SGBV gladiators get kudos

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Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has honoured Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) heroes, stressing that the fight against SGBV is a joint effort. ADEBISI ONANUGA reports.  
  
Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has assured that his administration will continue to strengthen the legal frameworks and support systems that would enable sexual and gender -based survivors (SGBV) to continue to break the culture of silence and thereby stem abuse in the society.  
  
He said that his administration will continue to support and invest in initiatives that protect the residents, especially the most vulnerable, including women, children, and marginalised groups.  
  
The governor commended the success stories and the impact of the DSVA in the society while describing the agency’s efforts as nothing short of extraordinary.  
  
Governor Sanwo-Olu stated this at the 2024 Governor’s Commendation and Awards Night, organised by the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), with the theme: SGBV, Not On My Watch. The event held at the Marriot Hotel Joel Ogunnaike Street, GRA, Ikeja.  
  
Igbogbo Family Support Unit (FSU) was the recipient of the Best FSU award which attracted judges, many traditional rulers and the cream of the society. Ipaja PHC won the award of the best Health Facility PHC; Badagry won the best Health Facility General Hospital; while Gracie’s Place won the best NGO Service Provider.  
  
Others who shined at the Governor’s Commendation Night included Centre for Women’s Health Initiative which was crowned with the award of the best NGO (Advocacy Awareness) Recognition; Alimosho worn the award of the best Family Social Services while Education District 2 won the Most Responsive Education District.  
  
Governor Sanwo-Olu, who was represented by his wife, Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, emphasised the need for the establishment of more Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) to support survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).  
  
He stated that this has become necessary because the current three SARCs in the state, can no longer cope with the huge population of the state.  
  
“We have 20 local governments here, so, it is not enough, because there are a lot of cases to be attended to. We are dealing with 20 million citizens in Lagos State, and we are still counting, “ he said.  
  
The governor, however, expressed his satisfaction that people are now speaking out and reporting cases.  
  
He noted: “The blame and shame game is in full swing, and the sex offenders register is being used,” the Governor said.  
  
The governor recalled that from the inception of the agency in 2014, government had shown unwavering determination to provide holistic support to victims of domestic and sexual violence, while at the same time holding perpetrators accountable.  
  
“Sexual and gender-based violence is one of the gravest barriers to achieving gender equality, hence, the government will not allow such to persist in the state”, he said.  
  
He said the theme for the event was more than a slogan, describing it as a call to action for all to take action against the menace.  
  
“The fight against SGBV requires the participation of everyone, religious leaders; community heads; families and individuals alike. It is not just the responsibility of the government or the agency, it is a collective endeavour”, he stressed.  
  
The Deputy Governor, Dr Obafemi Hamzat who noted that more people have found the courage to speak up, assured that the state would continue to provide them with protection and the necessary support to build a new life for themselves.  
  
He said this was why the government initiated programmes to empower more women and vulnerable persons through skills acquisition and empowerment programmes.  
  
The Deputy Governor who was represented by the Permanent Secretary in his office, Mrs Mobolaji Daba, affirmed his support for zero tolerance to any act of violence or intimidation against any person’s group of persons or gender.  
  
“We have achieved so far in the campaign to end domestic and sexual violence. The war is not over, so we have to keep this conversation going by maintaining the momentum.  
  
“The governor’s commendation and our award night event is another opportunity for us to encourage and enlighten our people to sign up and join in the campaign against Domestic and sexual violence in any ramification violence is antisocial groups and development.  
  
“I can assure you that social and domestic violence will not be condoned under our watch. Not in this Lagos.  
  
“It is on this premise the domestic and sexual violence agency with the support of our first lady, Dr (Mrs)Claudiana Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, in breaking the chains of silence and stigmatisation from the victims of sexual and domestic violence”, he said.  
  
He commended all the beneficiaries of the year 2024 award to see it as a challenge for them not to rest on their oars.  
  
‘‘You are seen as champions, for the protection of the rights and privileges of the vulnerable, the oppressed and exploited in our society.  
  
“You are true heroes and the job of heroes are never done”, he stressed.  
  
He also commended the efforts of the Executive Secretary of the DSVA, Mrs. Vivour-Adeniyi, and her team for standing strong in the campaign for the protection and prevention of victims of domestic and sexual violence and exploitation.  
  
Answering questions from newsmen, the Executive Secretary, Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, said the agency had attended to over twenty-five thousand cases in the last ten years.  
  
Vivour-Adeniyi said the agency would continue to embark on sustained advocacy, as there had been a direct correlation between heightened awareness and increase in reporting of SGBV cases.  
  
The Executive Secretary said the agency was gradually breaking the culture of silence, encouraging people to speak up and speak out, in the past ten years.  
  
She stressed that it has been a very remarkable journey, there is increased faith in the system, adding, “people are reporting more, but of course, we cannot rest on our oars, because we know we have not even scratched the surface.”  
  
The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Programme (ROLAC) was represented at the event by the Head of Programmes, Danladi Plang and Mrs Ijimakinwa and DState Coordinator, Mrs Ajibola Ijimakinwa.  
  
Mr Plang promised ROLAC would continue to support the state, and its agencies, particularly the two agencies, that they are already working with and the civil society organizations that they have engaged, one way or the other.  
  
“If you look back in the last 10 years, you agree with me that all the investment in terms of resources, in terms of personnel, in terms of legislation is paying off.  
  
“If you look at the agency that we are celebrating today, the special courts, the sexual assault and referral centers, the family support units, and a lot more. They’ve been doing well in terms of ensuring that persons who have been violated, you know, receive justice.  
  
“In this particular area and in many other areas in the  
  
justice sector.”  
  
He also thank the state for some of the innovations, they have evolved to support victims, survivors and SGBV.  
  
He disclosed that what they are planning to do not is to see how they can support the state judiciaries in automating their court process and upgrading them.  
  
Aside ROLAC the event which had the support of the European Union and implemented by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance was organized to round off the Domestic and Sexual Violence awareness month of September programmes.  
  
Traditional rulers present at the event included The Adegboruwa of Igbogbo Kingdom Oba Semiudeen Orimadegun Kasali; The Olu of Agboyi 1, Oba Monsuru Abimbola Oladega, the Oba of Agboyi, Alaiyeluwa Oba Taiwo Adesegun Lamina,  
  
The Olu of Iwaya- Alaiyeluwa Oba Suleiman Oloko; the Awesome of Onigbongbo, Oba Segun Ajasa; the Ikate of Surulere, Oba Lateef Atanda Adams; the Oba of Ketu Kosofeland, Alaiyeluwa Oba Balogun Oyero; the Aholu of Ajara Agamathen- Alaiyeluwa Oba Agono Toniyon 1; the Aholu Tosavi of Akarakumo Alaiyeluwa Oba Travil Awogbemi Nunayon among others  
  
The Oba Onigando of igando land lagos, Oba Lazeeze gbadebo gbadamosi Orootan 3rd  
  
The Oloto of oto awori land, Oba Josaia Aina Ilemobade Ikuyamiku 1st of Oto awori kingdom.  
  
Also present at the event were Honourable Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries  
  
The AIG Adegoke Fayoade, the Commissioner of Police – CP Ishola Olanrewaju Olawale,  
  
Heads of Agencies and captains of Industry.