The Role of Women in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta

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Declaration

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in October 2000, emphasizes the crucial role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. It urges UN member states to recognize the gendered nature of conflict, especially to protect women from gendered violence in conflict, and to increase the involvement of women at all levels of decision making in conflict management, resolution and peace processes, asserting

that full participation of women in peace processes can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. With this resolution there has been an increase in peace agreements that contain references to women or gender, but this has not been complemented with a marked increase in women's participation in formal peacebuilding processes. Women's contributions and views remain largely excluded, marginalized or overlooked in peace processes (Moosa, 2013).

In this thesis, the relevance of 1325's call for gendered perspectives on violent conflict and peacebuilding will be explored in relation to the long-running conflict in the Niger Delta. There have been many analyses of the causes of the Niger Delta Conflict and of the attempts to resolve it, but this thesis looks at the Niger Delta conflict through gendered lenses, undertaking analyses of women's experiences and involvement in the conflict, their relationship to existing formal conflict resolution attempts and, based on field research in the Niger Delta, a discussion of women's potential roles in bringing a more sustainable peace to the Delta.

The Niger Delta is an oil rich Southern region of Nigeria at the delta of the Niger River. From the early 1990s, the region was plagued by a series of conflicts related to oil, land, governance and ethnicity for over a decade. The Niger Delta struggle was most obviously characterized by male dominated violence, hence the roles women played in the conflict, whether as victims, supporters of militant activism or non–violent protesters, have been given little attention and this thesis aims to remedy this by uncovering women's varied experiences of the conflict. In 2009, a formal peace process saw the introduction of amnesty for the militants by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The amnesty programme was presented as a solution that would bring lasting peace to the Niger Delta region, but despite this effort the region still lacks sustainable peace and development. It is still plagued with high levels of unemployment, kidnapping, political instability and insecurity. Authors like Amusan (2014) and Umejesi (2010) have attributed the lack of sustainable peace in the region to an imbalance of involvement in the process between the genders. For example, Umujesi (2014) noted that the amnesty programme in 2009 failed to identify some victims of the conflict, such as women, and failed to take cognizance of the socio-economic and ecologic losses women suffered during the struggle. He noted that, traditionally, the women of the Niger Delta are fisherwomen and subsistence farmers. However, the activities of the oil companies polluted rivers and caused general environmental destruction. It is some of these issues which the amnesty

programme failed to address. This thesis will develop these insights into issues arising from the failure to include women's perspectives and participation in peace processes/peace building in the Niger Delta to date. Drawing from focus group discussions and expert interviews in the Delta, the thesis offers women's perspectives on the past, their current situation and the possibility of creating sustainable peace in the future.

Gender roles in the Niger Delta demand that the woman is the food provider, caretaker of the children, her spouse and vulnerable dependent relatives within her household which makes the impact of this hardship most visible on women. Igube (2007) notes that the life of women in the rural Niger Delta area revolves around farming, fishing, food processing, marketing etc. This is the core of their livelihood, but because of environmental degradation by the oil companies in the region, the economic activities and means of subsistence by the inhabitants, especially women, have been adversely affected. Hudson (2009) states that women suffer and gain from conflicts and where women have suffered it is important that peacebuilding processes should consider that suffering in the construction of a lasting settlement and consolidate or acknowledge any gains. Peacebuilding processes have a complicated task of not only paying attention to the varied roles that women play but also the impact of war on women. Attention to these details is essential for planning regarding issues in the post conflict period.

As well as suffering from the causes and impact of the conflict in the region, women also had a part to play during the conflict in the Niger Delta. For example, Dyan et al (2005) state that during armed conflict many women and girls assumed a range of gendered roles including frontlines combatants, spies, messengers, porters and wives. In the Delta there is evidence that women worked in military camps keeping records of armoury and spying on state security agents (Onyoyume 2013: 10). Moreover, women participated in protests against the oil companies (Ukeje 2002: 605; Ukeje 2004). This shows that the women were actively involved during the armed conflict in the Niger Delta, but as this research will demonstrate, in the post conflict peacebuilding process these women's concerns have not been given due consideration. Arguably the needs and perspectives of women involved in and affected by the conflict need to be considered if sustainable peace is to be achieved.

Although not engaged in formal peacebuilding, women in the Delta have not been silent. Over the years to register their displeasure, the women have used varieties of resistance like dancing, singing, demonstrations, participating in women's meeting and struggling to maintain their daily routines amidst the chaos and violence that surrounds them (WARDC, 2006). One example of such was the demonstration of Gbaramatu women of Delta State over the alleged occupation of the oil rich area by the multinational companies and the oil companies at least paid attention to them and agreed to come to the negotiation table with the women and listen to them without the occurrence of violence. Okpowo (2002) stated that the role played by these women in these demonstrations shows the possibility of an enduring post conflict reconstruction if women are involved. Thus, women's role in mobilizing for social justice could add a dimension to peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and represents a significant development that can be built upon.

One of the impediments to women's involvement in post conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta is the dominant regime of patriarchy manifested in the economic, social and institutional and traditional myths constructed to maintain male power and blunt popular awareness among women (Ukeje, 2004). This research aims to examine this and other impediments to women's involvement in the post-conflict peacebuilding process and ask how they might be overcome.

Dyan et al (2005, 3) have noted that the few international and national policies and programs developed to empower women or promote women in peace building too often remain superficial and as a result do little to challenge and dismantle structures that caused and fuelled the violent conflict. Although a number of authors have focused on the role women played during the conflict in the Niger Delta, not many have looked at the role of women in post conflict peace building and though authors like Ukeje (2004), Oruwari (2006), Obi (2011) and Amusan (2014) have identified in their work that gender dynamics were not given attention during the peace building process, not much academic work has been written on the role of women in the post conflict peace building, apart from Umejesi (2014). This research therefore will be making an important contribution to existing literature by creating awareness of the role of women in the conflict and in post conflict peace building in the Niger Delta. This information will be useful to the Nigerian government, policymakers and NGOs who are concerned with looking at policies and development plans for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta region. The research will contribute to existing literature that shifts focus to the necessity of women's

inclusion and attention to gender issues in the phases that follow violent conflict be it social, economic and political, by studying the specific context of the post conflict period in the Niger Delta.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The objective of this research is to;

1. Analyze the Niger Delta conflict through gendered lenses, paying attention to women's complex involvement in the conflict.
2. Critically analyze the predominant approach to 'peacebuilding' in the Niger Delta since the amnesty and ceasefire of 2009.
3. Analyze the gender dynamics in formal peacebuilding processes in the Delta.
4. Identify women's peace-building activities in the Niger Delta and their potential contribution to sustainable peace.
5. Examine the obstacles hindering women's participation in peace-building processes for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta and propose what can be done to overcome them.

1.3. Research Questions

My research is concerned with examining the gender dynamics of conflict and post-conflict sustainable peace, through a case study of the role of women in the Niger Delta. Therefore, my research seeks to answer the following questions;

1. How did conflict impact on the lives of women in the Niger Delta?
2. What approaches to peacebuilding have been undertaken in the Niger Delta to date?
3. What do women consider as sustainable peace in the Niger Delta?
4. Are women engaged in activities that could contribute to peacebuilding in the Niger Delta?
5. What factors hindering women from participating in post conflict peacebuilding?
6. How can women be incorporated into peacebuilding efforts?

1.4. Theoretical Framework – Gender Analysis of Conflict and Peace

This thesis begins from the premise that gender analysis is essential to understanding the causes and dynamics of conflict and the conditions for achieving positive peace. Gender here refers to socially constructed norms and practices of masculinity and femininity which are fundamental to the organization of societies and shape power relations within them. Positive peace is understood to mean a peace which is more than the absence of the direct violence of war but involves the creation of conditions of social justice and human flourishing (Galtung, 1985).

Several authors are of the view that understanding the complex roles, responsibilities and interest of women and men in armed conflict is key to peacebuilding. Moser (2001) in her work explores the experience and perspectives of women in violent conflict, arguing that women have the capacity to build relationships and transform inter group conflicts especially in post conflict situations. Pankhurst (2005) on the other hand acknowledges that most approaches to peacebuilding have marginalized or ignored issues of gender and women. Women consistently remain a minority of participants in peacebuilding projects and gender analysis rarely informs peacebuilding policies. She calls for strong adherence to policies and recommendation that would tackle issues relating to women, supporting her view with the theory that women have a stronger commitment to maintain long term peace than men. NìAolàin et al, (2011) brings a different dimension arguing that it is not just enough to integrate women into post conflict processes but also gender analysis should be integrated into all aspects of the newly developing or rehabilitating state. This research builds on these points in theorising why women should be involved in peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and how their perspectives can contribute to sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. In the next sub-sections, some of this conceptual thinking about women, positive peace and the relationship between them will be explained in more depth and the themes identified here will be referred to throughout the chapters of this thesis.

1.4.1 Women and Peace

Galtung's (1985) conception of 'negative peace' refers to the most commonly understood definition of peace 'the end or absence of widespread violent conflict associated with

war'. An example of this could be when there is a cease fire. Yet, peace means different things to different people. Peace Studies theorists have two main categories for peace as originally defined by Johan Galtung (1985). According to Galtung, any conception of peace portraying the absence of direct war and violence between states is negative peace; though not fully peaceful it is better than violence. However, while this is the form of peace generally accepted by governments and international agencies, it may include social and structural violence, including gender violence and inequalities against women (Pankhurst 2000**).**

Positive peace in contrast requires that violence be minimal or non-existent, this means that major conflicts of interest underpinning conflict and their manifestation need to be resolved. Positive peace requires the absence of indirect structural violence such as gender inequality (Duncan, Winter 2001 and Christie 2011). Positive peace presents a more lasting solution to ending armed conflict (MacGinty, 2006). It aims to end the social, economic and political roots of conflict and can be achieved through peacebuilding.

It is important to understand that there is a gender difference in the definition of peace which must be taken into consideration in post conflict process, this is because, what women and men specify as elements of positive peace may differ because of their roles, identities and experiences before, during and after conflict. For example, Moosa (2013) in her research found out that men tended to associate peace with the absence of formal conflict and insecurity at the community, regional, and national levels while women tended to associate peace with shelter, food, education and security in the home. Most approaches to peace building have either ignored or marginalized these issues of gender, therefore even when a peace agreement is reached the women may still feel the absence of peace because their needs and priorities are absent from the peace agreements (Moosa 2013).

There have been so many debates regarding women thinking about peace. Some argue that women should be involved in peace because their nurturing and mothering responsibilities are essentially different from men (the motherist position), and therefore better at peace making at some levels than men. The idea here is that their innate capacity for nurturing makes them more inclined towards peace building the reference to motherhood have been invoked to support the idea that there is a commonality to maternal

experience that can enhance understanding across communal and gender divides. Women are seen as more accepting of compromise in disputes and are less likely to support violence and war (Caproli and Boyer 2001). The motherist position has been critiqued by some women that it poses problem because it accepts women's subordinate role in the society. Writers like Judy El Bushra states that, "the problem is that women's role as mothers provides them with a platform on which to approach and appeal to powerful men, but it simultaneously undermines their desire to be taken seriously as political players" (El Bushra, 2007, page 140). Those who critique the motherist position state that it limits the role of women in post conflict societies. This means that in post conflict societies, women are caught between the need to establish a distinctive women's agenda on the one hand and the need to engage with an alien and potentially oppressive politics on the other. This research builds on these debates to uncover the weaknesses in peace building strategies such as little considerations for women needs, marginalization of gender analysis and few attempts to change discriminatory practices in institutions and societies. It looks at the kind of community/civil women groups that exist in the Niger Delta and what level, and how women have emerged to articulate gender related issues.

The difference between negative and positive peace enables us to create genuine peace. Negative peace which is the primary focus of formal post conflict actors should be replaced by positive peace which adopts removing of structural violence. Until the focus changes in line with the ideals of positive peace which addresses inequalities and oppression on women, peacebuilding activities cannot provide long term solution.

1.4.2 Peacebuilding

Johan Galtung who is referred to as the father of peace in his essay "Three approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peace-making and Peacebuilding" states that there should be peacebuilding structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the "root causes" of violence and support indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution (Galtung, 1976). Though peace-making, and peace-keeping are essential for successful peacebuilding, they often present little and restricted commitment because it's for a certain amount of time while peacebuilding refers to a long–term commitment that includes post conflict reconstruction and includes broad processes and stages necessary

to transform a conflict toward sustainable peace (Ledearch, 1997). Peace-making is to stop the hostility and enable the combatants to pursue non-violent options, peacekeeping aims to separate the warring parties and maintain a state on non-violence while peacebuilding establishes the conditions for sustainable peace (Bercovitch et al, 2002). This means that the major purpose of peacebuilding as defined by Bercovitch and Kadayifici (2002) is the prevention of repetition of a conflict. To achieve this, peacebuilding must go beyond diplomatic agreements to promote social and psychological change at the grassroots level. Thus, peacebuilding defined as the ability of women, men, boys in their own cultures to promote condition of non-violence, equality, justice and human rights of all people, to build democratic institutions, and sustain the environment (Mazurana and Mckay, 1999, p.9). Peacebuilding is not just an end to direct violence but aim to change social structures which contribute to the inequality in the society.

Expanding on this Boutrous Boutrous Ghali (1995: 823) defined peacebuilding in his report as an action to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace to prevent a relapse into a conflict. In other words, peacebuilding is acknowledging initiatives that aim to stop the reoccurrence of armed conflict through a long term- process of capacity building, societal transformation and reconciliation. Henning Haugerudbraaten (1998) presents two concepts of peacebuilding which are (a) short term involvement of the international community and (b) long term efforts by indigenous actors to promote political and economic development. The first involves political measures taken by external agents, it does not address the structural factors that brings about social building schemes. While the other one provides solution to the roots of the conflict because it is carried out by the local people who understand the need of the community. In emphasising, authors such as Kaye (2003) and Lederach (2005) states peacebuilding must acknowledge the cultural context. Getting to the root of the conflict and understanding the cultural context helps to determine the appropriate strategies for peacebuilding. Kaye (2011) points out that economic prosperity is a key to lasting peacebuilding in places of protracted conflict. Peacebuilding is therefore considered to deal with the issue of creating positive and sustainable peace which involves restoration of relationships, elimination of discrimination, removal of structural and physical violence and the creation of social systems that serve the need of the whole population, which is those at the grassroots (Maiese, 2003). Despite this peacebuilding literatures do

not fully identify the contributions of those in the grass root - especially women - and that is why understanding peacebuilding from a gendered perspective is important.

1.4.3 Importance of Peacebuilding from a Gendered Perspective

Peacebuilding from a gender perspective is the ability of women, men, girls and boys to promote the conditions of nonviolence, equality, justice and human rights, to build democratic institutions and to sustain a peaceful environment. It also involves aiming to change social structures which contribute to the inequality in society (Mazuranna and Mckay, 1999:9).

