

**ADDRESSING THE RISING CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN 2017
AND 2018 IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA:
A WAKE UP CALL ON STAKE HOLDERS***

Abstract

The trend of domestic violence is as old as humanity, and it has persisted in Nigeria for reasons not well addressed by the society. However the trend has assumed alarming dimensions in recent time in Lagos State of Nigeria leading to the passage of several legislative instruments. The law against domestic violence has come on board to curb the ugly trend with little or minimal success. The legislation against domestic violence is meant to save lives and properties in the family arena. In Nigeria there are various laws against Domestic violence applicable in the states of the federation. The primary objective of this paper is to identify the reasons why domestic violence has been on the rise in Lagos state notwithstanding legislations. This paper also identifies what constitutes domestic violence, instances of domestic violence in Lagos state of Nigeria and make recommendations towards checking and minimizing this animalistic behaviours of humans against fellow human beings. This paper approaches the topic by reference to statute books, Law Text Books, Law Reports, Internet sources, Newspapers. The findings in this paper are that, impatience, uncontrolled temper and incompatibilities among couples cum the wicked inclinations of humans lead to domestic violence. This paper makes recommendations towards stemming the tide through legislation and proactive action by various government agencies and department as well as non-government organizations.

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1. Introduction

Domestic violence started in the bible days when Cain, for reason of jealousy killed his brother Abel¹. This trend of domestic violence has persisted till date among mankind. The ministries of social welfare are set up in Nigeria to oversee incidence of home affairs and this might have accounted for the reason that led the Government of Imo state led by Governor Rochas Okorocha to establish the ministry of happiness and couples fulfillments. The Federal Government of Nigeria and the various states of the federation have laws against Domestic Violence. This is to ensure happiness and harmony in domestic and public lives of the people. Many well meaning Nigerians welcome the laws against Domestic Violence which was meant to curb the excesses in the family lines. It is disheartening that proper checks and monitoring and enforcements of the laws are very minimal and weak. Many victims suffer in silence and at times die in silence and nobody is arrested and prosecuted. Instances abound where the offences are committed unnoticed by the law enforcements agents of the states. The severity and the alarming trends in Domestic Violence has attracted the attention and criticisms of different stakeholders such as Judges, Lawyers, Academics, Social Scientists, Religious Bodies, Social workers, Counsellors and general observers, depending on one's point of view. Notwithstanding the persistence of concern and criticisms of different stakeholders, the violence of a member of the family unit against the others has continued hopelessly. Many writers in the past and present have dwelt on the subject matter of Domestic Violence. When issues of Domestic Violence are brought before the courts, the courts have never failed in making pronouncements, awarding damages and convicting the defendant,

¹ Holy kings James bible version, Genesis Chapter 4 verse8 Bill Noller International publishing, Sam Dimas, CA 91773

notwithstanding the relationship of the defendant and the victims of the violence, if the case is proved beyond reasonable doubt by the prosecution. However there have been legal and policy responses of late to address the menace. Notwithstanding scholarly efforts and judicial contributions on the subject of matter, Domestic Violence have persisted in many Nigeria families. In the light of all these, Academics and other stake holders have made useful contributions toward stemming the tide and it is ongoing. There is no doubt that a discussion of this nature will serve the immediate and future needs for advancement of peace and harmonious co- existence in Nigeria.

2. Meaning or Definition of Domestic Violence

The Black Law Dictionary² defines 'Violence' thus:

“The use of physical force, usually, accompanying by fury, vehemence or outrage; especially physical force unlawfully exercised with the intent to harm.”

The Black Law Dictionary³ also defines 'Domestic Violence' thus:

Violence between members of a household, usually spouses; an assault or other violent acts committed by one member of a household against another.

² Ninth Ed.) Edited by Bryan A Garner (U.S. West Publishing Co., 2004)p. 558 & 1705

³ *Ibid*

The infliction of physical injury, or the creation of a reasonable fear that physical injury or harm will be inflicted, by a parent or a member or former member of a child's household, against a child or against another members of a household.

3. Legal Frame Work

The legal frame work for this paper are the 'Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007' and the Violence against persons (prohibition) Act 2015, the Act is a federal statute, but regrettably, it is only the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja that has jurisdiction to hear and grant any application brought under the Act⁴. This means that for an aggrieved complainant in Lagos to seek redress he/she has to travel all the way to Abuja to make his application for redress. However the domesticated version of the law is available so that an aggrieved complainant in Lagos will take advantage of Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007' to get remedies.

