Massive Boost in Combating Rape as ENUGU STATE DEPUTY GOVERNOR Joins the Fray

Enugu, March 8, 2016, Her Excellency, the Deputy Governor of Enugu State Hon. Mrs. Cecilia Ezeilo, has rallied support behind the fight against the eradication of Sexual Violence Against Persons as she unveils a billboard campaigning against the impunity.

Hon. Ezeilo, who cut the tape to officially unveil a billboard erected by Women’s Aid Collective (WACOL) through her Sexual Assault Referral Center (Tamar SARC), was visibly saddened by the sharp increase in the cases of sexual violence especially cases involving defilement of children in the society. She was however optimistic of government’s actions to halt it.

Hon. Ezeilo also described the message of the campaign which is “STOP RAPE! Stop child Sexual Abuse, BE WARNED! Punishment for Rape is Life Imprisonment. Let’s Join Hands to Break the Silence, as both timely and critical to eradicate the scourge.

She commended Tamar SARC for spear-heading the campaign to rid the state of the menace as well as create a safe environment for all.

The second in command in the Lion building, who was also a one-time legislator, maintained that the Centre had recorded a significant milestone in its avowed commitment to create equal opportunity for the girl-child: “Enugu state government would continue to support your organization towards the realization of its noble objectives”, she promised.

Earlier in her address of welcome, the former UN special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, and the Founding Director of WACOL/Tamar SARC, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo who, incidentally, shares same surname with the Deputy Governor, said that efforts by WACOL/Tamar SARC to rid the state of the menace were needed to create a safer society. She said that Tamar SARC was a subsidiary of WACOL, which had mounted aggressive campaign to stem the tide of increasing sexual assault in the state.

The Founding Director, who addressed the mammoth crowd that gathered to witness the unveiling, revealed that the event was part of the organization’s activities marking the 2016 International Women’ Day.

She regretted that the rate of rape in the state had become alarming, adding that no fewer than 450 cases had been reported to the Center in the last 15 months.

The former UN Rapporteur said that unveiling the billboard was significant as it would assist in the effort to break the culture of silence associated with rape and child abuse. “We still believe that many rape cases are not reported due to the stigmatization attached to it; but we thank the Enugu State Police Command for helping us to break the culture of silence,” she said.
Joy Ezeilo hailed the state government for the support it had given to the project. “This is part of our ongoing stop-rape campaign; we have enjoyed tremendous support of our partners. It is our belief that with the deputy governor championing this campaign, the state government will get to hear the cry of women,” Ezeilo said.

As part of the collaboration, the event attracted representatives of groups, including the Department for International Development (DFID) represented by the South-East South-South regional coordinator Mrs. Olachi Chucks-Ronny, Justice for All Program (J4A), represented by their Regional Coordinator, Mrs. Josephine Onah, Voice for Change (V4C), Mrs. Ikpo Kobi, the Zonal Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Mr. Clement Okwor, as well as other members of the media.

Others were Zonal Director National human Rights Commission, executives of International Federation of Women Lawyers, Chairperson Child Protection Network, Coordinator Community Safety Partnership, Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC). Also present were the executives and members of the Nigerian Medical Students Association (NIMSA), Tabitha-Debora Initiative of University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Law Students of UNEC, Purple Club of Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu, and also the management and staff of WACOL/Tamar SARC.

Highlight of some cases reported to the centre.

Case of defilement of Client 444

On the 21st of March, 2016, Client 444, an eight-month old infant, referred to Tamar SARC from a State owned hospital, was brought to the Center by her mother who reported incidents of serial defilement by her father in Emene. Her mother detailed her husband’s strange behavior. She explained that she observed that her husband often had an erection when he carried his daughter on his lap. She also mentioned that her husband would purposefully send her out of the house to be alone with the daughter in a locked room. Though her daughter could not yet speak, she noticed that her daughter would let out loud shouts of pain when alone with the father. Her suspicions were heightened on 20th of March, 2016 because of an incident that she described in detail: “I was feeding the baby when my husband who was eating outside came in complaining that he was disturbed by flies. He then told me to go and get his cup of water and leave the baby with him. As I was returning, I heard the girl scream. When I asked him what happened he explained that he had scared our daughter with a grin (facial expression).” I did not take his explanation and decided to check our baby’s body. I discovered that the surface of her private part does not look normal as it use to, so I drew his attention to it and he dismissed it with a wave of hand. I then told him that I will go to the hospital and confirm. It was at the hospital that it was confirmed that the baby was tampered with and I was referred to Tamar SARC. The case has been reported to the police for investigation.