In defining peace from a gendered perspective, most studies accept that in conflict men are the perpetrators of violence and women are the victims, but the reality is that men and women experience conflict in different ways (El-Bushra and Piza-Lopez 1993.) These studies are gender blind, they are either neutral or take only a male centric approach Caproli (2005:162). Thus, authors such as Cockburn (2004) and Caproli (2005), state that a gender perspective on peacebuilding that considers the perspectives of women separately from those of men is the key to understanding peacebuilding processes. A gender lens is used to examine the different roles men and women play, and the ways in which their identities are constructed (Harris, 2011).

The experiences, perspectives and priorities of women regarding conflict are different from that of men. The involvement of women in the peace and recovery process provides an effective strategy for peacebuilding and enables the specific needs of women to be identified. Women are identified as mediators and decision makers in their homes, because in the domestic domain, they mediate conflict, build trust and dialogue in their families and communities. These vital roles that women play as peacebuilders is an indicator that women's meaningful involvement in political structures will have positive consequences for sustainable peace (Cardona et al, 2012). Women's participation at the local, regional and national governments encourages political stability and governance that is more representative and responsive. This also helps economy and development because Smee (2001:1) notes that over the past fifty years several of the fastest growing economies have been post conflict societies, their development in part has been due to the increased role of women in trade, production and as entrepreneurs.

According to Marie et al (2015), it's been observed that women groups have positive outcomes if the women groups have a strong influence on the negotiation process. Even when women groups only had moderate influence, an agreement was reached in majority of cases.

Stable institutions require women's participation. Given the fact women keep communities running during wars, (Ellerby and Mibenge, 2012), there should be recognition of their essential participation in maintaining the day to day life, this already existing role of theirs ought to be central to the stable resolution of conflict.

In gender studies literatures on peacebuilding, three themes have emerged (United Nations, 2002). The first theme focuses on the impact of armed conflict on women. The second theme looks at ways in which international humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping operations reduce or spread unequal gender relations within a population (Clifton and Gell, 2001). The third theme focuses on the absence of women in positions of decision-making process (United Nations, 2002). Stressing on the need to bring women to peacebuilding, Baines (2005:6) states that ignoring gender dynamics and excluding women from peace negotiations prevents the implementation of any resulting agreements. In the following chapters of this thesis, this study takes up these three themes. It analyses the impact of the Niger Delta conflict on women, critiques the predominant approach to establishing a negative peace from a gender perspective and, with reference to field research in the Delta, considers women's perspectives on peace, their current engagement in peacebuilding and arguments for their further inclusion. The work in this thesis is therefore a contribution to thinking about the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda, particularly Resolution 1325 and its 'sister' resolutions, which call for women's perspectives, participation and protection in responses to conflict and efforts to build peace.

1.5 Methodology

This research relies on qualitative methodology. Desk-based research, gathering secondary sources such as newspaper articles, journals and books is one component of the research methodology. These sources help me in understanding debates about

gendered experiences of war and the role of women in peacebuilding generally and help me to analyse the existing levels of women's peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. This approach is complemented by empirical field research in the Niger Delta involving interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The fieldwork was carried out from January 2017 to April 2017 in Bayelsa State and Delta State in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria.

Map of Bayelsa State.

Source: Google

Bayelsa is a state in southern Nigeria which is located in the Niger Delta. Its capital is Yenagoa. This state was formed in 1996 from part of Rivers state, thus it is one of the newest states of the Nigerian Federation. It is a riverine setting and as such most of the communities are surrounded by water. It sits on one of the largest crude oil and natural gas deposits in Nigeria, but despite this the majority of people in this area live in poverty. There are several dialects spoken in state, but the main dialect is Ijaw. The first map of shows the places visited, these are small, rural towns in Bayelsa state, hence not very clear on the map.

Map of Delta State

Source: Google

Delta state is also an oil and agricultural state located in southern Nigeria with a total land area of 16,842 square kilometres. The capital is Asaba, while Warri is the economic hub of the state. The state is ethnically diverse but the major languages here are Urohobo, Itsekiri, and Ijaw. The places visited in Delta State falls under Warri South and Uvwie as shown on the map.

The traditional occupation of the people in Bayelsa and Delta is mainly fishing and farming, therefore there is a high dependency on their river and land for survival. The average woman from this region takes the responsibility of feeding the family. The women engage in petty trading, farming and selling products from illegal oil refineries just to sustain their families. It is therefore a known fact that the women from this region are not only hard working but fend for the family with or without the man in the home. Despite the violence in this region the women still carry out their ascribed roles. Though the men are the leaders or figure head in the home, the women are major providers in this region because most times, they are the ones willing to do the farming and fishing to keep the home going.

In Bayelsa, I worked with a gatekeeper NGO, Stakeholders Alliance for Corporate Responsibility (SACA). SACA advocates for international codes and standards for indigenous communities with regards to extractive industries operating in these areas. They lay emphasis on the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous People. They also promote principles of human security and human rights. One of the activities of the NGO is their work in encouraging women to participate in community decisions and development which connects to my area of interest. In Bayelsa I used the help of a research assistant from SACA. Working with this gatekeeper I identified key informants and women's community groups to approach for participation. I then used snowball sampling to increase the number of participants for the interviews and/or focus groups.

The field research is qualitative in nature, relying on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Semi-structured interviews were held with NGO staff and

selected women activists. The interview guide ensured key questions were asked of all participants while allowing for the development of each participant's experiences and angle. Focus group discussions were held with the women in the communities visited. According to Bryman (2012: 503), FGDs allow participants through communal discussion to bring to the fore issues in relation to a topic that seem to be important and significant to them. This is important as it enabled me to understand what sustainable peace is envisaged to be by women in the Niger Delta, as well as find out more empirical information concerning, for example, the work undertaken by women's civil society organizations.

In Bayelsa, focus groups were gotten through the communities that my gate keeper works with. We visited the community leaders and told them what our research was all about, we told them that we would like to interview women in the communities. The community leader spoke to the women leader who in turn reverted back and told us a suitable day the women could meet with us. The woman leader in each community then sent information to women in their community inviting them for a meeting on a particular day.

To ensure that my field research met ethical standards, a review of my proposed methodology was carried out by the School of Religion Research Ethics Committee. To ensure ethical research, I committed to the following principles and practices. The first step was getting informed consent from the participants. To do this, an information sheet was given to all the participants, explaining to them that the research will identify women's active roles in conflict resolution in the region and explores how their perspectives can be included in the search for lasting peace. Participants were told why the research is being done and what it would involve if they agreed to participate. Every participant had a copy of the information sheet which they signed giving their consent before the interviews began. (For details on the information sheet, see appendix B). For those participants in the focus group who could not read, the researcher read from the information sheet and explained to them. After which some wrote their names or gave their consent for their names to be written on the consent form.

With regards to anonymity, the participants were made aware that while the interviews would be used for the thesis and possibly publication purposes, they would be referred to by pseudonyms unless they were willing to be named. Furthermore, they were reassured that no part of the audio interviews would be played in any public forum. Following the

semi-structured interview approach, an interview guide was developed to ensure key questions were asked of all participants while allowing for the development of each participant's experiences and angle (see interview schedule and the questionnaire developed to guide the FGDs at appendix A). The research also made use of an observational approach, for example, as we moved around the communities, I watched out for the gender dynamics in the community.

Although most of the field research in Bayelsa was done in collaboration with SACA, through my research assistant from SACA, I established contact with another NGO in Bayelsa called FIDA (Federacion Internacional De Abogadas: International Federation of Women Lawyers). This is an international organization with branches in Nigeria. The organization fights against injustices done to women and advocates for the human rights of girls and women, but part of what they do in this region is advocating for peace. Through this contact I was able to conduct an interview with Mrs. Dise Shiela Ogbise Erhisere the chairperson of FIDA in Bayelsa State.

With the help of my research assistant, I was able to identify and recruit key participants for interviews and focus group discussions and then use snowball sampling to increase the number of participants to the focus group discussions. The aim of all the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews in these communities was to enable me to understand the women's experiences of the conflict and peacebuilding activities and their potential contribution to sustainable peace through identifying peacebuilding activities undertaken by women's civil society organisations and the obstacles hindering women's involvement in post conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. The discussion also focused on the women's understanding of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and what peace meant to the women in these communities.

On the first day of the field work, I had a mock discussion with my research assistant on the focus group questionnaire to ensure cultural relevance and the coherence of the approach used. Once the research commenced, participants for the interviews and focus group discussions gave their consent by signing a consent form (for those who were literate) or we wrote the participant's name after getting verbal consent from those who could not write or who did not want to sign the consent form. On the advice of the research assistant, I provided lunch in some communities or money to buy lunch in some others. Most of these discussions were carried out in public venues, like a town hall, which was

a safe and open environment as the safety of the researcher and research assistant was always considered to be important.

During my field work I remained aware of security concerns such as kidnapping or mistaken identity for being an oil worker. There are also geographically contained pockets of the region where this kind of activity is known to occur, therefore I avoided these areas. Moreover, my gatekeeper, who has been in this region for more than twenty years and is very familiar with the area helped me to navigate this region. I always kept in touch with members of my family who live in the region and made regular skype calls to my supervisor.

1.5.1 Participants

The participants in Bayelsa were contacted through my gate keeper. This is because the communities visited in Bayelsa are communities SACA has had previous interactions with. The participants in Delta State were contacted mainly through religious Christian church groups by the researcher. This is because I have direct contacts with these groups, and I grew up here. In Delta state, the women's groups of some churches in this area were contacted about the research. These women leaders informed the women in the churches about the research. The participants for the focus group discussions (FGDs) were mainly adult women recruited through snowballing. The choice of adult women was to enable me to learn from mature members of the communities what sustainable peace is envisaged to be by the women in the Niger Delta, as well as find out more empirical information concerning for example, the work undertaken by women's civil society organizations. Furthermore, although most of these communities are supposedly open to men and women discussing issues together, women are often mere listeners/observers. Therefore, creating a women-only discussion space was vital to allow women to speak up and make their views known. However, male community leaders and traditional elders were also interviewed to form an analysis of gender dynamics and power in the community.

At the end of each interview or focus group discussions (FGDs) the participants had the opportunity to debrief. Participants reviewed and reflected on the session and made

comments to the researcher concerning the process or the content of the discussion. Some participants agreed for their names to be used in the research and others wanted anonymity – and these requests have been accommodated in the report of the findings that follows. The FGDs and interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of all involved. After the field visit all interviews were transcribed and the script saved and stored on my password protected computer. In line with Trinity requirements these transcripts will be securely stored for ten years and then destroyed.

1.5.2 Field Work in Bayelsa

This research was conducted in five communities in Bayelsa. These communities are communities SACA had previous contact with and at the time of the research SACA was evaluating the GMOU (General Memorandum of Understanding) between the oil producing communities and the multinational oil companies. As SACA is well-regarded in the communities, access to the communities was not difficult. We just needed to take permission from community leaders in order to gather the women.

I spent four weeks in Bayelsa and conducted focus group discussion in the following communities – Okordia, Ikarama, Imirigi, Ayamabele, with a total of 16-20 women in each focus group, bringing this to a total of 80 women in Bayelsa state. The research was done mostly in Broken English (Nigerian Pidgin English) which I speak fluently. In Ayambele community the research was done with the aid of a local interpreter. This was for two reasons firstly, the language spoken in this community is Ijaw, and secondly, though my gate keeper could speak this language he advised that in this community the people would listen or give more attention if it was one of their own talking to them.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the following community leaders and NGOs s in Bayelsa State (all consented to be named in the research apart from the first women leader in Ikarama). Each interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes.

i.   Women leader of Ikarama
ii.   King Richard Seiba, Ibeda-Owei of Okordia kingdom (community king)
iii. Madam Alice (leader of Women for Environmental Justice Network in Imirigi Community

iv.   Mr. Aba (The director of SACA). He was interviewed because most of his work involves women in the rural communities in Bayelsa

v.   Mrs. Dise Sheila Ogbise –Erhisere (the chairperson of FIDA in Bayelsa State).

Some Photographs from the Field Work

These participants consented to be photographed for this this research

Photo 1 showing the researcher with the women of Imirigi

1.5.3. Field work in Delta State

In the second phase of the field work I spent four weeks in Delta State. I did not have a research assistant in Delta State, but I am familiar with the town of Warri because this is where I grew up. I conducted three focus group interviews in three communities and held three semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in peacebuilding activities in the Niger Delta.   A total of 66 women were interviewed for the focus group discussions. The research was conducted in the following communities, Ekpan, Ubeji, and Jeddo.

Photo 2 Researcher with some of the Ubeji women

The semi structured Interviews in Delta State included the following persons:

a. **Mrs. Johnson Omonui -** Executive director of Lift Up Foundation. Her foundation focuses primarily on health and peace for women in the Ndokwa West Local government area of Delta State.

b. **Mrs. Vivian -** She is the director of Rudolf, an NGO which fights for the empowerment of women in the rural Ndokwa Local Government area. The organization focuses on skills acquisition for women in Ndokwa local government. They occasionally carry out peace building activities

c. **Alhaji Paxman Ekpuze -** He is a peace activist and the acting state director/chairman of the United Nations POLAC (Positive Livelihood Award Centre) Peace Programme in Delta State.

1.6. Ethical Considerations and Responses

Prior to undertaking the field visit to the Niger Delta, an application was made to the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Religion, TCD and the Committee approved this application before I travelled. A number of ethical issues needed consideration in relation to the research area and proposed methodologies. For example, women participating in this research have experienced periods of conflict. Their gender also makes them unequal in their society. Interviews and focus groups can therefore bring up difficult issues related to either of these themes.

To ensure ethical research the participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the research and the issues to be covered in the FGDs/interviews before they participated. Participants were assured that, unless they wished, they would not be named in the notes, transcript, thesis or publications. Instead terms such as 'Focus Group 1 participant' or 'NGO staff' are used. Participants' consent was secured, and they were informed that they could withdraw at any time. Consultation with the gatekeeper identified social supports in the region that participants could be directed to if they experienced upset. In relation to data storage, my practices conform to those expected by TCD - data is stored under password protection on my computer and will be kept for ten years following the interviews, it will then be destroyed by me or my supervisor.

1.7. Personal Safety of Researcher

I am originally from the Southern part of Nigeria and have lived in the Niger Delta. I'm aware of security concerns in this region and know that these are geographically contained in certain pockets of the region, which I did not enter. Moreover, I did not travel alone as I worked with a gatekeeper who has been in this region for more than twenty years and is very familiar with the area. With the help and advice of my gatekeeper I was able to navigate this region. I kept in touch with members of my family who live in the region always and made regular skype calls to my supervisor.

