Kano to prosecute teachers found guilty of sexual harassment

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The Kano State Government has vowed to take decisive action against any teacher or school staff found guilty of sexually harassing students, declaring that such offenders will face the full wrath of the law.  
  
This is contained in a statement by the Senior Special Assistant to Governor Abba Yusuf on Student Matters, Ibrahim Sumaila, and issued to newsmen on Wednesday.  
  
According to the statement, the SSA remarked upon a high-level stakeholders meeting organised by the Centre for Awareness on Justice and Accountability on ways to address the alarming prevalence of sexual harassment in educational institutions.  
  
“As an Islamic state, Kano will not fold its arms and watch our daughters suffer abuse and humiliation. Any teacher who dares to violate a student will be flushed out and prosecuted without delay,” he said.  
  
Sumaila expressed the state government’s support for NGOs leading advocacy and reform in the sector.  
  
The event, which brought together students and media professionals among others, marks the launch of a six-month project by CAJA aimed at curbing sexual harassment through strategic policy-making at the institutional level.  
  
On his part, CAJA Executive Director, Kabiru Dakata, said the initiative is targeted at developing internal policies in tertiary and secondary schools, stressing that most institutions either have no clear sexual harassment policy or bury such issues in vague student handbooks.  
  
“We worked for three years pushing for a national law on sexual harassment, but it’s a tedious process.  
  
“Now, we are going for the low-hanging fruit—pushing individual institutions to adopt clear, stand-alone policies,” Dakata said.  
  
He lamented that many victims suffer in silence, with some dropping out or failing courses because they refuse to yield to the demands of predatory lecturers.  
  
“Students don’t even know where to report or who to turn to when harassed. That’s a failure of the system,” he added.  
  
Barrister Maryam Ahmad Abubakar, who delivered a paper on understanding sexual harassment in academic settings, described the act as any unwelcome sexual behaviour—verbal, physical, or psychological—that creates a hostile learning environment.  
  
She emphasised the need to enlighten both staff and students on boundaries, citing the importance of moral and religious teachings in reducing such cases.  
  
Among the proposed strategies were: enforcing strict penalties, revising admission and employment ages, and integrating moral instruction into general studies curricula.  
  
CAJA, with support from the Nigerian Women’s Trust Fund and other partners, also plans to empower survivors as advocates, conduct advocacy in selected schools, and produce campaign materials to raise awareness.