Case of defilement of Client 449

On the 30th of March, 2016, a female police officer brought a 10 year old girl to Tamar SARC to report a case of trafficking and serial defilement of the girl. The sexually abused girl, Client 449, detailed her case to highly trained psychosocial and medical professionals. She explained that the family driver of her guardian had defiled her more than five times. She reported that the driver was always forcing her into his room where he would have carnal knowledge of her. To further explain the girl’s plight, the police officer who accompanied her to the office explained the complex nature of her case. She stated that the girl has continuously been in transit and a victim of maltreatment. She was originally from Cross River by birth and was later adopted by a lady living in Anambra State, who later sent her to Enugu. She has been in various locations in Enugu moving from one family to another and experiencing all forms of abuse.

At the moment, the lady who had adopted the girl as
Society has a long history of cherishing strong family bonds. But what happens when what is supposed to be a loving relationship becomes twisted to the point where a father is sexually aroused by his own children and commits the unthinkable?

On the 11th of April 2016, three sisters ranging from the ages of 5, 7, and 9 years were brought to Tamar SARC by their mother Mrs. O along with WACOL legal advisor to report recurring cases of sexual molestation by their father, Mr. O and also an estate caretaker in Uwani. It all began last year when the attention of Mr. O was called to the fact that his daughters were being sexually abused by the caretaker. After denying that the old man was not capable of such an act, the girls' father began engaging in the same act. Mrs. O reported that on Friday, 8th of April after spending a good time with her husband, she stepped out to buy things to cook. On returning, she was told by her daughter that her husband had molested one of them. She thus decided to report the abuse before it became too late. The three children all recounted how their own father on various occasions had inserted his finger into their vaginas. This act was normally done when their mother was not at home. They further testified that their dad penetrated the eldest child with his penis while insisting that the other children faced the wall, and then he would penetrate the other two with his fingers. The girls' mother also added that her husband had a record of years of abusing other children, though she was recently made aware of this sexual abuse. She explained her husband's drug and alcohol excesses may contribute to his abnormal behavior and attraction to his own daughters.

The three girls received extensive psychosocial and medical treatment from Tamar SARC highly trained psychologists and medical professionals, and are placed on counseling sessions to rehabilitate them.

Mr. O. was apprehended at the Uwani police station and the case transferred to SCID for further investigation.

Journalists in Enugu state have been briefed on the current state of rape in the state. Speaking during the event, the Founding Director of WACOL/Tamar SARC announced that the cases of rape have been on the increase despite all efforts to eradicate it.

According to Dr. Ezeilo, over 472 victims have been treated at the Centre since inception two years ago, adding that many more incidents were yet unreported. Ezeilo further gave a breakdown of demographic and geographic data of the cases received at the Center. She stressed that the greatest challenge to fighting the scourge is the unwillingness of the care givers to prosecute cases in courts. "This is most common with parents where the victim is a minor. They always come with stories and refuse to pursue the cases, without recourse to the minor-victim's feelings. This is unacceptable", Ezeilo said.

She however frowned at the low record of prosecution, stressing that concerted efforts should target more effective and result-oriented prosecution by the partners. "It is not in the interest of the society to allow rapist to continue to roam the street, so we must get them to where they belong. Parents must stop running away and help their children get justice from the predators", she emphasized. Also speaking, the Chairperson of Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Enugu state chapter, Mr. Rex Arum, opined that journalists have a duty to expose all evil in the society, such as rape and child defilement. He promised that his members would continue to write stories, article in a manner that will help fight against the stigmatization of victims. About 26 journalists attended the events including Thisday, Daily Sun, Daily Trust, Tribune, Vanguard, The Guardian, NAN, NTA, FRSC, Solid FM, GoUNi FM. Others were Coal City FM, Leadership, Daily post, Advocate, African Examiner, Daily Trust, and Punch etc.