1.8. Limitations of the Research

The field research visit in Bayelsa state was brief due to limits of time and resources. It was also not possible to travel extensively in the Delta due to the safety considerations

outlined above. Access to the field was also somewhat limited by my reliance on one particular gatekeeping NGO. However, as mentioned earlier this gatekeeper is well established in the area and trusted by the communities. Another issue encountered in the field was that due to the informal nature of women's community groups, the history and activities of these groups is undocumented and can only be constructed verbally rather than through any records.

Undoubtedly further time in the region would have enhanced the quantity of the data and my ability to further my findings and analysis. This points to the need for future research on this theme.

1.9. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this thesis, as reported and discussed in chapters five and six, was done through manual thematic analysis. This is a qualitative data analysis method that identifies meaning across a set of data (Sarantakos, 2007). I took note of recurring themes during the research especially from the field work and identified these and other themes in my later analysis of interview and FGD transcripts. These re-occurring themes are developed and analysed in the forthcoming chapters in relation to the research aims and questions.

1.10. Thesis Structure

Following from this introduction, which has outlined the topic, aims, questions, theories and methods underlying this research, the chapters of the thesis will proceed in the following way:

Chapter 2 – Conflict in the Niger Delta

This chapter provides historical, political, and economic and gender background to the Delta and offers an analysis of the history, causes and consequences of the Niger Delta Conflict.

Chapter 3 – Women and Conflict in the Niger Delta

This chapter provides a gendered account of the conflict, examining women's multiple experiences before, during and after the conflict. It pursues the argument that one reason why women should be included in peacebuilding is their diverse experiences of conflict.

Chapter 4 –Peacebuilding Processes in the Niger Delta

This chapter analyses previous and current attempts to bring peace to the Delta. It surveys these attempts with a gender-sensitive lens, noting the absence of women from formal peace efforts. Building on chapter two's analysis of women's experiences of the conflict, it adds to arguments about why women should be included through reference to international instruments and academic literature on gender and peacebuilding.

Chapter 5– Research Findings

This chapter reports on the findings from the field work on Bayelsa State carried out in spring of 2017. The chapter is organised around the key research questions which drive the thesis (outlined in this introduction) and reports on the opinions of interviewees and FGD participants in response to these questions.

Chapter 6 – Analysis of Findings and Conclusion
This concluding chapter highlights the key themes that emerged from the interviews and FGDs concerning women's perspectives and potential contributions to peace in the Delta. It also analyses the on-going barriers to women's voices being included in attempts to create peace, while revealing the particular contributions women can make to imagining and enacting sustainable, positive peace.

Chapter 2. The Niger Delta Region and the Causes of Conflict

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the Niger Delta Region. It provides the background necessary to understand the conflict phases and the cause of conflict in the Niger Delta. The chapter argues that there are so many theoretical explanations given for the conflict in the Niger Delta, but one aspect that has not been explored extensively is the gender dynamics of the conflict. The chapter puts forward the argument that understanding the gender dynamics of the conflict could contribute to understanding sustainable peace in the region.
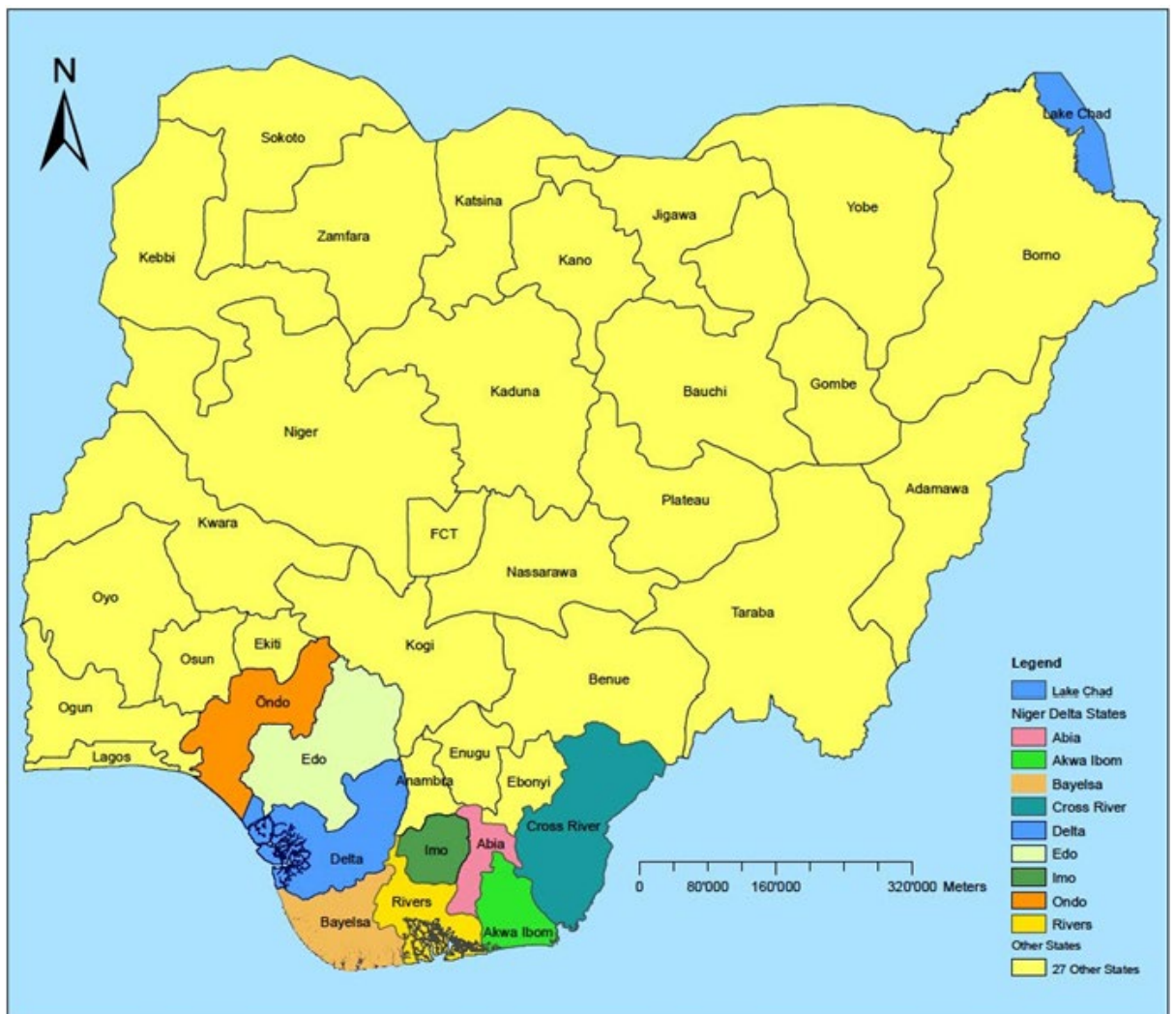
Map 1 showing the oil producing states of the Niger Delta: from American Journal of Environmental Protection (Aniefiok. E et al. 2003).

The Niger Delta region is composed of nine states which include Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta State, Abia, Imo, Ondo and Edo. The geographical perimeter of the region spreads from the Benin River on the West to the Imo River in the East all the way to the river Niger where it forms its own tributaries. The current estimate of the population is not yet ascertained but Watts (2004: 58) estimates the population in the region to be about seven million. The pattern of settlement in this region is predominantly rural and nuclear, with communities occupying the dry land along the swamp. The livelihood in this area is usually characterized by peasant farming on small lands, fishing and hunting. Prior to the discovery of oil, the region was rich in agricultural products like cassava

This region has a massive oil basin of about 70.000sq, 606 oil fields, 275 flow stations, 5,284 wells, four refineries, ten export terminals, gas plants and a large sector of liquefied gas. There are fourteen multinational oil companies operating in this region which are both private and state owned some of which include Chevron, Texaco, Mobil, Agip, etc., but the most prominent of them is Shell. Shell is seen as a key player in this region because it is responsible for a large portion of production activities in this region and started operations here even before Nigeria became a state (Akintola, 2011).

Oil was first discovered in the Central Niger Delta in 1956 at Oloibiri, a remote creek near Yenagoa where the capital of Bayelsa state is located presently (Watts and Ibaba, 2011). Shell B-P (as it was called then) quickly built a camp for workers, electricity, water etc. and sunk seventeen more wells in Oloibiri. The Nigerian oil industry grew quickly, and a giant oil field was discovered at Bomu in Ogoniland, thus Shell rapidly expanded its operation across the oil basin. By the first oil boom in 1973 Nigeria was accounting for 3.5% of world output. Nigeria therefore emerged as a place for low cost, high quality oil. Despite this, the community where oil was first discovered is now a rural slum with a population about one thousand (a change from the population of 10,000 during the boom). It has no roads, electricity, water, functioning primary school and rural livelihoods have been eradicated because of the heavy pollution of the creeks. This picture is repeated in many of the creeks in the Niger Delta region where oil is produced.

Despite the perceived wealth the region still languishes in abject poverty. The rural communities of this region host some of the most sophisticated multinationals on earth but still show extreme underdevelopment, with unemployment ranking as high as 80% and a lack of basic amenities. For example, the community source water for their cooking, drinking and other domestic uses from polluted rivers or lakes that have been used for disposing of oil waste and other forms of human waste (Obi, 2009). The findings from the Niger Delta Human Development Report (2016) indicate poor quality infrastructure, high unemployment, and high poverty of 69% and the increase of HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, Imasogie and Osaretin Odia (2009: 27) state that a lot need to be done for the socio-economic and cultural freedom of the people in the rural areas because the region lacks holistic development. For example, during a visit by these authors to some of the communities, informants stated that the construction of a block of classrooms or a single health care centre cannot take the place of potable drinking water, good roads, and electricity and industrials mills for their agricultural produce. The region also suffers the devastating environmental impact of oil production and oil leak incidents making it one of the world's most severely petroleum impacted ecosystems and one of the five most petroleum-polluted environments in the world (Niger Delta Natural Damage Assessment and Restoration Project, 2006). The abundant resources that many assumed would bring the "good life" to the people have continued to be a mirage as the region has lacked justice, progress and peace. Before the discovery of oil and gas in the region, fishing and farming was the primary occupation of the people making it a subsistence economy but with the discovery of oil attention became diverted to the production and distribution of oil. From this period contention began to arise over the distribution, allocation and management of oil rents plaguing the region with conflict.

The production of oil in Nigeria is operated by fourteen majors bound by a joint operating agreement with the government to determine the distribution of royalties and rent. This makes it a form of state-landed property, that means any land which has oil belongs to the government (Haussmann, 1981). Obi (1997) states that the Nigerian economy revolves around the struggle, control and distribution of oil rents. This is due to the rentier nature of the Nigerian state. The rentier nature here means that the Nigerian State relies on the proceeds from the sale of oil, with little contribution to the production process and very little focus on the other sectors of the economy. This characterizes the over

dependent nature of the Nigerian economy which is sustained by the oil gotten from the Niger Delta region.

The importance of oil to the international economy and the instability in world supplies has made Nigerian oil strategic. According to Watts (2004), even though the discovery of oil has opened the nation to investment and global trade, which have benefitted several political actors both at the local and international level, it has not accounted for much internal progress. The revenue gained from oil has not translated into a better standard of living for the people, infrastructural development, and stability of the nation (Gary and Karl, 2003), especially in the Niger Delta region where the oil is majorly harnessed.

Although oil is not the only natural resources in Nigeria, it has become crucial in defining politics and power in the Nigerian State. Ikelegbe (2006: 31) states that oil has brought an intense struggle for power and rents by different groups which has generated resentment, identity mobilization, instability and conflicts. With the presence of oil in the Niger Delta Region there is so much to fight for (Ikelegbe, 2006). At the community level, resource opportunities come from recruitments, surveillance contracts, community development projects and direct payments as well as other benefits from the multinational corporations MNCS). Initially only the traditional rulers, businessmen and local elites had access to these benefits but with the increase in violent struggles for resources, the youth militia, ethnic groups and leaders have more access to the oil resource benefits and all these groups form an integral aspect of the conflict (Ikelegbe, 2006).

The above scenario has fostered a conglomeration of interest in the Niger Delta Region. Each party aims to lay hold on something from the economy. This has greatly impacted the role, position and pattern of relationships that exists between the various factions in the region. This situation paints a complex scenario between agitation for resource control, socio-political marginalization and the actual criminality that has pervaded the struggle over oil rents in the Niger Delta region.

2.2. The Conflict Phases

While the oil economy and its control form one of the key underpinnings of conflict in the region, there are other sources of violent unrest too. Political agitation in the Niger Delta dates to the colonial era in 1951 when the Eastern region of Nigeria was created to

be one of the three major constituents in the nation. The other two constituents were the North and West, these two constituents were dominated by the Hausa and Yoruba respectively, while the Eastern region was dominated by the Igbos. There was no southern constituent created because the peoples of this area were composed on multiple ethnic minorities, so these minorities were distributed between the East and the West. The Niger Delta as a minority group – including the Ogoni, Ijaw and Itsekiris – expressed discontent and fears about being included in the Eastern Region. Because of this, a commission was set up by the colonial government in 1958 called the Sir Henry Willinck Commission to investigate the growing agitations and fears of the Niger Delta people. Though the Commission created the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB), it did not, however, do anything to alleviate the fears of the Niger Delta people. It was amidst these grievances that the first opposition was launched.

The first opposition launched in the Niger Delta against the oil companies was called the 'Twelve Day Revolution'. This opposition was started by a group of Niger Delta Ijaw youth led by Isaac Adaka Boro on the 23rd of February 1966 at the Tantonabau Riverine area (Agbiboa, 2015). He declared the Niger Delta a sovereign republic (Niger Delta Republic: NDR) seeking, amongst other things, ownership and control of the oil in its territory. This 'revolution' was quickly quashed by the Federal forces (Okonta and Douglas 2003). Though this revolution was crushed, it awakened the ethnic consciousness of the minorities in the Niger Delta and brought about the establishment of various civil society groups.

Boro and his men were integrated into the Nigerian army and sent to fight in the Nigerian civil war where he was killed in 1968. Despite this, the fundamental question raised by Boro and his men during his agitation was not answered. This question includes the question of who has the environmental sovereignty between the State and the local government and the ownership of petroleum resources in the region. These were the main grievances behind the armed struggle, but they were not addressed (Umujesi, 2014) and the repression and injustice against the Niger Delta people by the military government and the oil companies continued.

It was against this background that the Ogoni resistance represented by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP) was formed 24 years later in 1990 by Ken Saro Wiwa. The group was a grassroots movement that was environmental, cultural and

human rights based but were not a political or religious group. Ken Saro Wiwa was an international businessman, a writer and an activist for the Ogoni people who resided in London at the time. He researched and wrote the Ogoni Bill of Rights which he presented to the elders and leaders of the Ogoni and it was signed. It was then presented to the Federal military government headed by General Ibrahim Babangida and the Shell Oil Corporation. Although the Bill was acknowledged, no further action was taken with regards to its implementation. The Bill amongst other things contained some of the following; the right to control the resource gotten from the land and use a proportion of the resources for the development of the Ogoni community, the right to protect the environment from further degradation, political control of the Ogoni affairs by the Ogoni people, the right to true fiscal federalism and democracy, etc.

