said one of the cases that stuck with her was the case of an almajiri her office handled about three years ago. It is that of a Mallam with a school on the outskirts of Hadeja Road, who picks seven boys at random from his pupils, who can be as young as five or four, to be his wives. She said the seven boys would be his wives for three to four months and then he would recycle them. “We don’t know how long it had been going on, but he had run the school for a long time and he also had two female wives and children,” Ibrahim said.  
  
The Public Relations Officer (PRO) Kano State Hisbah Board, Lawal Ibrahim, said that last year, about 14 cases were reported to their office.  
  
He added: “We noticed that there are some areas that have become notorious for molesting underage children. Most of them are street children. They pretend to give them shelter but take advantage of them at night in areas like Gata, Gadan Kaya, Rigiyan Lemu, etc.”  
  
On his part, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) Kano State Police Command, DSP Abdullahi Kiyawa, insists that “cases of sodomy are not as rampant as those of rape in Kano State. When you take statistics of them and compare them to sodomy, which we call unnatural offence, you will realise that we record more rape cases than unnatural offences.”  
  
How society reacts  
  
Stakeholders like Huwaila Ibrahim and Wanda Abu agree that perpetrators of sodomy feed off on the culture of silence that the society adopts when it comes to issues of rape, especially sodomy. Most families worry about the stigma that accompanies the revelation that their sons are sodomized so they try not to pursue the case, hence the perpetrators often walk free.  
  
Islamic cleric, Ibrahim Kura explains: “Because the society stigmatises people involved in this, even if it is the victim, most people or families prefer to forget about it rather than report. Another problem people see is that it is just litigation and maybe jail term for the perpetrators and no compensation. If there was a level of compensation, people might be more willing to come forward.”  
  
For instance, Hindattu Adam, after realising what her brother-in-law did to her three-year-old, refused to confront him, tell anyone about the incident or report to the police. Whenand all little boys,” she said.  
  
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For instance, Hindattu Adam, after realising what her brother-in-law did to her three-year-old, refused to confront him, tell anyone about the incident or report to the police. When confronted with the fact when she spoke to our reporter, she said that she would only take it up if the doctors told her that her son was sick or infected with something. Other than that, she would make her children avoid the in-law and leave him to God.  
  
Counselling psychologist with the Cece Yara Foundation, Sarima Worgu, explains that the effects of sodomy on a boy can be physical and psychological.  
  
She said: “Apart from the physical, the psychological effects range from hyper arousal to experiencing avoidance behaviour, depression, poor school performances, anxiety and sexual behavioural problems.  
  
“There are so many effects that this could have on children, but these are the long term impact on the kids, including substance abuse, especially for children who did not get help and support from their loved ones. The older they grow, the more they begin to engage in unhealthy lifestyles, risky behaviours and some of them even consider suicide.”  
  
In some other cases, the society tries to deal with perpetrators on their own rather than hand them over to the police, says Ibrahim of Hisbah. He added that they always send their men out to patrol trouble spots because they realised that most communities would rather kill the perpetrators when they find them than hand them over to the authorities.  
  
At the Waraka Centre, Fauziyya Ishaq from Gaida in Kano, who brought her 13 years old brother Mohammed Ishaq to be checked by a doctor after he escaped being raped by one Mallam Ali, told the story of how the perpetrator was almost lynched by an angry mob of men with sticks and stones, and women who came out to beat him with pestles.  
  
Mallam Ali, whom she said hails from Kaduna State, had invited Mohammed to his shop to assist him in cleaning. But when the young boy walked in, he shut the door, overpowered the boy, pulled down his trousers, laid him down and tried to rape him. But the boy pushed him away, and while running out of the shop, he was injured by a nail he stepped on and had to be stitched up at the hospital.  
  
The young boy reported the incident to his friend who naively thought he could confront Mallam Ali on his own but narrowly escaped the same fate. So he went back home and reported to his elder brothers, who in turn gathered the community members and attacked their brother’s attacker. Mallam Ali was fortunately rescued by a local vigilante and taken to the police.  
  
She added: “When he realised that he was safe with the police, he arrogantly told us that we were making a fuss over children that he was yet to defile. He bragged that if we counted our fingers and toes, they would not add up to the number of young boys he had defiled in Kano and there was nothing we could do because he had friends in high places.”  
  
An accused gay rapist, 28 years old Sadiq Mohammed, who spoke to The Nation while being paraded at the Police Command in Bumpai explained that he started having sex with men in primary school.  
  
He added: “I did not mean to defile 17 years old Salim(not real name). I just did it because I enjoyed it. But he is the only child that I have ever touched. I only did it because my lover was not around.”  
  
What the law says  
  
The Senate on July 14, 2020 passed a bill removing the statute of limitation on rape and including boys in the definition of rape. It amended Section 357 of the principal Act, specifically substituting the words “woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent”, with the words, “any person, without consent, or with consent.”  
  
The bill was sponsored by Senator Oluremi Tinubu and titled, ‘A bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Code Act CAP. C.38, Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004’. But this new bill is yet to be implemented in the states.  
  
Huwaila Ibrahim said: “Kano State lawmakers are presently trying to amend some laws concerning rape. Unfortunately, right now, sodomy, according to the law, is still under unnatural offences and not rape.”  
  
She added: “Why the case of sodomy breaks my heart is because the offence in Kano State comes with a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment and N50,000 fine.”  
  
The FIDA chair said: “There is no case I know where one is given more than five years, and all the perpetrators I know are perpetual offenders. There is a person that I am hoping will be nailed again and we will make sure he is returned to the particular judge that convicted him twice so that he can be convicted for life.”  
  
But the Director Public Prosecutions Ministry of Justice, Kano state, Sanusi Adomaji says it sometimes goes beyond that. Adomaji, who said that the ministry in the last eight months has got about 18 convictions for sodomy, added: “The duration of the convictions ranges from seven to maybe 10 years, and the court could direct the accused to compensate the victim in monetary forms apart from jail term, which could be N100,000 to N200,000 maximum, for the pains and trauma caused such a victim.”  
  
Way out  
  
In Kano the police, FIDA and the Waraka Centre said they were trying to sensitise Kano residents on the need to protect their wards and report rape as soon as it occurs. Huwaila and her colleagues, at a town hall meeting in Kumbotso Local Government Area, informed residents that the area was becoming notorious for paedophilia and, unfortunately, the parents of most of the victims refuse the report while some who do wait for days and contaminate evidence before reporting.  
  
So far, twenty-two SARCs centres supported by the European Union, British Council and other organizations are spread across the country with some states like Lagos and Kaduna having three centres each, some like Kano have just one while some states are yet to set up theirs.  
  
One of the coordinators of the Waraka SARCs, Abba Ahmed, explained that the centre supports and assists survivors of rape and other sexual assaults. He added that they are proposing to have more centres in the state because of the people in remote communities instead of just having only one in the whole of Kano State.  
  
Abu said that if the country wants to contain cases of sodomy, more campaigns and sensitization should be carried out by the government, civil society, media and religious leaders.  
  
“If you know that same sex exists then you should know that sodomy would. So there should be laid down laws with strict penalties,” she said.