



South Saharan Social Development Organization  
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Abuja: House No 1. 212 Road, Global Estate Mborara 11  
Off Thames Str, Alvan Ikoku Way, Maitama Abuja

November 14, 2020

The Christian Association of Nigeria,  
Enugu State Chapter,  
Enugu State

Dear Sir,

### **SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND RAPE CULTURE IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

South Saharan Social Development Organization (SSDO) is a not-for-profit legal entity duly incorporated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2001, with a primary focus on equipping women, youth and children with the social, health, economic, educational and political skills needed to survive and compete favourably in a vastly changing and urbanizing Sub-Saharan Africa.

South Saharan currently implements a Good Governance project- The Awakening. The project airs on radio through Dream FM in all south-eastern stations sensitizing youths in the southeast Nigeria on good governance and civic rights.

We write to bring your attention to our discoveries through interactions with citizens on the weekly Awakening radio program and social media platforms.

Attached to this letter is a policy brief with the details of the discoveries and our recommendations for your swift attention.

Sincerely,

Stanley Ilechukwu (MD)

Executive Director

*Original copy by me Nkechi Okoro*

*14/11/2020*



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## **SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND RAPE CULTURE IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

### **Introduction/Summary of the Problem:**

Rape happens when a child from 0 – 17 years is molested with or without consent. For adults 18 years and above, rape happens when the victim does not in any way consent to the act, or is tricked into the act. In Nigeria, rape cases are grossly under-reported.

The numerous stories of sexual abuse, entrenched in tradition and scattered across tribes and cultures, and perpetrated mostly against women is a cause for concern. So endemic is this culture of sexual violence against women that it is woven into the very fabric of our existence. It cuts across all segments of society: the home, the education system, the workplace, the nation's armed services, hospitals and even places of worship — places that over 40% of the nation's populace consider a second home where many seek refuge. There is overwhelming statistical evidence to back up these claims.

Nothing exposes the backwardness of a country more than this prevalent rape culture, backed by religious and cultural sentiments of male supremacy and dominance.

### **Issues Raised:**

#### **Some of the issues raised were:**

1. **Low-Conviction rate:** Nigeria's Criminal Code recommends life imprisonment for those convicted of rape and 14 years for attempted rape. Given that as few as two out of 40 rape cases are reported in Nigeria, it is difficult to estimate the number of rapes committed each year. Yet it is quite shocking that in the legal history of Nigeria, fewer than 20 persons have been convicted of the crime.

2. **Under-reporting of cases of sexual violence due to stigmatization and social blame:**  
One major reason for this might be the fact that most rape perpetrators are known to the victim, and might even be family members. As Nigeria's culture dictates protecting the family at all cost, the burden is left for the victim to bear, often causing major life-long trauma without any hope for justice.

**Policy recommendations:**

1. Rape victims should be given all the necessary legal, financial and emotional support that they need to ensure that they get justice in court and that abusers pay for their crimes. They should not be pressured to forgive their abusers and forget about pursuing justice.
2. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and victims of rape should not be made to bear the brunt of stigma but rather the perpetrators (rapists). This means that victims should not be interrogated on what they wore, where they were, who they were with, their lifestyle choices or sexual history, as these questions tend to cast aspersions on the victim and wrongly imply that they are somehow to blame for their misfortune. Victims will be encouraged to speak up if they know that they will be supported, not antagonized.