Neither the Federal Act nor the Lagos State law defined domestic violence. Both legislations only described what constitutes domestic violence. For example the Act gave the following instances as constituting domestic violence: Infliction of physical injury; willfully placing a person in a fear of physical injury; Forced isolation or separation from family and friend; emotional verbal and psychological abuse⁵.

⁴ Violence against persons (prohibition) Act Part 2 section 27A 2015

⁵ *Ibid* Section 2(i), 4 (1);13 (1); 14 (1)

The Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007 on its part, simply states that Domestic Violence means any acts listed below against any person⁶:

- i. Physical abuse
- ii. Sexual abuse exploitation including but limited to rape, incest and assault Sexual
- iii. Sexual Starvation
- iv. Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse
- v. Economic abuse and exploitation
- vi. Denial of basic education
- vii. Intimidation
- viii. Harassment
- ix. Stalking
- x. Hazardous attack including acid bath with offensive or poisonous substance
- xi. Damage to property
- xii. Entry into the complainant's residence without consent where the parties do not share the same residence; or
- xiii. Any other controlling or abusive behavior towards a complainant, where such conduct harms or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or well being of the complainant
- xiv. Deprivation

Basically speaking Domestic Violence, apart from breaching the provisions of the Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007, violates the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended, being the grund norm of Nigeria. Section 33 (1) provides that every person has right to life and no one shall be deprived intentionally of

⁶ Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law section 18 (g) (i-xiv) 2007

his life, save in the execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria. For a better appreciation of the Right to life, we hereby reproduce Section 33 of Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria below.

“Every person has a right to life and no one shall be intentionally deprived of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria”

Section 34 (1) provides that:

“No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment”

Any act of Domestic Violence is in breach of the constitution in the first place before other state laws. In many acts of Domestic Violence, it involves any of the followings: Physical abuse, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, intimidation, harassment etc. Long before the passage of the Act or law against Domestic Violence, the Nigeria courts have been condemning violence in every facets of it. In *Gira v. the State*⁷ the Appellant committed the offence of murder by inflicting injuries on the deceased with a machet and was convicted of murder by the trial court. On appeal, the court of Appeal dismissed the appeal and upheld the conviction whereupon the prisoner appealed to the Supreme Court. Dismissing the appeal, the Apex court held that by beating the deceased (his wife) with a lethal weapon, it could properly be inferred that the

⁷ (1996) 4 NWLR (pt 443) p.375

Appellant intended to kill the deceased or wanted to inflict grievous bodily harm on her.

Domestic Violence occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage becomes domineering and overbearing on the other person. Domestic Violence often starts with verbal abuse, threats and eventual physical attack on the victim. The psychological and emotional aspects of domestic violence may also be severe. No one cherishes the pain associated with domestic violence, whether physical, verbal, psychological and emotional torture. The person or partner engaging in any of this kind of domestic violence has no legal back up for his action, save perhaps in self defence. Most people who are in a relationship clothed with domestic violence do not sense the danger until it degenerates into physical assault. Psychological, emotional, and sexual abuses are also classified as domestic violence. Regrettably it is only the physical assault or bruises that is easily noticed by a third party, while the other forms of violence which are also damaging are not easily noticed by a third party.

4. The Scourge of Domestic Violence in Lagos State 2017 and 2018

It appears unbelievable but real that in the year 2017 alone a staggering number of 852 (eight hundred and fifty two) cases of domestic violence was recorded in Lagos state alone⁸. It will not be out of place to call the years 2017 and 2018 as years of domestic violence. The Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007 list sixteen items as constituting Domestic Violence; however, due to the limited scope of this paper, we are going to narrow down our discussion on four major aspects to wit:

⁸ Punch newspaper'(Lagos) 2017 31st Decemberp. 53

- i. Physical abuse
- ii. Sexual abuse exploitation including but limited to rape, incest and assault
- iii. Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse
- iv. Economic abuse and exploitation

i. Physical abuse:

This involves physical battering and inflicting bruises and sometimes leading to the death of the victims. It may be or may not be the intention of the person inflicting the injuries to cause death, nevertheless death results. The aggressor has by his action of violence committed the crime of murder. Going by the egg shell rule, a person who chose to take on violence against another must take his victim the way he finds him. It does not matter that violence would not have killed a normal person⁹.