Statistics of cases so far recorded

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of incident</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape/Defilement</td>
<td>421</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attempted rape</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others (Domestic Violence)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total no of cases</td>
<td>472</td>
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Age Group

<table>
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<tr>
<td>0-5yrs</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10yrs</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>11-13yrs</td>
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<td>14-17yrs</td>
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<td>18-22yrs</td>
<td>86</td>
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<td>23-29 yrs</td>
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<td>30-39yrs</td>
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<td>40-above</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no of cases</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local Government Area of Incidents:

1. Aninri -------- 4 cases
2. Awgu ----------- 9 cases
3. Enugu East ----- 157 cases
4. Enugu North ---- 78 cases
5. Enugu South ---- 114 cases
6. Ezeagu --------- 12 cases
7. Igbo Eiti-------- 5 cases
8. Igbo-Eze North -- 1 case
9. Igbo-Eze South  -- 3 cases
10. Isi-uzo-------- 4 cases
11. Nkanu East------16 cases
12. Nkanu West------ 14 cases
13. Nsukka--------- 4 cases
14. Oji river------- 5 cases
15. Udenu----------- 2 cases
16. Udugu----------- 26 cases
17. Uzo-uwani------ 2 cases
18. Unknown--------- 4 cases
19. Outside Enugu State  --- 12 cases
A group of Non-Governmental Organizations in Enugu state including the Women’s Aid Collective (WACOL) have on Tuesday May 3, staged a peaceful protest in the Enugu, South East Nigeria to register their annoyance on the recent killing of scores of people at Nimbo community in Uzouwani LGA of the state.

The group is also demanding a probe on the security lapses in the run up to the unfortunate event, despite tip off to the security agencies by concerned citizens. It could be recalled that on the 25th April 2016, Fulani herdsmen invaded, abducted and killed over 50 residents of Nimbo, a community predominantly farmers.

In a communiqué presented to the Enugu state governor, Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, when the called on him, the statement reads in part we also strongly condemned security agencies who despite early warning signs failed law abiding citizens they were supposed to protect.

“We strongly condemned the killing, raping, abductions and maiming of our people in vulnerable communities in recent past, especially the killings on April at Nimbo, which claimed several lives,” The federal government must take this as a national security issue given the experience of Boko Haram that require urgent legal, educational and other measure to maintain law and other-Law enforcement agencies should be proactive rather than reactive at all times in order to effective protect live and properties” it emphasized.

The group is also demanding a comprehensive public and transparent enquiry into the immediate and remote causes and aftermaths of the Nimbo community killings by alleged Fulani Herdsmen, as well as ensures accountability and zero tolerance for unlawful extra-judicial killings and wanton destruction of properties in accordance with the Nigerian’s Constitution and obligations under the international human rights laws.

“We call for an urgent extension of humanitarian aid to the victims, which should be fast-traced and effectively monitored; we call for a day of mourning to be declared by the Enugu state Government in memory of the victims they emphasized. They also disagreed with the proposed National Grazing Routes Reserve Bill touted at the National assembly as a solution to problem of farmers/herdsmen continuous clashes. They therefore urged the government to consider the resolution contained in the communiqué as a solutions to ensure peace and stability in the state.

Highlight of the protest was handing of a statement to the governor of Enugu state Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwu.

The communiqué was signed by the following organizations; Women International league for peace and Freedom Nigeria (WILPF Nigeria), Women’s Aid Collective (WACOL), Forum for Promotion of National Ethos and Values(FPNEV), Women in Peace Building (Network), South East, J.C ibekaku Hope project, South Sahara Social development Organization(SSDO), Carmelite Prisoners Interest Organization (CAPIO), and Federation of Muslim Women Association Nigeria (FOMWAN). Others are Civil Recourse development and Documentation Center (CIRDDOC), Nigerian Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ), National Council for Women Society (NCWS), Enugu State broadcasting Service (ESBS) catholic Women organization (CWO) as well as federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA).
Date: 20th April 2016
Time: 10am
Venue: Roban Hotels Enugu