GBV: Don’t mind lawyers who deny claims of spousal rape – Don

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The Centre for Study and Resolution of Domestic Violence, with support from the United Nations Population Fund and the Norwegian Embassy, has raised alarm over increasing rate of spousal rape and other forms of gender-based violences in Gombe.  
  
A Professor of Criminology and Gender Studies, Kaduna State University, Hauwau Yusuf, who doubles as the Executive Director of CERSDOV, made this disclosure during a two-day stakeholders’ sensitisation workshop at the Gombe State Ministry of Women Affairs.  
  
Arewa PUNCH reports that participants were drawn from the civil society organisations, professional bodies, ministries, departments and agencies, faith-based groups, and security agencies.  
  
She said, “Spousal rape exists when the woman or man is forced without consent for sexual intercourse. Lawyers will tell you that a husband can’t rape his wife, but that is not true because human rights exist.”  
  
Speaking further, she harped on the importance of local involvement, saying, “We believe in the strength of partnership and collaboration. There is no better way than this to reach.”  
  
On the relevance of criminologists and lawyers, she stressed, “The thin line between lawyers and criminologists is that we are interested in the perpetrators and victims. The VAPP is comprehensive.”  
  
Meanwhile, the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Asma’u Iganus, urged for collaboration, saying, “There is nothing better than this. We have to help ourselves. Mine is to thank them and encourage them for more work.”  
  
Iganus reiterated the commitment of the Muhammadu Yahaya-led administration to the protection and advancement of women’s rights in the state.  
  
“We are committed to working with partners to eradicate gender-based violence and uplift the status of women across Gombe State. I call on all NGOs operating in the state to collaborate with the ministry to ensure their programmes align with our policies and deliver maximum impact,” she urged.  
  
A representative of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, Barrister Martha Daniel, decried the absence of a specialised court tailored to fight GBV.  
  
“It’s unfortunate that we do not have family courts. That’s why we hear things like ‘my pastor said I should withdraw the case from the court.  
  
“This, to a large extent, encourages the surge,” Daniel added.  
  
On her part, the Gender Desk Officer, Ministry of Justice, Barrister Mwalin Abdu, noted that there are concerted efforts to harmonise the penal code and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act.  
  
Abdu said, “The Attorney General has submitted a bill to the House Assembly to align the penal code with the VAPP Act.”