When there was no response from the government, the group internationalized its campaign by linking with global rights and advocacy networks. On the 4th of January 1993, Ken Saro Wiwa led about 300,000 people who marched in a peaceful and non-violent protest to show their dissatisfaction with the government and Shell Oil Company. The group gave Shell oil a 30-day ultimatum to address the problem presented by the Ogoni people. The response to the protest by the government was a massacre of the protesters by the military with several lives lost and the key leaders of the movement arrested with no charges. Obi et al state that the response of the government was that of repression and indifference (Obi et al 2005: 11).

It was this non-violent protest and the global campaign by this group that placed the activities of oil companies (especially Shell) and the Nigerian Government under the spotlight for their roles in the abuse of human rights, exploitation and pollution of the people (Obi et al 2011: 8). Although the organisation employed peaceful means in its struggle, the non-violent Ogoni struggle ended between 1993 and 1994 with the trial, conviction and execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and other prominent leaders of the MOSOP group.

This led to a more antagonistic phase, where the Ijaw ethnic minority youth in the Niger Delta met in Kaima and proclaimed the Kaima Declaration in December 1998. Kaima is a place regarded by the Ijaw youth as a spiritual home of Ijaw nationalism and resistance (Umujesi, 2014:6227). This was because Kiama was the birth home of Isaac Adaka Boro, regarded by then as an Ijaw Martyr (Obi et al 2008). The Kaima Declaration emphasized

that the ethnic Ijaw people oversaw the petroleum resources found in their land and gave the oil companies an ultimatum to leave the Niger Delta by 30 December 1998. The Federal military government responded with the reinforcement of troops in the region thereby crushing the protest, but again did not address any of the grievances of the people.

In 1999, Nigeria returned to democratic rule and the conflict took a more violent and political turn. Politicians took advantage of the anger of unemployed youths and made them into fighting tools against opposing political parties or political opponents (Obi et al 2008). By the year 2006, there was a full insurgence in the region as several militant alliances like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) began to emerge. This group came out with the intention of closing the oil industry. The militants shut down oil infrastructures on a large scale. They attacked oil installation and government security forces. Within the first half of the year, they were able to shut down 300 operating oil fields along with the kidnapping of several foreign expatriates and local oil workers.

MEND has no clear leadership structure. Obi (2008:424) states that MEND was not a well-defined entity but a coalition of the armed groups operating in the Niger Delta. The group had different leaders all over the region. The decision of the group to not have a single command stemmed from the fact that they wanted to overcome the past failures of other groups whose structured leadership was the target for elimination or compromise by the government or the oil companies (Curson, 2011). The group was filled with various factions with different agendas. As a result, various criminal minds used the group's agitation for resource control to engage in criminal activities like extortion, sabotage, kidnapping, inter and intra communal conflicts, etc. (Jiboua, 2005: 18).

Again, the government responded to this insurgency with a military Joint Task Force (JTF) to unleash maximum attack on the militants in these communities. The clash between the militants and the Joint Task Force led to a huge loss of life in the region along with insecurity, kidnapping, rapes and a huge loss of oil and income to the government and the oil companies daily. This made it impossible to address any grievance of the community and there was an urgent need to find a way out. This led to the offering of amnesty to the militants by the Federal government, which the militants accepted.

2.3 Theories about the Causes of the Conflict

It can be derived from the account above that the causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta are a result of multi-layered factors (Agbiboa 2015, Idemudi and Ite, 2006). Indeed, in the existing literature, there are many theories about the causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta. For instance, Ifeka (2000) state that the conflict in the Niger Delta stems from political repression and undemocratic practices by the past military dictators. Some attribute the conflict to the clamour for more oil revenue (Omeje 2004, Ross 2003, etc.). While others believe the conflict results from the frustration and marginalization among the local communities (Fleshman 2002, Ukeje 2001, etc.). Some scholars have explained the conflict within the broad context of environmental degradation, unemployment and the repressive activities of the Nigerian State and the multinational oil corporations (Frynas 2001, Clark 2009) and others have explained it within the security nexus (Agbiboa, 2015). These various explanations are very useful in explaining the conflict in the Niger Delta, and demonstrate that it is difficult to rest the cause of the conflict in the Niger Delta Region solely on one single factor or explanation. For peacebuilding to be comprehensive, therefore, responses to these different explanations and conflict causes must be somehow integrated or intertwined.

Although it is not possible to analyse all the various factors or explanations given for the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta Region, what is important is trying to find a possible relationship among the factors responsible for the conflict (Idemudia and Ite, 2006). It is difficult to say that one factor was the major cause of the conflict because at different times, different factors have heightened the conflict. Supporting this argument is Ibeanu (2000), who says that it is not easy to assess if all the factors responsible for the conflict are primary or secondary factors. Therefore, what I attempt to do below is to briefly look at some of the discourse or explanations for the causes of conflict that have been used in framing a multi-layered framework for understanding the conflict.

One of the discourses is the debate about whether cultural or ethnic factors can explain conflicts and the other debate is whether greed (the competition over natural resource rents) or grievance (relative deprivation that results to grievance and fuels conflict) can explain conflict (Tadjoeddin, 2007: 1, Woodward, and 2005: 10).

The first debate stems from Samuel Huntington in 1993 who emphasized culture as the explanation for new conflicts. His argument asserted that the new intra state wars (that is in the post-Cold War era) involve a clash of civilizations between ethnic-religious groups and that these new wars will be fought along ethnic-religious lines. This argument was criticized by authors who emphasized ethnicity as the explanation for new conflict, but authors have differed in their explanation of the sources and nature of ethnic conflict. Gurr in his work gives the conditions for the mobilization of ethnic minority grievances which include: (1) unequal treatment of minority communities by dominant or mainstream groups; (2) competition with other groups for access to power in new states; (3) the contagious effects of ethno political activism elsewhere; (4) patterns of state building, political power and economic development that channel communal energies into either protest or rebellion; and (5) the emergence of new ethnic minority elites who are willing to, and are adept at mobilizing resources (Gurr 1993:23). He therefore states that ethnic groups are at risk only to the degree that they have been discriminated against economically, socially, culturally, or politically.

The second debate on greed or grievance stems from authors who place emphasis on political factors as the explanation for new intra state conflict. One of the authors who emphasizes political factors as the explanation for new conflict is Gurr. In his work titled 'relative deprivation' he states that the motivation of a group to participate or start violence stems from the discrepancy of what they think they deserve and what they think that they can get (Gurr 1968:1104). That is the discrepancy between their aspiration and achievement. An example of this discrepancy could be interethnic group inequalities on political, economic or social grounds (Stewart 2002). To expand on the above, Gurr in his work *Minorities at Risk* (1995), in explaining the origin of grievances and how ethnic grievances can accelerate into conflict participation, states that the political and international structure can create an environment for ethnic groups to start conflict.

This model of relative deprivation and grievance as an explanation for intra state conflict was criticized by several scholars who emphasize economic factors. For example, authors like Hoeffler and Rohner (2009), and Fearon and Latin (2003) in exploring why motivation for rebellion exist everywhere but insurgency breaks out only in some places agree that 'what is critical is not whether people have reason to commit violence, but what enables them to carry it out – circumstances…' (Sherman 2001:28). The circumstances include natural resources, poverty, weak states, geographical terrain,

places with low income for potential rebels, etc. (Dalky 2012, Collier and Hoeffler 2007). Their concept portrayed greed as the reason for conflict and do not see relative deprivation as useful in explaining conflict because it failed to explain why some poor places or people do not participate in violence.

The above concept of greed was also critiqued by other authors. For example, Humphrey (2005: 511-513) highlights the role of multinationals and states in resource extortion. While Fearon (2005: 487-503) explains oil's role in the rise of conflict and states that oil produces weak government and that provides the opportunity for rebellion.

In attempting to decipher the link between oil and conflict, some authors like Muller (2010), Collier (2007) and Basedeau et al (2009) amongst others have, attributed the conflict to the 'resource curse' or oil curse perspective. The resource curse perspective seeks to establish a connection between the abundance of a natural resource and violent conflict in Third World countries. Authors like De Soysa and Neumayer (2007:201-218) and Collier and Hoeffler (2007:21), show in their works how the presence of resources affects civil conflict. For instance, in the cases of the conflicts in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, Sudan and Morocco/Western Sahara (oil), Burma (tin), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (copper), l, they argue that the conflict in these areas can be linked to resource abundance. Therefore, oil becomes a critical factor in the location, duration and the intensity of armed conflict.

Ross (2002) states that insurrections motivated by resources share several common elements. One of those elements is that before resources were exploited, the people in these regions had a distinct identity (this could be ethnic, religious or linguistic) that made them separate from others. Another element was that the people in these places believed that the central government was not appropriating the wealth that belonged to them fairly. They believe that they would be richer if they were a separate state because they (the local people) bore the cost of the extraction process because of environmental damage, land expropriation and the immigration of labour from other parts of the country. Agbiboa (2015) further argues that most resource conflict come with an element of horizontal inequality, this means that some groups in natural resource-rich areas like the Niger Delta expect to get a bigger share of the resource revenues than they realistically can get (Ostby et al 2009), or some other groups think that others are receiving more than they are. Based on this, authors like Ostby (2008) and Macini (2005) argue that this

horizontal inequality (the inequalities between these groups) can lead to the politicization of the group identities thereby leading to intergroup violence. Agbiboa further argues that the presence of high levels of inequality is further likely to heighten grievances in two ways. The first is that it worsens the redistributive claims that the minorities are likely to make on their central government. The second is that as the cost of such redistribution climbs, the central government may not be able to meet this. These two dynamics are likely emphasized by either ethnicity or religion. For instance, the Niger Delta is populated by several minority ethnic groups who have borne the cost of oil extraction and believe that they have not yet been fully compensated (Oyefusi, 2008; Agbiboa et al 2012).

Ikelegbe (2006) points out that it is not the primary resource itself that brings about conflict. Instead it is the struggle by various groups at the local, national, and international levels concerning the management, manner of extraction and distribution of oil that propels and fuels armed conflict. While the harmful effect of the extractive oil activities on the people of this region cannot be disputed, other actors and activities have been involved in worsening or heightening the situation in the region. These actors take advantage of the porous circumstances in the region. In trying to assess the involvement of different actors and factors, Ibaba and Ikelegebe (2010) state that there is a confusing interconnection among militias, oil theft syndicates, kidnap for ransom, armed gangs, etc. This shows an unclear picture of connections between actual agitation for resource control, socio-political marginalization of the people and the violence and criminality that has dominated the struggle for oil rents in the region.

The debates above show that though oil may be important in the conflict, the presence of oil is not enough to provide a comprehensive explanation for the cause of conflict. Obi (2014: 148) states that oil endowment does not inevitably lead to conflict but will only be a factor among different contextual and structural factors, therefore oil may combine with such factors to produce positive results or a trigger for conflict. Supporting this view is Mahler (2010) who suggests that different factors (both oil and non-oil related) interact with each other to account for the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta region.

The above discourse provides a useful framework for developing an integrated explanation of the multi-layered causes of conflict in the Niger Delta region. There are

several factors at play in the situation of the Delta which account for the historical and on-going conflict. They include:

2.3.1. Centralization Problem

This refers to the interplay of several political factors and leadership in the Niger Delta conflict. Nigeria according to Idemudia et al (2006:393) is a state-nation, rather than a nation-state. The formation of what is known as Nigeria today originates from the conglomeration of two different protectorates of the North and South joined together during the colonial era. It is comprised of different multi-ethnic nationalities and religious groupings, which in themselves are not necessarily a political problem. The problem is the interest of these different groups to control the political domain in the process of social change (Babaginda, 2002). These groups compete for the benefit that they can get from the Nigerian state. Nigeria is comprised of over 250 different ethnic language groups, with three major ethnic groups which are Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo and the other groups are seen as the minority. This positions the Niger Delta region as a minority group that gets less attention from the central government even though the vast amount of the nation's wealth is gotten from this region.

Furthermore, the Nigerian government has a centralized ownership of the oil resources, this makes the component state and local government dependent primarily on transfers from the Federal government but many in the Niger Delta region perceive the transfers to be unfair because the North, which apparently has the political power over resource sharing, is unduly favoured (Uzodike et al 2010).

Another issue that has contributed to the centralization problem is how the 'derivation principle' of revenue allocation works in the country. The derivation principle is a component of fiscal federalism that seeks to allocate natural resource revenue to the Federation account considering the resource-producing state and region (Adebayo, 1988). This means that the state or region retains a certain percentage from the extraction of natural resources in that region. This revenue is calculated based on the contributions from a natural resource state and then the remainder (after the deduction of the percentage) is sent to the federation account to be shared among all the states. This was practiced in Nigeria prior to the discovery of oil with a 50% derivation but this has changed. Currently, the derivation is 13% which to the people of the Niger Delta is not enough. This has changed due to political and ethnic manipulation, those with the higher

controlling power are the ethnic majority and non-oil producing states, leaving the producing states (that is the ethnic minority) with a low percentage. Also, this change is made possible because of the constitution of 1976 that gives exclusive rights of all mineral rights to the Federal government.

It is important to note here that although 13% of the revenue is allocated to the Niger Delta, the high level of corruption prevents the money from getting to the communities. There has also been demand coming from the Niger Delta that there should be an increase in the oil revenue allocated to the Delta, but this has been met with serious opposition. For instance, Omotola (2009) cites that during the National Political Reform Dialogue Conference of 2005 the representatives from the Niger Delta demanded a 25% increase in derivation revenue but this was opposed especially by Northern delegates which led the Niger Delta delegates to walk out from the proceedings.

Finally, the failure of government to provide development benefits amid the perceived political and economic marginalization has resulted in the clamour for resource control and self-determination by those in the Niger Delta. They (Niger Delta local resistance) have been met with brutal response of the government security forces to most of their non-violent protests. This has led to the radicalization of the local resistance in the region (Agbiboa 2011). Hence the local resistance moved from non-violence to violence in the pursuit of resource control (Ebeku, 2008).