The following reported cases represent physical abuses within 2017-2018 under review.

• ***Samuel Mgbeodinma killed his wife Mrs. Gloria Onyedikachi***¹⁰

Tragedy struck on 16th day of June 2018. A couple who recently married on 10th day of February, 2018 fell apart in a domestic violence which saw the husband Mr. Samuel Mgbeodinma beat his wife Mrs. Gloria Onyedikachi Mgbeodinma to death on Saturday the 16th day of June 2018 at their Ikotun residence in Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos state Nigeria. The brutal man, after killing the wife put her in his car and drove off to his parents' home at Egbeda, the neighbouring community to Ikotun, both in the Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos state.

⁹ *In R vs. Blaue* (1975) 3 ALL ER p.446

¹⁰ Samuel Mgbeodinma killed wife” <https://www.latestnigeriannews.com> accessed on 20/7/2018

It was reported that the deceased was six weeks pregnant at the time of her demise. It was further alleged that it was not until 12pm Sunday 17th June 2018 that family members of the deceased woman went to the husband's father home, took the corpse to the mortuary and called in the police¹¹.

- ***Mr. Olaoluwa Adejo¹², a bank worker killed his 28-year-old wife, Maureen***

A bank worker, Mr. Olaoluwa Adejo, for the reason not yet disclosed killed his 28-year-old wife; Maureen at their home on Peluola Street, in the Bariga area of Lagos state. Mr. Olaoluwa Adejo was reported to have used belt and machet in beating his wife to death. Surprisingly the murder was carried out in the presence of the couple's five-year-old son, Richard, who testified that his father also forced a local insecticide, 'otapiapia', down the throat of his mother; consequently the police in Lagos arrested the 32-year-old banker who hails from Lagos state.

- ***Folashade Idoko stabbed her husband, Lawrence, to death¹³***

Mrs. Folashade Idoko, lost her temper after she discovered that her husband had a female lover with whom he had a telephone conversation; consequently the jealous and the no nonsense wife stabbed her husband, Lawrence Idoko to death with a knife at their home in Ayetoro, Oto-Awori Local government Area of Lagos state for receiving a telephone call from the suspected female lover. Folashade was arrested and detained by the Lagos State Police Command and had been prosecuted. The offence carries a death penalty upon conviction. Mrs. Folashade an auxiliary nurse and Mr. Lawrence were married for four years.

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

It was reported that there was intense aggression between the couple before the tragic incident. They had two children; a three-year-old boy and a one-year-old girl. It was in the heat of uncontrolled anger that Folashade grabbed a kitchen knife and stabbed her husband in the leg. He bled continuously and later died.

- ***Mrs. Udemeodibi stabbed husband Mr. Otike Odibito death¹⁴***

On the 3rd day of May, 2018, a female lawyer Mrs Udeme Odibi stabbed her husband Mr. Otike Odibi to death using a knife, over a family disagreement resulting from the refusal of the husband to will all his properties to the wife. Mr. Otike Odibi who was reported to have had children from his earlier marriage had insisted on willing a larger part of his properties to his children and the least to his wife, who at the time of his death had no child with late Mr. Otike Odibi. When the police arrived at the home of the couple in Diamond estate, Sango Tedo area of Ibeju Lekki Lagos state, the deceased manhood was cut off and placed on his right hand while his stomach was ripped open with the intestines spilling out. What a tragic event.

- ***A police sergeant, Oludele Olosunde killed his 17year old son¹⁵***

It was not good news at all that a police sergeant, Oludele Olosunde had to beat his son to coma whereupon the 17year old died as result of injuries. The unfortunate incident happened on Tuesday, 2nd day of January 2018 on Rasak Okunola Avenue, Ijagemo, in the Ijegun area of Lagos State. The teenage son who had secured admission into a university had his future and life truncated by his anger driven police father over a missing sum of N2000 (Two Thousand Naira) which

¹⁴ “Vanguard newspaper”(Lagos) 2018 4th May p. 7

¹⁵ “Punch newspaper”(Lagos) 2018 8th January p. 4

the father accused the boy of stealing, for which the boy allegedly denied stealing. In a rage of anger sergeant Oludele Olosunde descended on his son, Ibukun, gave him a merciless beating of his life and the boy collapsed which prompted the aggressive father to call in an auxiliary nurse. The nurse referred the victim to a medical centre in the neighbourhood because of the extent of his injuries. After he was confirmed dead, the policeman took the son away and buried him. Notwithstanding that he was a law enforcement agent, a resident called the police and he was arrested. Sergeant Oludele Olosunde was attached to the Kirikiri Police Division in Amuwoodofin area of Lagos state. Nobody is above the law. He is facing prosecution for the crime.

