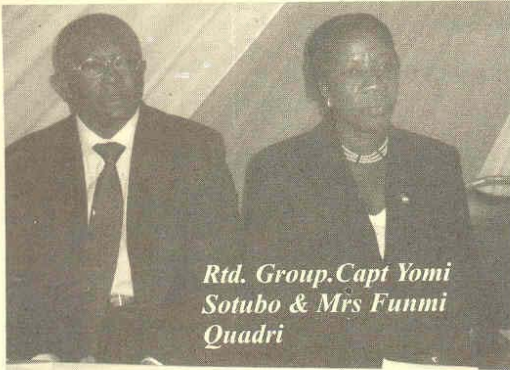


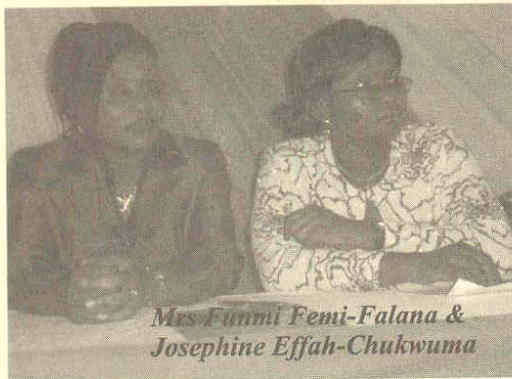
Project Alert

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Rtd. Group Capt Yomi Sotubo & Mrs Funmi Quadri

On the 3rd and 4th of December 2008, a two-day seminar was organized by Project Alert, a non-governmental human rights organization set up to provide information on various forms of violence against women and young girls. The theme of the seminar was, *Eliminating Gender-based Violence in Nigeria: The Role of Faith-based Organizations* and the venue was the Banquet Hall of The Lagos Travel Inn, Ikeja. The seminar was aimed at involving faith-based organizations and religious leaders in the effort to eliminate gender-based violence in the nation.



Mrs Funmi Femi-Falana & Josephine Effah-Chukwuma

Project Alert, as an organization, comprises of a six-member Board of Trustees. It was founded in 1999 by Mrs. Josephine Effah-Chukwuma, who also is the Executive Director of the organization. The primary mission of Project Alert, according to Mrs Effah-Chukwuma, is to educate society on the forms and prevalence of violence against women.

The seminar began at 9:00am with the registration of participants, who were mainly leaders of faith-based organizations such as The Anglican and Catholic Diocese, Nasfat, An-Sar-Ud-Deen and many other religious bodies.

The welcome remark was given by Louisa Ono Eikhomun, the Program Officer for Project Alert. Opening prayers

were said for about five minutes and the main programmed commenced at 10:00am with the welcome address by Mrs. Effah-Chukwuma.

In her welcome address, Mrs Effah-Chukwuma gave reasons why the program was being held at the selected date. She said, "it is worthy of note that this seminar could not have taken place at a more appropriate time than now. Firstly, this period is known world over as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The 16 days commences from November 25 (International Day on Violence Against Women/ Young Girls) and ends on December 10th, which is the International Human Rights Day." She described this period as the period in which governments, organizations and individuals are expected to carry out activities that would further raise public awareness on this all important issue that affects half of the world's population women- and come up with strategies aimed at combating it. The second reason she gave was that the 6th African Development Forum (ADF VI), a regional meeting organized yearly by AU and the ECA had just been concluded.

In her address to the leaders of the faith-based organizations present, she said, "faith-based organizations represent a critical ally in both preventive and curative efforts to end violence against women and young girls." She also pointed out that the leaders of most faith-based organizations are men, who typically have a significant moral authority in shaping the values and behaviour of men and women in their congregation.

For some reasons, the Cardinal of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos, Cardinal Olubunmi Okogie could not be present at the meeting. He however sent his own remarks in a letter. In his letter, Cardinal Okogie lamented that the world today erroneously refers to the woman as the weaker sex. He said, "scripture affirms that God created them, male and female, in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). It shows that the woman has a full possession of full human nature and is perfectly equal with man in moral value and status before the Creator. We must