NAPTIP wants stiffer sanctions for rape, gender violence culprits

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The Director-General of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, Prof. Fatima Waziri-Azi, on Thursday, in Abuja, lamented what she described as incommensurate sanctions meted to culprits of rape and sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria.  
  
Therefore, she called for stiffer sanctions, urging the judiciary to wake up to its responsibility on the issue.  
  
“There are some punishments that are not commensurate with the offences. An offence of a big nature like raping a child and the perpetrator is still given an option? NAPTIP wants to hear quality convictions on rape and SGBV cases,” Waziri-Azi said in her opening remarks at a one-day technical retreat for Judges and NAPTIP Prosecutors in Abuja.  
  
She cited the sudden rise in distress calls over SGBV cases nationwide, describing it as a cue for more action.  
  
“There was an increase in reportage to NAPTIP.  
  
“People are actually calling and this is due to the enhanced visibility of what NAPTIP is doing along with our reporting channels.  
  
“We received thousands of reports about SGBV cases in 2022,” she revealed. Between January and June 2023, she said over 600 such cases have been reported to NAPTIP’s helpline,” she said.  
  
Waziri-Azi explained that “In 2023, within the period of six months we have already received 663 reported cases.  
  
“So, with this high rate, there is a big problem within the family.”  
  
However, she said the agency secured the conviction of four SGBV suspects in the FCT and a rape suspect in Sokoto.  
  
“So altogether including 2023, we have secured three convictions in Sokoto,” the NAPTIP DG enthused.  
  
She disclosed that the agency operates 32 offices nationwide, nine Zonal Commands, 15 state commands, and eight liaison offices.  
  
The four states without a NAPTIP presence are Kogi, Bauchi, Niger, and Delta.  
  
“We also have 13 shelters across Nigeria including the FCT for the care of human trafficking victims and those who survived SGBV.  
  
“In addition to sheltering, we also cloth them, we feed them, we provide psycho-social support, legal support, medical support, and many more,” she explained.  
  
The retreat organised by NAPTIP in conjunction with the National Judicial Institute is to create a platform for judges, and prosecutors to share their unique experiences in trying to prosecute SGBV cases.