- *Isaiah Chukwu killed his wife Joy Osoemena Chukwu at Oshodi Lagos State*¹⁶

The very recent reported case of domestic violence is that of Isaiah Chukwu who killed his wife Joy Osoemena Chukwu at their residence in Balogun Street Oshodi Lagos state over alleged infidelity. The incident occurred on 21st May 2018. The couple got married in 2016 and had no child yet. For alleged accusation of infidelity, Isaiah Chukwu murdered his wife and stuffed her remains in a giant bucket and was heading to dispose the body in the night, whereupon the men of vigilante group got suspicious of his movement and demanded to see what he was carrying in the smelling bucket on his head, which turned out to be the body of his wife, what a horror. A family member of the deceased Mr. Nnaji Offor said that Isaiah Chukwu just paid the wife's dowry in April 2018 before he decided to murder her. He was arrested and the patrolling police team came around and took the murderer to the Akinpelu Police station.

¹⁶ "New Telegraph newspaper"(Lagos) 2108 15th May p.1; see also <https://naijagists.com> accessed 16/5/2018

Police spokesman, Chike Oti, a Superintendent of Police (ASP) confirmed the incident.

- ***Mrs. Nkiruka Ngwu, a petty trader burnt maid with pressing iron and hot water¹⁷***

Mrs. Nkiruka Ngwu, a petty trader mother of four, lost her temper and went berserk, whereupon she used a hot pressing iron to burn a maid under her care on the alleged reason that the maid maltreated her children whenever she was away. As if that was not enough, she was alleged to have also poured hot water on the defenseless ten year old girl. To heighten her state of heartlessness the suspect failed, despite plea from female neighbours, to take the maid to hospital for treatment which prompted the sympathetic women to petition the Lagos state Police commissioner. Mrs. Nkiruka Ngwu was subsequently arrested while the battered girl was taken by the Gender Section of the police command to the police hospital for treatment. Police spokesman, Chike Oti, a Superintendent of Police (ASP) confirmed the incident and the arrest of the suspect.

ii. Sexual abuse exploitation

Sexual abuse exploitation includes rape and other forms of sexual related offences
Sexual abuse exploitation comes under domestic violence by reason of section 18

(g)

(ii) of domestic violence law¹⁸.

Below is the media report of Sexual abuse exploitation

¹⁷ “Vanguard newspaper” (Lagos) 2018 12th March p .6

¹⁸ Lagos State 2007

- **Man arrested for raping his wife's 15 year old sister**¹⁹

This is a clear case of Sexual abuse exploitation reported in Lagos in the Saturday punch newspaper, where a man identified as Mr. Ojomu who had been having carnal knowledge of his wife's 15 year old sister, a senior secondary school one (SS1) student on the threat that he would stop paying the child's school fees if she divulged the act. The child had also kept the secret act which had been going on since 2016. The cat was let out the bag when the child told one of her teachers about the ongoing sexual abuse. The teacher promptly reported the matter to the Child Protection Network in the Onipanu community and the Group led by Mr. Toyin Olantanwon reported the incidence at the Onipan Police Station. The suspected Rapist was arrested and the Lagos state police Public Relation Officer Chike Oti, a Superintendent of Police (SP) confirmed the incident and said the suspect would be charged to court after medical examination result be made available to police.

iii. Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse

Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse come under domestic violence by reason of section 18 (g) (iv) of domestic violence law²⁰. It amounts to domestic violence under the extant law to inflict emotional pains on a member of one's family no matter the form it assumes. Frequent mockery and calling of immoral names, yelling and shaming directed to a member of one's household with the intention to annoy falls under domestic violence. This class of violence is not due to the abuser's loss of control over his/her behavior. Abusive behavior is a deliberate choice made by a partner in order to control his / her partner so as to erode the feeling of self-worth and independence of a partner. Where a member of a household is frequently called names like 'an idiot', 'good for

¹⁹ "Punch newspaper" (Lagos) 2018 19th May p. 34

²⁰ Lagos State 2007

nothing', 'empty head' or 'prostitute', will come under Emotional, verbal and psychological violence and this is contrary to section 18 (g) (iv) of domestic violence law²¹. These types of violence are not easily noticed by a third party unlike physical violence, nevertheless they are also damaging, leaving deep scars.

