

# *Women Against Rape, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Exploitation (WARSHE)*

## **OUR BELIEFS AND OUR CORE VALUES**

- We believe that **WARSHE** is both an intellectual and a political programme
- **WARSHE** subscribes to the existence of the Almighty, but is opposed to how institutionalized religion is used to oppress and dominate women
- All **WARSHE** projects endeavour to empower women from the perspective of the particular (preventing and coping with sexual violence and abuse) to the general (improving the social status of Nigerian women)
- **WARSHE** does not believe that persons, especially women who have experienced sexual violence and abuse (SVA), or who allege they have experienced SVA deserve their ordeal, even if, in the worst scenario, they are prostitutes
- We believe that women in all parts of Nigeria and all around the world suffer from one form of oppression or another, although some women are more powerful than other women (some men and children) by virtue of their ethnic/racial, economic, family, religious and political backgrounds, and their age
- We do not believe that men are enemies of women; neither do we believe that women are enemies of women. Clearly also, we do not believe that women are devil incarnates, and they are no saints neither.

Women are human beings, with their own assets/strengths, and weaknesses

- However, given our historical, socio-cultural, economic and political context, we believe that ALL women are potential victims of SVA, and all men who possess certain kinds of attitudes to women, and believe women to be inferior to them, are potential sexual abusers
- We know that men who are convinced that women are human beings, and who are committed to the cause of women have a place in **WARSHE**, and some are very active in **WARSHE**
- Since our inauguration in 1998, we are yet to meet an accused sexual offender who has admitted to the accusation, just as we have observed that reportage of incidence of SVA is extremely low, compared with the whispered instances, and actual occurrence of the abuses
- Persons who sexually abuse others then cash in on the fact that their victims and potential victims do not possess the guts to report or speak out, to perpetuate further abuses. They also justify such abuses when issues of SVA of women are raised in public
- For us at **WARSHE**, NOTHING justifies rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or any form of violence against women, although we believe that women as individuals and members of groups can work actively to prevent these abuses
- Therefore, we ALWAYS insist that those who wish to work with **WARSHE** as volunteers and paid staff should be sure that they can withstand pressure: pressure to sweep cases under the carpet because the alleged sexual offender is a powerful person, a friend or a

relation; pressure to use **WARSHE** to hunt our enemies, and subtle pressures to convince us that a victim of SVA is a bad person

- One value that we hold dear at **WARSHE** is humility: we believe that we do not have all the solutions to the problems of girls and women; that victims of SVA are not inferior to us; and that we have a duty to help victims and potential victims of SVA (through consciousness raising) solve problems through critical reflection
- We believe that we have to shield the identity of victims always, and support them as they work through their ordeal even if we are of the view that they had acted carelessly or wrongly in the past
- We are convinced that sexual violence and abuse (and all forms of violence against women) is torture; degrading human treatment; humiliation; abuse of power; contempt, especially for women and they portray deep seated hatred
- Given the above, **WARSHE** helps potential victims and victims of SVA to prevent and cope with SVA through empathy, care, critical reflections and community (or collective action).

## **WARSHE**

Conference Centre and Guest Houses (Main Building)

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Ile-Ife

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