2.3.2 Social Problems and Environmental Degradation

Localised social problems relate to the lack of development and high unemployment in the Niger Delta. Despite oil richness, this is still one of the most underdeveloped places in Nigeria. The living conditions of those in the Niger Delta are behind compared to their fellow counterparts in other parts of the country like Abuja. Also, the rate of unemployment in this region is very alarming. Umujesi (2014) has stated that in the Niger Delta, the level of youth unemployment is the highest in the country. This high level of unemployment has given birth to a high rise of militancy, illegal oil pipeline bunkering (this refers to the theft of crude oil) and youth activism in the Niger Delta. Also, these youths have also become a tool for political elites in pursing their self-seeking interest. Historically the Niger Delta region has been known to be a producer of palm oil, fish and agricultural goods before the discovery of crude oil, but non-existent or poor

environmental regulation of oil production and the abusive practices of the oil companies have resulted in ecological damage. Oil exploration in the Niger Delta has impacted the region's environment disastrously, thereby threatening the basic survival and livelihood of the people (Omotola, 2006).

2.3.3 Gender Dynamics as a Cause of Conflict

The conventional explanations of the conflict, as referred to above, are well known and well discussed in literature on economics, politics, greed and grievance etc. Despite these recurring arguments about the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta, one additional aspect to the conflict that has not been extensively looked at is the gender dynamics of the conflict.

Every war or conflict has immediate causes, and in most cases, it is easy to see the economic or political motivators of war. However, feminist theorists also draw attention to the idea that 'gender is a driving force of war' (Cockburn, 2008). In her writings, Cockburn is suggesting that male dominance (patriarchy), societal celebrations of certain types of warrior masculinity and gender inequalities are also key to understanding why wars and conflicts are thinkable and manifest themselves. . As observed by Cockburn (2010), militarization is present in the gendering of cultures in societies before, during and after conflict. Even peacetime is characterised by patriarchal gender regimes and 'hegemonic' ideas of masculinity often associated with physical power and dominance (Connell and Messerschmidt 2006). This masculinity not only serves militarism but needs militarization for its fulfilment. Such militarization in turn produces violence, male gender identities associated with warrior potential, armed masculinities – and on the other had victimised femininities or momentarily empowered women when conflicts lead to change in gender roles. The problem is that these gender identities tend to feed back into the continuum of armed conflict which makes the society continually prone to conflict, perpetually disturbing the peace.

Developing these ideas, Duriesmith, for example, has written about how central ideas about unfulfilled masculinity were to the mobilisation of young men as fighters in the Sierra Leone civil war. He writes about the 'protest masculinities' performed by young men who felt thwarted in their ability to achieve ideals of manhood in society – associated

with economic and political success and so resorted to armed violence (Duriesmith, 2014). In the Niger Delta case, the frequent references to the experiences of disadvantaged and disempowered (male) youth as key players to the conflict, can be seen in the light of Duriesmith's idea of 'protest masculinity'.

Gender analysis of war and conflict can therefore add to understanding of the factors that cause and drives wars. This is one of the variety of reasons for suggesting that incorporating gender analysis and acknowledging women's diverse experiences during conflict is part of recognizing the full continuum of war and conflict and hence the need for the involvement of women in peacebuilding.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has looked at the historical, political, and economic and gender background to the Niger Delta and offers an analysis of history, causes and consequences of the Niger Delta Conflict. It further argues that amidst explanations to the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta, one aspect that has not been given attention is the gender dynamics of the conflict. It argues that when you look at men and women's lives during conflict, gender can be seen to be shaping their experiences and hence these experiences should be considered during peacebuilding. The next chapter looks further at why it is important to consider gendered experiences of conflict, with a particular focus on women's gendered experiences.

Chapter 3 <u>Gender Debates and Women's Experiences of Conflict</u>

3.1. Introduction

Over the year's women have been portrayed as outsiders to war or its victims - as 'the beautiful souls' left at home and needing protection (Elshtain, 1987) or displaced refugees, grieving widows, etc. While this may be correct, it is a limited portrayal. This is because it has overlooked the impact of war on women's lives, women's agency in war, the changes war brings to gender relations and women's survival in war situations. The purpose of this chapter is to explore women's complex experiences in relation to war in general and their roles during conflict. This exploration is important for this thesis because the acknowledgement of women's many roles in war has been part of the reason for a growing argument that women need to be included in peace building. Moser (2001: 9), for example, argues that the lack of recognition of women's roles during conflict means that they are ignored or victimized during peace building interventions. This is very problematic as women are part of the population directly affected by any conflict. From this general point, this chapter will offer a gender analysis of the Niger Delta conflict, focused particularly on women's experiences of the conflict, and will argue that this enables us to see the importance of including women in peace building in the Niger Delta.

It is not as if women are absent from the historical and contemporary accounts of war but the roles in which women are portrayed are often partial and most times inaccurate. This is because women live within a male-dominated patriarchal culture and social structure, being represented by a set of institutionalized male-dominated community norms that causes women to perceive of themselves as "less than" or "unequal to" men (Ritzer, 2008: 493). As such most narratives of war tell where it is assumed that women are and what is assumed that they do. These assumptions of women's role during conflict moves into the post conflict period and as a result, during peace talks women are expected to be just observers and not active participants. This standpoint places women in the background as their ability in "role making" is subsumed with "roles given" by men to be mere onlookers in critical matters within their communities. Hence, the exploration of gender analysis to conflict is important to this thesis because the acknowledgement of women's many roles in war has been part of the reason for a growing argument that women need to be included in peace building. Cynthia Cockburn (2001:28) argues that gender analysis at its basic level helps to analyse how a policy or an event affects men and women

differently. This paper therefore argues that exploring women's relationship to war from a gendered perspective is imperative for identifying approaches to sustainable peace. It begins by looking at gender debates, then looks at war and conflict from a gendered perspective, then moves on to look at the role of women in war/conflict and concludes with why this gender analysis is important with regards to the role women played in the Niger Delta conflict.

3.2. Gender Debates

This first section provides an understanding of what gender is and explores debates surrounding the term. The term gender has been a debated concept. Kaldor defines gender as a set of cultural institutions and practices that constitute norms and standards of masculinity and femininity (Kaldor, 2013). Cockburn (2001) notes that gender shape every aspect of human interaction from the household to the international arena. Gender has its expression in the following areas: 1). Physique: that is how the bodies of men and women are nourished, trained and deployed and their vulnerability to attack. 2) Economics: that is how money, properties and resources are distributed between sexes. 3) Social sphere: this is authority in the family and in the community. It also shapes the political power in a society differentiating between the sexes, with political authority mostly being in the hands of male political elites.

According to Bradley, gender is lived experience,

> "Gender is both a material and cultural phenomenon at the same time. It is the lived experiences of men and women in relation to each other and to the ideas we develop to make sense of these relations to frame them. These material experiences inform cultural meaning which in turn influences the way lived relations change and develop" (Bradley 2013: 5).

As a cultural phenomenon gender shapes individual identities and lives, as well as the structural power relations of the societies we live in. As a factor that structures the society we live in, Cohn (2013) notes that gender never stands alone but it is interwoven in other structures such as class, ethnicity, age, race, etc. These structures are what produce power differences in societies or power relations between and among men and women (Bradley 2013: 4).

Although many feminist scholars have based their definition of gender difference on socially constructed relationships, others have based their argument for gender differentiation on biological division of role or challenged both notions together. For instance, while authors such as Gary (1992) advances sex role theory as the basis of a division of roles for men and women, Goldstein (2001) challenges the division of sex/biology versus gender/culture arguing that they are both interdependent, and that while biology gives very different potential, culture limits, selects and channels them. Other scholars like Connell (2005) and Steans (1998:92) supports the socially constructed notion of gender arguing that this is a learned process that enables individuals to identify and categorize themselves over time in specific ways in relation to other groups. This process of identity categorization yields different result for men, women, boys, and girls who are expected to comply with this group categorization, regardless of where it originates from. Gender identity as a social construct separates women and men by assigning certain specific behaviours, characteristics, roles and forms of interaction with themselves and the community at large (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003; Linsey 2011). This results in a sexual division of labour where women and men are assigned gender roles suitable for their social position. These assigned gender roles depict women in subordinate social positions; consequently, the roles women play is undervalued and given less attention compared to roles that men play (Moser, 1993).

In this research, gender refers to "a set of cultural institutions and practices that constitute the norm and standard of masculinity and femininity" (Steans 1998:2). This means that it is concerned with the role of social identities and how they are shaped by normative and ideational structures (Reus Smit, 2001: 209). This research argues that understanding the social constructions of masculinities and femininities enables us to analyse patriarchy and gender discriminations which are planted in the construction of the state, its institutions, international structures and processes, which has an impact on the causes and effects of violent conflict and peacebuilding. Most times because of assumed biological sex differences, behaviours are rationalized or considered impossible to change. For instance, the phrase 'boys will be boys' has led to an acceptance of aggressive and violent behaviours in males that impede progress in developing non-violent solutions to conflict. The biological perspective does not take into cognizance the changes in behaviour depending on the situational, relational and cultural context. It fails to realize that gender stereotypes change across cultures, race and class. Several authors such as Peterson and

Runyon (1993:17) propose that these changes within different contexts imply that the notions of gender are associated with cultural ideas of sex differences rather than biological differences.

When feminist use the term gender therefore, they do not just refer to biological differences between male and females even though this is what gender has been referred to historically, but they refer to a set of culturally shaped defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is associated with physical strength, action, hardness, aggression, while femininity is associated with passivity, empathy and weakness, though men and women may not quite conform to these stereotypes. Connell (2005) suggest that this stereotypical image of masculinity does not fit most men; she argues that it only produces what she calls "hegemonic masculinity", or dominant ideas of what it is to be a 'real man'. Kimmel (2004: 89) argues that hegemonic masculinity promotes the use of violence by men and exclusion of women. Tickner (2000) argues that though what it means to be a man, or a woman varies across cultures and history, in most cultures gender differences signify relationships of inequality and domination of women by men. These socially constructed differences are based on socially approved unequal relationships between men and women that further support men's stated superiority. Using this understanding of gender, the next section looks at gender relations in Nigeria – particularly in the Niger Delta. This then lays the basis for exploring the meaning of war and conflict from a gendered perspective.

3.3 Gender Relations in Nigeria

During the pre-colonial era in what would become Nigeria, the societies were patrilineal. This means that inheritance and authority was mainly traced through men and this structure still exists, but what determined power in the society was seniority/age and not gender (Agbese, 2003 and Oyewumi, 1997). Age/seniority was a major factor in deciding who participated in government and who performed certain duties or who earned titles. Because of this, women also gained power from kinship and were part of leadership and decision-making processes. Women leaders like Queen Kambassa of Ijaw (her age is not clearly known but scholars speculate born around 1450) and Queen Amina of Zaria

(1533-1610) used their kinship and positions in the society to influence political matters (Abubakar, 1992). Women could even dethrone men who were not performing their duties effectively. For instance, in Onitsha (the Eastern part of Nigeria) if a naked woman sat on the king's throne, that king was dethroned (Ohadoma, 2000). Ezeani (1998) argues that in this way, pre-colonial Nigeria enabled a degree of gender equality. However, roles that belonged to men and women were clearly stated socially and economically. Men were providers and disciplinarians, while the women were assigned domestic tasks at home, harvesting of crops etc. (Khapoya, 1998).

This was not the case in all the societies in the country as Nigeria has always been a multi-ethnic society. Therefore, each of these ethnic societies differed in how women were involved in the political, social and economic spheres (Okome, 2002). For instance, Agbese (2003) notes that among the Yoruba, many women were wealthy and independent but did not occupy crucial political positions and thus could not influence political decisions. However, evidence show that in pre-colonial Nigerian society, women could make contributions to the social, political and economic structure of their societies but this was altered by both British colonial rule and Christianity and Islam.

While authors like Denzer (1994) argues that colonialism gave Nigerian women greater freedom of choice in marriage and economic opportunities, others argue colonialism suppressed women and set the pace for an obvious male-controlled post-colonial Nigeria (Oyewumi 1997, O' Barr Firmin-Seller 1995), but the reactions to foreign rule varied in different parts of the country. For example, in the Southern part of Nigeria foreign principles, which were spread by the missionaries, expected women to stay at home, submit to colonial officials and their husbands and renounce their economic and social privileges. However, there was series of protests at these expectations, like the Aba women's riot of 1929-1930 and the Lagos market strike of 1954, which led to the involvement of military forces to restore order (Leith Ross, 1965: 20). The Aba women's riot started in Owerri which is the Eastern part of Nigeria and extended to Calabar with about two million people involved in the protest (Leith Ross 1965). According to history, the Niger Delta was one of the most notable places of African resistance to colonial rule, using strategies like tax boycotts, industrial actions, establishment of African churches and welfare protests, etc. (Ekwe-Ekwe 2001). Though protest by women was very rare, women in Aba rioted against the tax system in 1929.

On the other hand, in the North in 1804, Usman Dan Fodio through his 'Fulani Jihad' introduced Fulani interpretations of the Quran and gender roles. Usman Dan Fodio believed that women should be educated according to the Quran (Shetimma, 1995). This Jihad led to the removal of women from political positions and introduced "Purdah" (a system that prevents women from going out before sundown). The women were told to depend on their husbands for their daily needs. Because of these changes Northern women lost their public, religious and political power and became hidden under Islam (Callaway, 1987).

The post-colonial era was built on an ideology of male privilege, which empowered the local men and marginalized the women (Nzegwu, 2001:6). Women were absented at the national political level. From 1960 to 1975, there was no woman on the fifty-member sitting constitutional drafting committee, this limited the influence women would have had in bringing up issues that impacted upon them. Agbese (2003) states that the difference between this period and the colonial period is that the women fought to be included in the political, economic and social structure through the legal structures and when this did not work they turned to other strategies. Women were excluded from the national agenda up until 1987 when the first lady Maryam Babangida addressed the marginalized position of women in the country (Babangida, 1991). She started an empowerment programme for rural women with a National Commission to oversee it (Nwonwu, 2001). This created about 9,422 cooperatives and farms and issues like female genital mutilation were brought to light. She received an award for this and other first ladies who came after her continued this work.

In contemporary Nigeria, the gender gap is still there for instance in terms of political empowerment, only 6% of parliamentarians are women (Gender Gap Index 2016), Economically, there are more men than women in the labor force and the income of men is still higher than the income of women. Despite these differences, women's groups have become influential in instigating social and political pressures. They have fought attempts at oppression using strategies like strikes and boycotts to maintain their place in the country. On the other hand, the women in the Niger Delta do experience gender inequality and political marginalization and the next part will look specifically at the gender relations in the region and the marginalization of women.