Lending his voice to the issue of constant nagging by a partner against his/her spouse, which the Lagos State Law against Domestic Violence classified under domestic violence, per Aderemi J.C.A in *Ugbotor v. Ugbotor*²² citing *Atkin v. Atkin*²³ had this to say:

“It is not necessary, as it is obvious, in order to bring about the state of things that there should be violence. One knows that dropping water wears the stone. Constant nagging will become intolerable, though in the course of married life you may be able to point to no single instance which could possibly be described as, in common parlance, 'a row' yet nagging may be of such a kind, and so constant, that it endangers the health of the spouse on which it is inflicted”

The judicial authorities cited above lend credence that emotional, verbal and psychological abuse could also be damaging as the physical abuse analysed earlier in point number one above. Emotional, verbal and psychological violence come by way of threats, verbal abuse, discrimination, ridicule, humiliations and stigmatization and escalates to physical violence if not checked early.

²¹ *Ibid*

²² (2006) LPELR-7612 (CA) pp.14-15 paras E-A

²³ (1932) 2 A.E.R p.637

In a Vanguard Newspaper report²⁴, a woman by name Deborah said her marriage became traumatized and eventually hit the rock when she was diagnosed HIV positive. She was been tormented by her husband due to her HIV status. She was initially not willing to separate from her husband for fear of discrimination and stigmatization particularly from family, society and religious groups, whom she said were in most times judgmental. But when humiliations from her husband and household members became unbearable, she moved out of the matrimonial home rather than die in stigma and discrimination, Deborah asserted²⁵.

iv. Economic abuse and exploitation

Economic abuse and exploitation comes under domestic violence pursuant to section 18 (g) (v) of domestic violence law²⁶. These arise when a partner exploits the other financially via intimidation and humiliations. The partner been exploited keeps quiet and the exploitation continues, for fear of losing marriage and for fear of family and society mockery and stigmatization. This was the story of one woman simply identified as Omolola who was going through emotional pain and was been exploited economically by her husband because of her HIV status. Omolola went to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital crying over the humiliation and financial extortion which her husband had subjected her to, because of her HIV status. Omolola narrated how she disclosed her HIV status to her husband before marriage and he agreed to marry her while he was HIV negative. After the marriage the husband began to blackmail her. The man gave her a condition that she must be giving him money whenever he wanted otherwise he would tell the whole world how he was risking his life living with her. In her words, 'my husband turned me to ATM (Automated Teller) Machine'.

²⁴ "Vanguard newspaper" (Lagos) 2018 24th April p.41

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ Lagos State 2007.

She continued giving him money to avoid been exposed as HIV patient, to the extent that she became indebted to the tune of N 200,000.00 (Two Hundred Thousand Naira). When she had no money anymore to pacify the husband, he began beating her which caused her to be hospitalized twice. According to Mrs. Omolola, her husband moved out of the matrimonial home and began telling everyone that Omolola was a HIV carrier. The stigmatization became unbearable that Omolola had to relocate from Lagos to Agbara area of Ogun state to avoid being known and ridiculed²⁷.

5. Legal Consequences of Domestic Violence

This can be viewed from four stand points to wit:

- i. **Voluntarily causing death:** a domestic violence that results in death of the victim as a result of voluntary killing attracts death penalty on conviction pursuant to the provision of the relevant criminal laws of the state²⁸.

- ii. **Voluntary manslaughter by provocation:** a domestic violence that results in death of the victim as a result of voluntary manslaughter by provocation attracts imprisonment for life on conviction pursuant to the provision of the relevant criminal laws of the state²⁹. Voluntary manslaughter by provocation occurs when a person kills another: (a) in the heat of passion caused by grave and sudden provocation; (b) before there is time for his passion to cool; and (c) the force used is proportionate to the provocation³⁰

- iii. **Attempt to murder:** a domestic violence that involves an attempted murder of the victim is a felony.

²⁷ Vanguard Newspaper”(supra)

²⁸ Criminal law of Lagos State, Section 223,2015.

