

**LECTURE DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE
JUSTICE AKON B. IKPEME CHIEF JUDGE
OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA AT
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN JUDGES AFRICAN REGIONAL
CONFERENCE 12TH TO 17TH MAY 2024
AT ACCRA, GHANA.**



Lecture Focus

**CULTURAL BELIEFS AND THE IMPACT OF
FIGHTING SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST
WOMEN AND THE GIRL CHILD**

INTRODUCTION

- Cultural beliefs significantly shape the impact on societal norms and behaviors. These beliefs often play a role in determining the attitudes towards sexual offences against women and the girl child.
- Understanding and addressing these cultural beliefs are crucial steps in fighting against sexual offences thereby promoting gender equality and the safety of women and the girl child.
- Research indicates that cultural beliefs reflect as a major issue in the perpetuation of sexual violence against women and girls. The degree of the impact of these cultural beliefs vary from one region to another.
- This lecture therefore seeks to examine some cultural beliefs and the complexities arising from these beliefs as well as the impact in fighting sexual offences against women and the girl child. We will look at these negative cultural beliefs.

CULTURAL BELIEFS AND SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG PEOPLE IN NIGERIA AND THEIR IMPACT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST

1. Child Marriage (Early Marriage):
2. The Culture of silencing children
3. Money Marriage
4. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
5. The Belief of Silence or Secrecy of the survivor



CULTURAL BELIEFS AND SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG PEOPLE IN NIGERIA AND THEIR IMPACT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST (CONTINUED)

6. Belief of Male Entitlement, Domination And Control:

7. Belief of Blaming Females for Provocation:

8. Human trafficking

9. Discrimination And Marginalization As A Result Of Disability

10. Reluctance on the part of investigative bodies to investigate cases of Marital Rape



APPLICABLE LEGISLATIONS ON SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST WOMEN AND THE GIRL CHILD IN NIGERIA.

- The criminal code act of Nigeria 2004 and penal code of northern Nigeria 2004.
- The child rights act, 2003
- Violence against persons prohibition act 2015



APPLICABLE LEGISLATIONS ON SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST WOMEN AND THE GIRL CHILD IN NIGERIA. (CONTINUED)

- The Trafficking In Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration act 2003
- Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended



FAMILY COURT SYSTEM OF CROSS RIVER STATE

Pursuant to the Cross River State Child Rights Law 2023, the family court is established to entertain and determine cases pertaining to children and sit with at least one Assessor

- The Court operates at two (2) levels; The High Court and the Magistrate Court.
- This is all geared towards the protection of the rights of the child against derogatory or inhuman treatment likely to affect the mental, physical , social, emotional well being or otherwise in the development of the child.

THE FUTURE PROSPECTS

ARE WE WINNING OR LOSING THE BATTLE?

With the efforts of agencies like The Nigerian Police, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Women Affairs, NAP TIP, National Human Rights Commission, International Federation of Women Lawyers FIDA and other civil society groups to curb and eradicate the negative impact of these cultural beliefs, I think we can confidently say we are WINNING as the narrative is changing for the better.

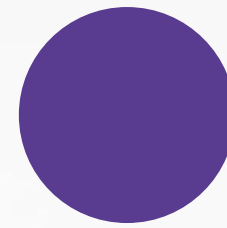
MEASURES WHICH CAN BE ADOPTED TO KEEP CHALLENGING THESE CULTURAL BELIEFS

- Invest in national prevention programmes to change social norms.
- Encourage Financial autonomy of women and girls.
- Build the knowledge of parents, guardians and children.

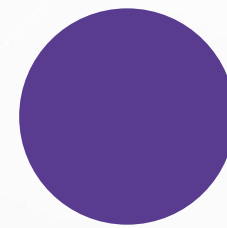


- • Educate adults, parents, teachers and adults to identify signs of abuse
- • Community leaders should be engaged through transformative learning
- • Law enforcement agencies should also be trained and retrained in the investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual violence.
- • Keeping a register of convicted sexual offenders which should be easily accessible to the public.

CONCLUSION



Women have the right to live in a society where they can exist freely without fear of being violated. Hence, there is a call to action to all individuals and organizations to rise up and continue fighting sexual violence against women and girls.



By challenging cultural norms and working together to change cultural attitudes, we can create a society where women and girls are protected and respected.

THANK YOU

HONOURABLE JUSTICE AKON BASSEY IKPEME
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Chief Judge of Cross River State