3.4 Gender Relations in the Niger Delta

Gender roles and relations in the Niger Delta mirror the general patterns of patriarchy and social and cultural subordination of women by men as seen in Nigeria more broadly. Before the conflict, women's roles in the Niger Delta were not widely recognized. Even though they constituted over half of the population they were not deemed equal with men and their place was in the kitchen. 'Hegemonic' notions of masculinity associate men with physical strength, family headship and community status. Women, by contrast are not regarded as equals to men in domestic or political relationships even though they are responsible for the survival of their households. The traditional division of labor in the area gives women the primary responsibility of providing for the household and managing natural energy for the sustenance of the household. The situation of environmental degradation and the economic dynamics around oil exploration in the Delta add particular challenges for women who are already subordinate in the gendered division of power and labour. For example, environmental degradation has destroyed the natural energy for domestic household needs adding to women's burdens. Women in the Niger Delta have long been aware of the politics of oil exploration and associated environmental degradation which has increased the poverty of women and their families already caused by other factors, as explained by Obayelu;

> Given the harsh realities of increasing poverty in the country, Nigerian women experience poverty in the following ways: economically through deprivation; politically through marginalization in terms of the denial of the rights to land ownership (inheritance) and access to credit facilities and other inputs; socially through discrimination in terms of participation in decision-making at home and in the community; culturally through ruthlessness; and ecologically through vulnerability (Obayelu and Ogunlade, 2006: 9).

Moreover, in the Niger Delta the exploitation of oil and gas resources by the multinational oil companies have resulted in massive pollution of the land and water. Women in particular have suffered from the losses of farmlands and fishing waters. This is because women in the Niger Delta constitute the greater proportion of subsistence farmers in the region. As subsistence fisher women, they have suffered from the pollution of the rivers

and the decline in fish stocks. The women have benefitted least from employment in the oil companies. When compensation claims are made by traditional rulers and local elites, women have been excluded from the compensation that arises from the acquisition, pollution and devastation of farmlands, as they are least recognized as owners of land and water resources (Ukeje, 2004).

In looking at the gender relations in the Niger Delta, the further question that arises is in what ways have the conflicts in the Niger Delta involved women and impacted on their lives, creating, altering and transforming the identity of women, as distinct from that of men, in the Delta.

Women's experience must be contextualized rather than given as a general experience (Jacobson et al, 2000). To understand women's experiences during armed conflict and war, we must first understand the context with which the experience is embedded. For women's vulnerability but also engagement in war to be understood, attention must be paid to the historical, economic, political, social and cultural context of that conflict.

3.5 War and Conflict from a Gendered Perspective

When we think about wars, what comes to mind is something like World War One or Two, or a declaration of battle between two or more states. On the other hand, Moser et al (2001:11 citing Cuomo 1996) argue that war is a continuum where violence increases or decreases around the actual outbreak of war. Sjoberg therefore uses the terms war and conflict synonymously to make an argument that it is important to consider the violence *that leads up to* the events traditionally considered as war and the *violence that happens around the things* traditionally understood as wars and the *violence that continue after* the things traditionally understood as wars. Thus, war and conflict based on Sjoberg's analysis can include "domestic violence, structural violence, economic instability, unemployment, poverty, poor working conditions, the impending threat of war and or infrastructural damage" (Sjoberg, 2014). Acknowledging the societal violence that can precede war already draws attention to gendered expressions of violence that are part of this continuum (like domestic violence).

Literature on gender and conflict has become prominent in the last twenty years (Thompson 2006) but most of the studies have assumed that men are perpetrators of violence and women are the victims. However, the fact is that men and women are impacted by conflict in different ways (El-Bushra and Piza- Lopez 1993; Caproli, 2005). Though many, traditional accounts of war tend to be gender blind (Sjoberg, 2014), more recent feminist accounts of gender and war emphasize the ways in which gender shapes war and war shapes gender.

Furthermore, with the changing nature of conflicts today, many scholars have argued for a reconceptualization of war from a gendered perspective. One of such is Mary Kaldor who wrote extensively on the 'new war' theory. She explains that there is a new type of war in the post-Cold War era, and she differentiates between old wars and new wars. The term old war here is based on the experiences of twentieth century wars in Europe, while the term new wars are used to differentiate recent political violence. The term new war here implies a different research strategy and a different policy response to violence that is different from the Cold War era. It therefore looks at the changing nature of organized violence and developing ways of understanding and interpreting the characteristics of such violence. From Kaldor's analysis, the new wars are different from the old wars in four key ways; these include type of actors, the goals, the tactics and the forms of finance.

In talking about actors in war/conflict, old wars were fought by regular armed forces that were under military codes but in new wars there is a combination of actors which involves both state and non-state actors (this include regular armed forces, private security contractors, criminal groups, jihadist, etc.). In both new wars and old wars there has always been female participation. For example, as Kaldor notes that during the Bosnian war there were many women's brigades on the Serbian side led by women (Obrad Kesic 1999: 189). Secondly with regards to goals, new wars are fought in the name of identity rather than for ideological or political goals (identity here includes religious, ethnic, tribal). Kaldor notes that war is an important mechanism through which identities are constructed and fixed, and gender identities are amongst these. Thirdly, the clashes between rival military forces were usually conclusive battles in the old wars but in new wars, the method is to gain control over the civilian population using violence. In new wars men of military age seem to be the first to be attacked in attacks on civilians, followed by women and children. One of the tools through which militaries do this is

through sexual violence and rape; this has become a strategy for political control in new wars. Even though sexual violence and rape has always been present in wars through history, Chinkin and Kaldor (2013) argue that rape and sexual violence as a tactic of war has increased. Lastly, in terms of the forms of finance, the old wars were financed by taxation of the population, but in new wars the warring groups get their finance from activities that are related to violence and organized criminal activity, this include looting, kidnapping and hostage taking, human trafficking and smuggling of valuable commodities such as oil, drugs, diamonds and humans.

In some respects, the conflict in the Niger Delta, as described in the previous chapter, fits with this characterisation of a 'new war'. It involved state, corporate security and non-state actors and was bound up with issues of identity politics and resource distribution. It was also highly gendered, as the sections to come will show.

3.6. Women's Role in War and Armed Conflict

When terms such as 'protected', and 'victims' are used to portray images of women, this implies weakness for women during wartime and therefore extends to women's lack of empowerment during peacetime. These issues during war or conflict period when not addressed lead to the roles of women been overlooked or undervalued during the post conflict and peace period. Therefore, this analysis of gender and war is an important chapter for this research in establishing a case for the importance of women's role in peacebuilding. Scholars like Sjoberg (2014) and Moser and Clark (2001) have argued that gender and war are connected. The gendered impacts of conflict can be seen in the portrayal of actors of wars as mostly men and the victims of war as women. Yet war affects all facets of social life, and it has different effects on different social groups. War shapes women's lived experiences in many different ways.

The roles women take up during war and conflict periods can include their participation in war as bystanders, perpetrators, victims/survivors or negotiators. This means that women participate in conflict either implicitly or explicitly. For example, when a woman takes up the role of becoming a household head because her husband is at the battle front, the woman takes part in that war or conflict by supporting her husband with or without

her knowing it. Meanwhile, the combatant woman on the battlefield is also a direct participant of war. Koolaee (2014) notes that during conflict/war women not only encouraged their children, husbands, brothers and fathers to defend their country, but they also spontaneously defend their homes and lives and fight against the enemy alongside men during war.

Several gender and feminist theories argue that when there is conflict, there is changes in gender roles and relation in society. Other researchers like Kohn et al (2003) disagree with this perspective and argue that the social position of women in the society does not change even in times of armed conflict, this is because according to them, women do not give up their domestic roles like cooking and caring. They further state that even when women become household heads it does not bring any change to their domestic status, they are still housewives with regards to carrying out their household and domestic duties. Despite these varying views on women's changing role in the context of conflict, contemporary feminist authors states that the changes in the roles of women during armed conflict most times results from the changes in the society (Goldstein 2001, Bouta and Frerks 2002, Moser and Clark 2001), (Moosa etal (2013). . Frerks and Banon (2005) note that roles are societally and culturally located and vary according to the context.

Therefore, while other elements of gender may seem more difficult to change, gender roles tend to shift throughout the various stages of conflict, responding to changes in contextual factors such as the absence of men from the household during conflict as they are on the battlefield. This means that that the interdependency of roles on other social constructs interacts with other aspects of gender. Also, though gender roles are learned and could be changed, their dependence on normalizing structures act as a barrier to gender change at the level of roles. For example, Sanam Naraghi Anderlini (2007:109) notes how that roles, identities and power interact in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. She states that because women are not pictured as having access to masculine combatant roles, they are often excluded from the DDR programs and other economic and political economic benefits granted them.

Still on the role of women during conflict, Bouta and Frerks (2002) study on women's roles in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, identifies seven major social roles that women take on during war and peace. These seven roles

include 1) women as victims of sexual abuse, 2) women as combatants, 3) women for peace in the non-governmental sector, 4) women in formal peace politics who participate in peace talks, e) women who are coping and surviving actors, they adapt their existing roles and their activities within the conflict environment, f) women who take up roles in the absence of their husbands as households heads, and g) women in formal employment during conflict periods. Sjoberg's analysis of finding women in war (Sjoberg, 2014:31-50), which this research uses, is similar to Bouta and Frerks approach. Sjoberg's mechanism recognizes four roles of women during conflict and these can all be related to the Niger Delta Conflict. It highlights the facts that women are not just victims of armed conflict but also active agents of war, peace and even social change.

It is increasingly clear that Enloe's question in relation to international politics - "where are the women" (Enloe 1993, 20-105) can provoke a range of answers in relation to war. To answer this question, Sjoberg takes a historical view of war and asks about women's role in the following areas: war preparation, war-fighting, war economies, and post-conflict resolution and reconstruction.

3.6.1 Women in War Preparation

In preparing for war, states need a trained military and a support system ready to fight. Cynthia Enloe (1993) gives an example of how the process of militarization extends into civilian life with the story of Kim Gorski who married an ex-military banker and he was called do a tour in Iraq and she was faced with the responsibility of a deployed soldier's wife. She exemplifies the many women whose support is essential to the process that makes war function. Women like Kim mobilize families and women, their support and their labour. Supporting this is Joshua Goldstein (2001) who writes about women's support roles in World Wars. Women on both sides of the World Wars pledged their support to their respective governments. Many of the women gave their support on an entrepreneurial basis, helping to care for the wounded, provide supplies for the militaries, and they created opportunities and organization where none had existed before (Goldstein, 2001).

3.6.2. Women and War Fighting

Women have served as fighters in traditional militaries and have been part of non-state actors. They have been terrorists, insurgents, rebels etc. Though women are increasingly recognized as fighters, their fighting is distinguished from men's fighting. For instance, Sjoberg (2014) states that "where the men are called soldiers and revolutionaries and terrorist the women are called women soldiers, women revolutionaries and women terrorists". This means that those women who participate in political violence are separated from men who do the same by their sex (Sjoberg 2014: 40-41). In Eritrea, Israeli and Nepal, women make up more than a third of the militaries. They are conscripted in eight countries and allowed to fight in combat roles in more than thirty militaries either through legislative or executive permission (Sjoberg, 2014). Furthermore, in the United States when there is shortage of male recruits during peace time, there has been the introduction of women into the armed forces. This happened in the United States from the 1970s when the state decides to replace compulsory military service with a volunteer force (Cohn 2013, 133). More recently in the United States military, women represented eleven percent of the US troops that were deployed to Afghanistan (Sjoberg 2014). Further evidence of women's active roles in conducting war is found, for example, in Meintjes et al (2001, 64) who state how in the thirty years of the revolutionary wars in Africa from the 1960s to 1999, women soldiers fought in the bunkers with men. In Zimbabwe and South Africa women took up arms to fight for their independence.

While women are present as agents in many military settings, it is also the case that the fighting of wars impacts on women in other ways. Gender-based and sexual violence are increasingly used as weapons of warfare and have become defining characteristics in many conflicts. Gender based violence is violence committed based on the sex of the victim. Although gender-based violence happens outside of war, it increases significantly in incidences and times of war. According to the OCHA/IRIN (2007) report, the greatest threat to civilian women during conflict is rape and sexual violence by armed, uniformed, state actors and non-state civilians. Rape is used as a means of social destruction in war. It is often perpetuated in public and in the presence of family members to undermine social stability and threaten the continuity of family and community (Magia 1998 and Nordstrom 1991). The trauma of rape for the individual is therefore a violation of the

bodily self and the social self. The trauma of rape is multidimensional in the sense that the victims lives the experience of violence and social destruction of which they are an integral part.

3.6.3 Women and War Economies:

Other feminist analysts looking for women in wars focus on wartime political economies and women's role in these economies. Sjoberg argues that political economy during peacetime helps us understand war economies. The gendered division of labour outside wars is generally one where men are breadwinners and property owners, whereas women bear a disproportionate share of unpaid caring labour. During wartime, the political economy is different, as war time changes gendered opportunities and structure. For example, during conflict and war times, families are separated by death or forced migration, this separation results in changes from male-headed households to female-headed households. Because of this change women end up doing more than their share of the increased workload, this includes managing economic resources in the absence of normal available resource like animals, land, farming resources etc. This forces the women to look for other sources of income and sometimes illegal sources of income.

It is important to pay attention to the economic, social and political ways that armed conflict affects women and girls. During conflict, there is commoditization of resources and an emergence of specific forms of economic organization and divisions of labour (Cohn, 2013). The systems that enable people to make a living during times of armed conflict is critical. These livelihoods systems are highly gendered and reflect the different cultural and social factors that determine the division of labour among men, women, boys and girls and their different access to resources. There is clear division of indentured servitude and other forms of forced labour that evolve around gender lines, for instance women and adolescent girls are used as sexual slaves for militia commander and soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. In Sierra Leone women and adolescent girls are forced to grow food, cook and clean for soldiers (Dyan et al, 2005).

There is also a shift in population resulting from when men and boys are forced to flee. This results in female-headed households and increased labour for the women. The workload of women as providers and caregivers also increase as the natural resources,

access to public, household and environmental goods shrink. These tasks undertaken by women and girls in many cultures become difficult. Also, as the natural resources for the home become few, girls are married off at younger and younger ages. Some girls are also forced to work as domestic slaves. which in most cases results in abuse.

3.6.4 Women in Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Reconstruction

United Nations Security Council of 1325 stresses the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in post conflict resolution and the peace building process. Therefore, peace-making and peace building are among many women's diverse role during and after wars. There have been many examples of the success of women's peace advocacy like Ellen Johnson Sir leaf and Leymah Gbowee who won the Nobel Prize for their advocacy against tyranny and for peace in Liberia in 2011.

As mentioned above, some scholars propose that women may be adept at peace-making because of their experience as mothers. Yet, Sjoberg (2012) cautions against this perspective, stating that this could be problematic both for the women who fit the category and those who don't. Those who fit the category could be taken less seriously and those who don't meet the category will struggle with not meeting the traditional expectations about femininity and are always less visible in both the stories and policy responses to war and conflict. This divergence can lead to conflict around gender roles and difficulty meeting women's needs and solving policy problems that arise from the roles that women play in wars and conflict. An example of this is that women who have been combatants or victims in war will have difficulty with readjustment to the process and structures that are gender biased against them. For instance, DDR processes (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) rarely take into cognizance that some of the soldiers that they are trying to disarm are women combatants and their experiences are different from the male experiences. While the male combatants may sometimes exchange guns for services the women may not have guns to exchange and may find it difficult to return to their households and face the fear of stigmatization and rejection by their families. This shows the gendered nature of the post conflict reconstruction processes.