²⁹ *Ibid*, Section 225

³⁰ *Ibid*

The criminal law of the state defines attempted murder as 'an attempt to unlawfully kill another'. The law therefore prescribes imprisonment for life on conviction³¹.

iii. **Grievous Harm:** a domestic violence that results in grievous harm of the victim amounts to a felony and attracts imprisonment for seven (7) years on conviction pursuant to the provision of the relevant criminal law of the state³². It follows therefore that Mrs. Nkiruka Ngwu, a petty trader mother of four who lost her temper and used a hot pressing iron to burn a ten year old maid under care on the alleged reason that the maid maltreated her children whenever she was away³³, would on conviction spend seven (7) years in prison pursuant to the provision of the extant law of the state³⁴.

6. **Is the act of engaging in domestic violence inherited or learnt?**

This has been a minding bugging question. A school of thought has it that violence is in the blood or DNA of the perpetrator while another school of thought posits that it is learnt or acquired by association. To answer this question, an expert, a psychologist, Dr. Valentine Ezeh, a lecturer at the department of Psychology University of Nigeria, Nsukka, said men and women raised in a violent family subconsciously learn aggressive behaviours. Dr. Ezeh explained that couples who kill their partners usually come from troubled homes where aggression was the norm while growing up. The psychologist contended that people with low self-esteem tend to use aggression as a “defence mechanism” for their weakness³⁵.

³¹ *Ibid*

³² *Ibid*, Section 245

³³ “Vanguard Newspaper”2018 12th March p. 6

³⁴ Criminal law of Lagos State 2015, Section 245

³⁵ “Punch newspaper”(Lagos) 2017 31st December p. 53

Lending credence to Dr. Valentine Ezeh assertion, Mrs. Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, the coordinator of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) was of the view that ladies whose mothers were often beaten by their fathers, will also tend to surrender to their husbands' beatings, as they too will see the beatings as the man's natural way of correcting them for wrong doings³⁶.

7. Lagos State Government Action Plans Towards Eliminating or Reducing Domestic Violence to the Lowest EBB

The Lagos State Government has not relented in its drive to rid Lagos off domestic violence. The first move was to pass the Lagos State Protection against Domestic Violence Law 2007. The state also passed into law the Criminal Law of Lagos State 2015³⁷ which deals with sexual offences such as defilement, rape, unlawful sexual intercourse, sexual issues bordering on consent in sexual offences and other offences against morality including, but not limited to abortion.

To avoid delayed justice, the Lagos State Government established 'Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court' which has been designated to solely handle sexual violent cases for quick dispensation of justice in such cases. This is a commendable bold initiative.

The Lagos State Government launched 'Sex Offenders' register in 2014 as an executive order. There is the mandated reporting policy 2014 as well. There is the Lagos State Protection Policy and the policy is an annexure to the order and then there is the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) established in 2013.

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ Chapter 16 Sections 134 -148

It is an Agency of the Government, headed by Mrs. Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi. When the Agency was established in 2013, complaints was just three per month, but as at January, 2018 the complaints has increased to an alarming rate of one hundred and thirty (130) per month³⁸

A Survivor or victim of domestic violence can approach the police as a first step. A Survivor may dial this code #6630#. This service is available in English, Pidgin, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo languages. So there is no excuse that the Survivor is illiterate and cannot speak English unless the Survivor or victim chooses not to complain, in such case the Mrs. Vivour-Adeniyi led Agency may not be aware of it.

Further, the Lagos State Government has a Family Health Care Centre. There is also the Marebel Centre, Women at Risk. They provide free medical assistance to the Survivor or victim of domestic violence in Lagos³⁹.

The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) also provide free legal representation and transportation to the Survivors when Suspects are been prosecuted in the law court⁴⁰. That is not all; there is further the need to ameliorate the trauma of the Survivors of domestic violence. This is undertaken by the Clinical psychologists at the Lagos State Family Health Care Centres who minister to the emotional need and stability of the Survivors⁴¹.

³⁸ Daily Sun Newspaper”(Lagos) 2018January p. 32

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ *Ibid*

8. The Challenges Facing the Lagos State Action Plan in Her Efforts at Reducing Domestic Violence in the State

The challenges are of two folds: institutional challenges and customary challenges

- **Institutional challenges:**

The churches and the mosques, when they receive reports or complaints bordering on domestic violence, rather than take steps to prosecute the suspects, they begin to apply religious sentiments, wadding into the matter with a view to settling it at their offices, simply because the couples or family involved are their members. This approach of the religious bodies aids the perpetrators of violence to escape justice and the wrath of the law against domestic violence. The Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) are sometimes also guilty of not initiating criminal proceedings against the suspects, all in the name of being peace advocates. They mediate and try to counsel parties and try to pacify the oppressed partner not to take legal action against the spouse. It is when the violence is horrific that the NGO will quickly initiate criminal proceeding against the aggressors.

