

# **An overview of the SARC model and how it has been adjusted to suit context as needed in Nigeria**

***Prof. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (OON); Chairperson, Sexual Assault Referral Network, Nigeria***

## **Discussion Outline**

- 1. Introduction and Context**
- 2. Innovation in Nigeria's SARC Models**
  - 2.1. What services?**
  - 2.2. SARC model with a difference**
  - 2.3 The imperatives of government involvement**
- 3. Public/Private partnership & Cooperation that works**
- 4. Conclusion**

# 1. Introduction and Context

- ❑ Sexual assault or sexual violence has plagued victims/survivors that are disproportionately women and girls for decades. For far too long victims have gone without effective remedies, especially in the light of cultural inhibitions, blaming the victim phenomenon, stigma and ineffective system of justice.
- ❑ Various models have come into play in responding to cases of SGBV around the world.
- ❑ Now we proudly have 30 SARCs and counting in 17 states of the federation of Nigeria, establishing different models within specific contexts that have provided assistance to about 20,000 victims with pioneering support of the Justice 4 All programme, RoLAC and their respective funders and partners, including FCDO and EU. This is a home-grown model that is working for us in Nigeria.
- ❑ SARCs support to victims/survivors include specialised services such as: counselling, medical, shelter, forensics to aid prosecution and legal assistance amongst others.
- ❑ Confidentiality, high quality, ethical, non-judgmental and victim centered services that are gender sensitive are at the core of SGBV service delivery.

## **2. Innovation in Nigeria's SARC Models**

### **2.1. What services? Models of available services before SARCs in Nigeria**

SARC model with a difference

The model on the ground, tested and working:

1. CSO-led (Lagos and Enugu) - the first two.
2. Government-led (Niger, Akwa-Ibom, Jigawa, Kano, Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Edo and Ekiti).
3. Government and CSO-led combined (Kaduna, Anambra etc.).

In Nigeria, given that NGOs were the main service providers and for far too long Governments at all levels have not played the expected critical role in funding services on SGBV, it became imperative that any initiative must be with full involvement of CSOs/NGOs and in partnership with Government.

### **3. Why Government involvement is vital for the success of the SARCs: state responsibility and sustainability**

- Budget matters (prior to the establishment of SARCs, issues of this nature were never funded by the Government with the exception of Lagos state that has demonstrated exceptional leadership in this regard. Notwithstanding, there were obvious lapses in types of services provided).
- Public/Private Partnership and Cooperation.
- Securing state institutional commitment to keep SARCs running in the long term is of paramount importance.
- Adequate funding is required to keep these SARCS afloat to enable the provision of comprehensive support services to survivors of sexual assault while investing in continuing capacity building for the team of staff engaged as responders to ensure high standard of care.

## 4. Conclusion

- ❑ Unarguably, the work started must be scaled up and sustained.
- ❑ We need 774 SARCs in every LGA in Nigeria not 30 across some 17 states.
- ❑ Institutional support should be provided for infrastructure, office space, equipment and staffing, not just for capacity building.
- ❑ A lot of lessons have been learned and we now know that a mix of Government and CSO led partnerships, given Nigeria's peculiarities, is the way to go.
- ❑ Building partnership with key stakeholders/actors in Government and amongst non-state actors, including private sector is imperative for expanding and sustaining the important work SARCs have been doing in Nigeria, in response to victims/survivors of SGBV in search of justice and succor.