The need to recognize the ways gender affects post-conflict processes and women's diverse experiences of war as actors, victims and perpetrators have led to growing efforts to include women in peace processes and peace building - as formally endorsed in UNSCR 1325 and subsequent UN Resolutions. Moreover, many Peace Studies scholars argue that peace is not just the absence of war but involves challenging structural violence and hierarchical relationships between human being that create direct violence and injustice. Therefore, peace for women cannot be separated from the question of relationships between men and women in all aspects of life and family.

Prashar (2014, 33) highlights the fact most times wars are classified as religious, cultural, economic and political but never gendered. By contrast, the section above has suggested that gender analysis, particularly with a focus on women's roles and the construction of femininities in war, is important to understanding war and conflict - but also processes of peace building. Feminist studies of conflict have shown that women are not outsiders to war but have a range of experiences before, during and after armed violence, as 'victims, perpetrators and actors' (Moser and Clark, 2001). For these reasons, women's voices must be part of post conflict peace and reconstruction. From this general point, this chapter returns to the specific case of the Niger Delta. Based on the above, the next section will highlight women's varied experiences during the armed conflict in the Delta.

3.7. Women role during the armed conflict in the Niger Delta

As already mentioned, in war women have different experiences, either as war fighters (combatants) or as war victims, workers, community leaders and other roles. Women's experiences might not often be a battlefield account of war, but they are frontline accounts (frontline accounts here are first-hand account of war experiences). This means that though many women do not physically carry weapons to fight, their experiences of these conflicts, especially in non-combatant roles or as victims, reveal frontline accounts of war. These frontline accounts reveal the everyday life of violence that women go through during conflict and it also shows how these violence manifests even after there is a ceasefire.

In exploring the role of women in the Niger Delta conflict I will again refer to Sjoberg's analysis mirroring the four major points introduced above where the role of women in

conflict could be seen, this include 1) women in war preparation, 2) women and war fighting, 3) women and war economies, and 4) women in post conflict resolution and reconstruction**.**

3.7.1 Women in war preparation in the Niger Delta:
As explained before, women are primarily the subsistence farmers of the Niger Delta, maintaining households but excluded from public decision making. Yet, during the conflict there is evidence that women played several roles alongside men during the conflict. For instance, Onyoume (2013) notes that women worked in military camps, kept records of armoury and spied on state security for the militants.

Many women were involved in supporting positions that led to violence, through their political engagement with the situation in the Delta. When people feel deprived of resources, they are more likely to engage in political, social and economic actions to address their deprivation (Edlyne 2007:62). The women in the Niger Delta suffered (and continue to suffer) doubly from this deprivation. Edlyn (2007) states that first they suffer deprivation since they are excluded from internal or domestic politics, decision making and negotiation with the oil firms. Secondly, the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta means that these women suffer greater socioeconomic deprivation than their counterparts from other parts of the country as their main source of livelihood is destroyed. This deprivation resulted in several actions of protest by women in the Niger Delta.

The discussion of gender relations in the Niger Delta cannot be complete without the recognition of women's protests that took place in the oil producing communities. One example of women's protests in the Niger Delta is the account given by Obi et al (2011, 155-156). The protest took place on 17 July 2002 where the Kenyagbene women and the Ijaw Gbaramatu women of Delta State marched to the five Chevron flow stations in the Delta. The conflict that triggered this protest occurred in May 2002 when Chevron withdrew one of its boats that was used to carry the women into Warri Town on its market days, without the consultation of the women. This heightened the frustration of the women over the presence of the oil companies in the region, farms damaged because of oil spill and no potable drinking water because the rivers and streams were polluted with

oil thereby exposing them to health infections and hazards. For the women to get the company to reverse this decision over six hundred women mobilized and blocked the water ways thereby hindering the Chevron-Texaco workers from going to work in the flow stations. The response of the company was a negative one. Chevron alerted the State Naval Patrol Team which came in gunboats to attack and disperse the unarmed women. The women's boats were forcibly capsized by the forces and a girl was drowned.

The women's reaction to this violence was a non-violent protest where the women marched to the Chevron flow stations and occupied the stations. The women took over the security post and instructed staff to go home except for security personnel and cooks who cooked for the women. This protest lasted for ten days with the protesters working on a shift basis which provided the women three hours per day to go to their homes, freshen up, eat and resume the protest. This act cost Chevron and the Nigeria state a huge loss of income as several thousands of barrels of oil per day was locked in. This prolonged protest forced the company to the negotiating table and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in 2005 between Chevron-Texaco and the Gbaaramatu leadership.

It is important to note here that during this protest, the women used nudity as a form of protest. The women exposed their naked bodies and vaginas to impose on the oil company's male workers 'social death'. It is believed that this act could lead to actual demise (Turner and Brownhill 2004, 67).

Other forms of nonviolent protest used by the women included singing, dancing demonstrations and strikes. (Samuel, 2004, Ikelgbe 2005). While these forms of protest could be dismissed as gendered spectacles, they allowed the women to enter a negotiation process with the management of the oil companies where the women presented 26 demands which include social amenities, jobs, etc. This was considered very important because these were local women fighting against the might of global giants (Turner and Brownhill, 2004).

This occupation of oil installations by the women shows the result of gender specific, non-violent, activism as against the violent protests undertaken more commonly by male youth in the Niger Delta (Ukeje, 2004). Ukeje (2004) states that "the trend of protest has become remarkable milestones in the long struggles by oil communities in the Niger Delta for access to subsidized socio-economic opportunities and environmental justice".

The protest by women in the Niger Delta is an instrument of politicized identity mobilization (Ukeje, 2004). The role of women in mobilizing for social justice at various times – before, during and after the armed conflict in the Delta - represents a significant development and could be an important dimension to peace building.

Women's role as a support base during crisis is very paramount and not new in the Niger Delta. For instance, Oriola (2012) quoting from Alagoa (1964) states that when King Koko led the Nembe Brass People in the Akassa war against the Royal Niger Company against its monopolistic trade policy in 1895, his first wife came out to perform a ceremonial ritual on him done before going into war. She rubbed the whole of his body with some concoction and completed the process by throwing the remaining brown chalk on the canoe as a blessing. During the recent conflict, before any military confrontation, the militants were forbidden to have sexual encounters as this is believed to destroy the protective cover of the gods. Yet, women were very instrumental to the insurgency in the spiritual fortification of those fighting. The militants relied on older women to perform religious rituals on them for protection against their opponents, which in this case were the security agents of the Nigerian state and the oil corporations (Stevens, 2006). This was because of a belief that women have a strong power that is associated with menstrual blood, which is believed to increase as the women grow older or experience child bearing. The older women appease the earth and their ancestors on behalf of their sons as they go out to battle. The older women also bathed the militants in spiritual concoctions to fortify the militants' bodies against bullets and other dangers. This sacred exercise is done while nude and, while this is going on, sometimes the men receive slashing on their heads, backs, and below their eyes to make them spiritually alert and invisible to ordinary human beings (Oriola, 2012). After the rituals concluded women experiencing their menstrual flow or in their reproductive age were not allowed on the creeks (militants hideouts or base), because of a belief that the presence of the women in this category could be detrimental to them. Thus, support workers, such as cooks, had to be males during this period of ritual protection and they were usually separated from the other camps that would have female cooks. The involvement of these women in such rituals, preparing militant fighters for battle, is one illustration of the fact that women in conflict communities can be supportive of the use of violence when fighting for a cause they believe in. This aligns with the literature reviewed above which challenges the idea that women are always peaceful outsiders to conflict. In the Niger Delta, women's complex

identities related to the intersections of their gender and ethnicity and shaped by economic and environmental impoverishment, led many women to support the insurgency in ways open to them through traditional gender roles (such as the anointing of men before fighting). However, some women also pushed those traditions to engage in active contributions to the militant effort.

3.7.2 Women and fighting in the Niger Delta

Women sometimes played war making roles in the Delta conflict. In the Niger Delta, Mathers (2013) states that women and girls were active participants in militant activities working in camps as cooks and engaging in menial jobs. The women also acted as spies for the militants, spying on state security equipment. He also stated that some girls could carry out terror attacks on the oil installations as they were subject to fewer security checks by the soldiers in the region. While these women may have worked in non-combatant roles during the conflict, they were no less involved in this conflict. For example, Patch (2008) states that there is a stereotype of male youth activists by the authorities in the Niger Delta and stories of male militancy in the Niger Delta conflict are dominant. Turcotte (2011) states that the historical stories told of the Niger Delta allow the conflict to be constructed only as the acts of male violent youths who victimize their own communities. However, some authors like Umjesi and Onoyume have noted that though women worked in the military camps and played non-combatant roles, like keeping records of armoury and spying on state security apparatuses, their involvement in these roles was crucial for the survival of the militants in the creeks. Though not much is reported about female militants or fighters in the Niger Delta conflict, evidence suggest that they were highly involved in non-combatant roles.

While these women were present as agents in the conflict settings, the conflict impacted the women in several ways one of which is gender-based violence, which as Kaldor, Chinkin and others noted above reflect is often a strategic characteristic of 'new wars'. One form of gender-based violence that was seen in the Niger Delta over the course of the conflict was the issue of rape and sexual exploitation. Ikelegbe (2005, 255) quoting Onwumeodo (1999a) claims that over 238 of the Ijaw women in the Niger Delta were raped during the military invasions in the towns and villages of the region. Furthermore, Niger Delta women were also being sexually exploited by both the militants and the government military and later the peacekeeping force. For instance, Iyahere (2014, 16)

mentions that the angry young men who were fighting for their rights would make do with any women around sexually, while the soldiers sent by the Federal government invaded private homes terrorizing and raping women and girls. Also, girls and young women looking for economic survival hung around the oil companies and were at the service of both the national and international oil workers and given some few naira or dollars after every sexual meeting. There have been several reports of gender based violence (including rape and sexual slavery) documented (Onwumeodo, 1999a). Most of these cases were heard in court when there was a government investigation into human rights violations by the security forces especially in the Ogoni land, but these have been limited to the Oputa Panel (an investigative committee that was set up by the government when Human Rights Watch and other non-governmental organizations agitated for investigations to be carried out by the Nigerian government). Other non-governmental organizations like the centre for Democracy and Development published a report in 2001 that gave instances and eye-witness reports of gender-based violence during the conflict.

3.7.3 Women and War economies in the Niger Delta

The political economy of war shows that one of the most affected areas during war is the livelihood system. The livelihood system refers to the ways in which people earn a living in rural communities, this include fishing and farming. This livelihood can either be heavily damaged by the conflict or a target of "deliberate destruction". Cohn (2000) states that the economic effect of conflict is severely felt by the rural people as they lack the skill for crisis especially in Africa. This leads to a situation whereby the formal economies are being eroded by the conflict and alternative economy starts springing up, which ranges from trade by barter to the black-market economy and other illegal business.

One of the black-market economies in the Niger Delta is known as the 'Asari Fuel business' (this is semi-refined fuel gotten by militants illegally from bunkering the pipes of oil companies in the region, they refine it in their own way and their wives sell it). Umejisi (2014) gives an example of how most of the wives of militants were involved in marketing petroleum products to different parts in the Niger Delta, which their husbands got from bunker petroleum pipes.

The conflict in the region resulted in lots of scarcity of basic needs such as food, water, health and educational facilities and those affected the most were women and their children. The men were not available as they were either wounded, fighting or migrated to other places for greener pastures, this led to a change of role where women were forced to be the heads of the family in terms of the provision of basic needs (Amusan, 2013). This results in women taking on even more than usual the need to care for the family. This change in household power relations in the Delta reflects the wider literature that suggests wars and conflicts reshape gender relations and can lead to women becoming more responsible for household survival during conflicts. However, whether this is empowering in the short or long term for women is questionable, as women in the Delta continue to struggle with the burdens of providing for families in a context of structural violence and environmental destruction. This lack of continuing empowerment through changed gender roles during conflict is also confirmed by women's lack of consideration or involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding.

3.7.4. Post Conflict reconstruction and peace building

The amnesty programme which was signed by the President of Nigeria (President Yar Adua) on the 25th of June 2009, benefitted male militants who were given 60 days to surrender their weapons. The militants agreed to exchange their guns for a monthly salary by the Federal government and came under a special skill acquisition programme for a period, after which they were given some money to start their own business. By the end of the 60-day deadline there was a total of 20,192 ex-militants who surrendered their weapons. According to El-Rufai (2012) almost 200 billion naira was spent on the amnesty program by the year 2012, from 2.9 billion in 2009 to over 200 billion by the end of 2012. With this amount of money spent on militants, little was spent on women or children who were also victims during the conflict and continue to suffer marginalization in this region. The amnesty program of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration excluded the women and children.

During the conflict, the strategy of protest created the space for negotiation and discussion (Turcotte 2011: 209) but the women were not involved in these amnesty negotiations and were excluded from post conflict settlement. Another instance of women's exclusion from post-conflict politics is the example given by Turcotte (2011 :

212), who states that in May 2010 when a woman called Emem Okon of the Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre attended the Chevron's shareholders meeting in Houston as part of the legal proxy holders to speak on the environmental impact of Chevron activities in the Niger Delta, she was barred from entering the meeting along with their community representatives.

The exclusion of women from relevant decision-making especially with regards to decision-making process of war and negotiations leading to peace, results in women carrying the high cost of violence in the long term. This has negative consequences not just for women but also for the men, families, communities and the nation. For there to be sustainable peace in the Niger Delta, the women must be on the negotiation table, they must be involved in post conflict settlement. These dynamics of political exclusion from peacebuilding and their consequences will be further explored in the chapters to come.

Conclusion

From the review above, we have seen that gender is increasingly identified as a fundamental factor in shaping armed conflict (Sjoberg 2011, Enloe 2004). Contemporary analysts of gender and war trace multiple ways in which gendered ideas, institutions and identities shape the societal contexts from which conflicts emerge and how they are fought. Such analysis also reveals the complex relationship women have to armed conflict. While many women are not directly involved in violence, they are not simply passive outsiders but often active supporters of armed causes. Though many women are victimised by the gender based violence associated with war, academics also draw attention to women's agency in war, looking at how women can also lend support to conflicts. Although women may be socially conditioned to exhibit more peaceful qualities, patriarchy works through various race, ethnic, and class lines, religions, and nationalism to encourage and involve women in violence. History has shown women are often essential to the perpetration of violence, and they have acted to support and encourage it (African Rights, 1995). Importantly too, women seek to survive through conflict roles in the context of armed violence (Moser and Clark 2001). An important aspect of this chapter review has looked at how conflict may change gender roles and shape identities as women become chief providers for families and households when men fight (Cohn 2013).