The Police on their part do not help matters. In many cases when they receive complaints from a wife or husband or from neighbours on behalf a child, they proceed to arrest and detain. This first step is commendable. However due to large scale corruption that has eaten deep into the force, the police begins to settle the matter at the station as if it is a family matter, rather than prosecute immediately after investigation is concluded. It is only when the suspect could not provide enough gratification or where the victim or complainant threatens to petition the police to a higher authority that the police will prepare charge and prosecute the suspect. This is a serious challenge to the Lagos State policy on Domestic and Sexual Violence.

- **Customary challenges:**

Many survivors are often discouraged by the societal attitudes. Some customs in Nigeria forbids women from reporting their husband to law enforcement agents or reporting to public authorities. Many Nigeria societies have what is called Town Unions. These Town Unions, in their constitutions make it mandatory that a domestic matter must first be reported to the Union for mediation and it is only when they union cannot resolve it that such matter can be referred to the police or any other agency of the state. By this approach, Domestic Violence is swept under the carpet.

9. Suggestions to Stemming the Tide of the Mournful Scourge of Domestic Violence in Lagos State

1. Parents and Guardians have a big role to play in investigating the family background of the man or lady their daughter or son intends to marry from. If the family has a notorious history of domestic violence, it is risky marrying from that family. Such violent family should be avoided in marriage.
2. Parents should inculcate the right values in their children or wards, giving good upbringing. This position will instill in them early enough the right attitude to marriage when they get married; by so doing they will eschew violence in every shed of it.
3. Incidentally Secondary school students engage in love dates. It is suggested that both secondary school students and tertiary institution students be given counselling by relationship experts in order to let them know how to identify abusive relationship. For instance when a friend or fiancé or fiancée becomes overly possessive, yells, harasses and indulge in stalking, then such a relationship will be violent based if it leads to a marriage eventually. Those in such relationships should quit and not dwell in the illusion that they can change their partners in a marriage. No one can change a grown up man or woman after wedding.

4. The moment a spouse is manifesting aggression and the other cannot handle it alone, he or she should consult a Psychotherapist or marriage counselor early for solution on how to handle the aggressive spouse so as to quell the tensed situation. Often the victims of domestic violence know their partners are aggressive but they remain in such tensed relationships without taking steps to contain it before it escalates. Aggression can be verbal or physical. Once a partner identifies this kind of trait in his or her spouse, and it persists despite seeking help from counsellors, the spouse being oppressed should opt for judicial separation or dissolution of such marriage in a competent court of jurisdiction before death occurs.
5. Churches and mosques should regularly preach against domestic violence, bearing in mind that since they admonish their followers to seek paradise, a spouse who dies in aggressive marriage is likely to miss the most priced and cherished paradise. Religious institutions should be bold enough to advice warring couples to separate before it degenerates to death of a partner. When the tension comes down the parties can come back to continue their union, at least alive.
6. There should be society enlightenment to remove stigma of separation. It is advisable that neighbours and friends should wade in to initiate separation early enough before it degenerates to death of a partner. Before Barrister Udeme Odibi stabbed her late husband Mr. Otike Odibi to death, Mr. Otike, as reported earlier in this article, alerted his friends and his mother of his wife's threat to kill him, but no serious action came from his so called friends and parents to cause separation between the estranged couple. Had separation been initiated, Mr. Otike Odibi's death would have been averted.
7. Religious bodies should emphasize love, morals and integrity and responsibility. People must eschew greed and avarice so that the

thoughts leading to money ritual will disappear. These evil thoughts of quick wealth compel spouses to use their partners for rituals, which usually involve unlawful homicide.

8. Domestic Violence includes inflicting injuries in children in a household. Parents therefore must control their temper towards their children so as not to harm or kill them. Parents must imbibe the spirit of disciplining their children with love.

If the entire recommendations above are followed by all and sundry, the incidence of domestic violence will reduce significantly. All hands must be on deck. These scornful and mournful scourges must be dealt with decisively in whatever way it demands. Human lives cannot continue to be wasted and damaged. This is a time of proactive action and no one should be left out of this campaign. With joint societal efforts success will be recorded against domestic violence perpetrators in Lagos state of Nigeria.