As this chapter has shown, all of these dynamics can be seen at play in the conflict situation in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta conflict has been chiefly portrayed as a conflict involving militant men, but this leaves out the role women played during the conflict. Umjesi (2014: 6223). The sections of this chapter have shown the diverse experiences and roles played by women in the conflict from support roles for the militants, non-violent protests against the oil companies, to providers for families. Women's multiple roles during the conflict are one reason why their participation should be sought when post-conflict peace is being discussed and implanted.

However, the amnesty process in the Delta was entirely focused on male combatants and a compensation scheme for them. Policy makers in the Niger Delta construct involvement in the conflict solely around those who took up arms against the government and this overlooks those who were not so visible in the struggle, such as women. Their perspectives on the issues underpinning the conflict are not considered. Their efforts and skills during the war go unacknowledged and devalued. Over time, records have shown that the spaces women create and the resourceful ways that women keep families and communities in one piece are not recognized and preserved during the post- conflict period. Earlier in this chapter, the debate was introduced between those who see conflict as potentially transformative of gender relations and those who doubt the durability of such change. El Bushra (2003), for example, in her field work in Somalia, Sudan, Mali, and Angola suggests that the increased presence of women in public and the new economic responsibilities that conflict or war brings shows a limited shift in gender roles that could be carried over into post war period. On the other hand, authors such as Frerks and Banon (2005), Kohn (2003) note that roles are societally and culturally located and vary according to context. These authors are of the opinion that reproductive roles during and after conflict are encapsulated within broader gendered power structures that shape gender identity. These might not change unless these structures change. They are of the opinion that pre-war gender differences in rights and entitlement impact post war situation rather than temporal changes. Though gender roles may change and women may play crucial roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, gender identities tend to appear unchanged in the post conflict period (Justino, 2016). The material in this chapter acknowledges the range of women's agency in relation to conflict in the Delta. This chapter highlighted several roles of women in conflict first from a general perspective, then with specific reference to the Niger Delta. Linking Bouta and Frerks theory and

Sjoberg's theory, it highlights four major roles of women in conflict. Gender analysis of war suggests that incorporating women's diverse experiences is part of recognizing the full continuum of war and conflict. This analysis is important and could be linked to and exemplified in the case of the Niger Delta. However, the last section of the chapter indicates that women have been excluded from the formalities of post conflict peace and this suggests a reversion to pre-conflict gendered power dynamics and norms, in accordance with the opinion of Frerks, Banon and Cohn. When it comes to decision making processes women are still ranked as second-class citizens by men (Cohn 2013, 13) and their duties are relegated to child bearing roles. They are not recognised as potential participants in building inclusive, positive peace. This raises questions about the gender dynamics of peace efforts to date, the power divisions which prevent women having voice and the potential that lies in women's grassroots initiatives. The next chapter will look in more depth at the peace process and post-conflict peacebuilding in the Delta between 2009 and the present day, with an emphasis on the gender dynamics of these processes.

Chapter 4 <u>Peacebuilding Process in the Niger Delta</u>

4.1 Introduction

The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta has brought with it a lot of untold hardship and deprivation for the people, leading to conflict between the militants, local elites, government and multinational companies. The conflict which began as a non-violent struggle by Ken Saro Wiwa towards achieving the desires and wishes of the Niger Delta people degenerated into a militarised movement including hostage takings, kidnapping, sabotaging oil installations, car bombings etc. Several reasons have been given for the causes and extensive duration of this conflict and these were discussed in chapter one.

Historically, there have been attempts to find a lasting solution to conflict and crisis in this region. For example, special federal agencies like Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB)

have been established to try to resolve on-going issues over oil revenues, conflict and regional development but these have largely proved futile. This chapter will focus on the most recent attempt to end overt violence in the region, which was the Amnesty Programme in 2009, initiated by the late Nigerian President Umar Mus Yardua, with the aim to achieve lasting peace. This programme was meant to quell the rising insurgency, hostage taking and kidnapping and address the issues of importance of the people in the Niger Delta region. As will be shown below, this programme did disarm the militants, but it has not brought sustainable peace and development to the region. Moreover, a study of this programme reveals that women were absent from the process and implementation of the amnesty and, arguably, their absence is one reason why the process has proven inadequate over time. This therefore illustrates the gender blindness of the amnesty process and the consequences of this.

4.2. The Amnesty Process as a Peacebuilding Initiative in the Niger Delta

This section looks at the amnesty process and the factors that led to the initiation of the amnesty process as a peacebuilding initiative in the Niger Delta. There have been several efforts towards sustainable peace in the Niger Delta before the amnesty process but none of these efforts proved fruitful. Most of the initiatives prior to the amnesty focused on development initiatives for the region, intended to address the causes of conflict in the region. However, their success was limited.

Before independence in 1960, the government introduced a governmental policy framework to foster development in the Niger Delta region. In 1958, the Sir Henry Willink's Commission was set up to enhance development in the region. The Commission stressed the need for prompt attention to the special needs of the region, which were identified as the poverty and the frequent conflict. This resulted in the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) in 1960 by the Federal

government (Aghalino, 2004:125). When this failed to achieve its objectives another one was established called the Niger Delta River Basin Authority in 1976. Later again, through federal government decree No. 23, the Oil Mineral Producing Commission (OMPADEC) was set up in July 1993. This Commission was given the responsibility to receive the monthly sums from the allocation of the Federation and administer the confirmed ration of oil production in each state with the intent of ensuring the development of the oil mineral producing areas (Aghalino, 2009). It is important to note that these initiatives were all established under the military regime in Nigeria. In 1999, democratic government began under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo. This president again set up a Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. Again, this failed because the government was not trusted by the Niger Delta People and, as described in chapter one, armed conflict persisted.

In 2009 President Yarduwa announced a new approach to addressing conflict in the Delta in the form of an amnesty programme. Several factors necessitated the introduction of the amnesty programme which we will be looking at briefly.

One of the reasons that fostered the initiation of the amnesty programme was the transition from military regime to civilian rule in 1999. The democratization process both empowered a new generation in the Delta and heightened tensions over reforms around revenue distribution. Democracy gave opportunities for most of the youths who led the Niger Delta struggle in the early 1990s to emerge as regional elites poised to take over power in the region. They were appointed into governments and became part of the ruling elite at both the state and the federal levels. These elites, who became governors and legislators, saw themselves as the representatives of the people and set out to challenge the Federal government on the redistributive mechanisms in Nigeria's Federal system. The involvement of the youth leaders in the new regime was expected to profit the state politically. Furthermore, there were misgivings about the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as President because he was a former military head of state that was part of the military oligarchy that distorted Nigeria's Federal system by driving centralization after the civil war in 1967. The confidence in Obasanjo by the Niger Delta Region was further put to the test when it was time to implement the 1999 constitutional provision on a new revenue allocation formula. This constitution was introduced by the departing military government of Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar. The constitution states that not less than thirteen per cent of the national revenue should be allocated based on derivation. This

was meant to be an improvement on the previous one, but the Obasanjo administration delayed in the implementation of this constitution and when it eventually started the implementation, it did not back date the payments to May 29, 1999, the date when the constitution became effective. This started a legal battle over the application of the derivation principle for revenue accruing from on-shore productions. The reason for this is that the Federation of Nigeria laid claims to on-shore revenue based on the international law statutes which vests ownership of territorial waters on sovereign states. The government in the coastal states in the Niger Delta argued that Nigeria's ownership of territorial waters was gotten from the fact the waters were contiguous to the coastal states and Nigeria's rights stemmed from the coastal states' membership of Nigeria. When the legal resolution failed, the federal government of Nigeria under president Obasanjo decided on a political solution that made the coastal states eligible to receive derivation revenue from on-shore oil production. In addition, the development agency (OMPADEC) that served as a redistributive mechanism to spread some benefits of oil production to oil communities was not functioning and there was a delay in setting up an alternative agency. This delay led to fears that there would be a termination of resources that were due the region (Ozo-Eson, 2001).

In addition to heightened tensions between politicians at state and federal levels, there was the issue of restive youths who mobilised against oil companies. For example, on the 11th of December 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council gave an ultimatum to the oil companies to vacate production sites by December 30th of that year. By January 1999, to enforce the ultimatum, the Ijaw Youth Council engaged in a peaceful march to gain public support called 'Operation Climate Change'. This march resulted in attacks by the Nigerian Security force which led to a bloody encounter and the death of some youths and soldiers. This took the militarization of the conflict to a heightened level and marked the resurgence of militancy, as there emerged more armed groups seeking to revenge the killings of the youths involved in the non-violent protest. The militant groups, relying on mystical powers of the 'Egbesu' (Egbesu is referred to as the god of warfare for the Ijaw people of the Niger Delta Region, the men who acquire these spiritual powers believe that they are invincible warriors immune to bullets) confronted the Nigerian military, the Nigerian state and its security apparatus. There were several encounters between the armed groups and soldiers and police who were deployed to pacify the region. In order to restore public order and to stop the daily killings of security personnel in the region,

President Olusegun Obasanjo ordered troops to Odi to arrest members of the armed groups involved in the killings, this led to what was known as the 'Odi Massacre'. Later, coming up to the 2003 election, several political parties used these armed groups to influence presidential candidate for the elections. This also took a violent turn in the Niger Delta, particularly Rivers State, as armed groups of opposing parties clashed. Later, President Obasanjo and Peter Odili (leader of one faction) entered a truce between the warring groups initiating a disarmament process for the armed groups. This did not last however, as one group led by Asari Dokunbo claimed that Ateke Tom - the leader of another major group was not surrendering weapons. Asari abandoned the disarmament process and the truce was broken. Consequently, the confidence of the Niger Delta people in the Obasanjo administration did not improve, and this undermined the efforts of this administration to curb militancy in the region.

Alongside these local dynamics, there was pressure from the international community to try to stabilise the situation in the Delta because of the Middle East crisis and the surge of oil prices. The United States offered increased development assistance to secure oil production bases and curb arms proliferation in the Niger Delta Region. The above factors, which include political tensions around the transition to a new government, the limitations of the security-led approach, the global energy crisis and the pressure, form the international community, led to the necessity for the Yardua administration to explore other ways of negotiation and reconciliation.

During Yar Adua's campaign for the presidency he decided that the security approach which the Obasanjo administration used was not productive because it had led to increased militarization of the region with armed groups having access to illegitimate revenues and weapons (Sayne, 2013; Asuni, 2009). Also Nigeria's military response was drawing a lot of local and international criticism because of alleged human rights violations. These factors led Yar Adua to start seeking dialogue with the groups in the region.

The President set up a technical committee on the 8th of September 2008 to review findings and recommendations of previous panels and committees like NDDC and suggest the way forward. The conclusion of the committee was that there was a need for the implementation of previous recommendations that had been suggested but not

implemented since 1958. Generally, the recommendations of the past committees were development plans for the region, completion of important abandoned projects, equal revenue distribution etc. In cases where the recommendations were considered at all, the committee found they had been taken out of context or implemented without consistency and monitoring (Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, 2008). The committee finally came up with three possible resolutions that could be used to deal with the present situation (Kuku, 2012 :117). These were (1) an increase of derivation revenues from 13 per cent to 25 percent; (2) an open trial and bail for Henry Okah and (3) a disarmament process for youths involved in militancy through a DDR programme. The resident decided to go with the last two recommendations since the first recommendation required a constitutional amendment that would take a long time. The president agreed to the release of Henry Okah (one of the leaders of the militant groups) and a conditional amnesty for militants who agreed to lay down arms; this was to secure the region and create the environment for improved revenues. This approach by Yar Adua helped in shaping the character and outcome of the amnesty programme.

4.3. The Concepts of Amnesty and DDR

Amnesty is a legislative or executive act by which a state restores those who may have been guilty of an offence against it to the positions of innocent people (Onuorah, 2009). Recent peacebuilding literature identifies many institutional approaches to peacebuilding which include, power sharing (Hoddie, 2007), security reform (Toft, 2010), peacekeeping forces (Doyle and Sambanis 2006), post conflict justice mechanisms (Bell 2009 and Binnnings et al 2012). Amongst these options is amnesty which entails a legislative or executive act by which a state restores those who may have been guilty of an offence against it to the positions of innocent people (Onuorah, 2009). Amnesty is often accompanied by the process of disarmamament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), which is increasingly associated with the United Nations practices in conflict and post-conflict societies (Soderstrom, 2013; Muggah, 2009). DDR is a series of planned activities that seek to collect weapons from fighters, destroy such weapons and prepare fighters for a normal civilian life.

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants (United Nations Secretary-General, 2005). The aim of disramment is to reduce or control the number of weapons held before demoblisation in order to build confidence in a peace process (United Nations, 2006). When the disarmament phase is undertaken correctly with the right mechanisms and arms are actually destoyed, it has the potential for building confidence in a peace process. This process is also beneficial for ex-combatants due to their improved socioeconomic and political conditions, encouraging them to abandon their desire to acquire weapons to press their demands (Okonofua, 2016). Demobilisation is the process of disconnecting combatants from their armed groups or units significantly and giving back to the state its monopoly of violence (Hithcock, 2004; Nillson, 2005). Reintegration is the process whereby ex combatants and their families are integrated into the socio-economic and civilian life of the community (Jennings, 2008). This process could take several forms, *political integration* in which the ex combatants become part of the decision making process of their communities; *economic integration* in which the ex combatants, their families and support system are equipped to develop their livelihoods; *social integration* in which the local communities accept ex combatants, their families and the primary support system as members of the community. Therefore most conventional DDR would be hope to establish security, while also incorporating a development perspective (Jennings, 2008).

It is important to note here that some critics query the DDR process, arguing that generic approaches to reintegration can misfire completely or they challenge particular aspects of DDR approaches such as the giving of monetary incentives directly to combatants, arguing that DDR investments should be directed to more inclusive programs like employment, economic growth and infrastructural development. Moreover, Muggah argues that any of these processes are intense and could be heavily politicised and the capacity of the civilian population to absorb ex combatants is limited (Muggah, 2009). It is important therefore to design inclusive amnesty and DDR programmes. Inclusive peacebuilding is about the satisfaction of the needs and related challenges of individuals and groups in a society. The World Bank (2010) has argued that inclusiveness is an essential feature of effective DDR and peacebuilding. It must include the needs of the poor. Stewart (2010) concluded that economic exclusion is an important factor that motivates groups to mobilise and participate in violent conflict. This implies that if a

peacebuilding initiatives like DDR is not inclusive it could be difficult to achieve lasting peace (Lambourne, 2004). This realisation is one of the reasons why gender considerations are becoming more important in relation to thinking about DDR. Gender forms the basis to societal relations within which individuals and groups act. DDR programmes that work with local civil society organisations, including women networks, are more successful (Lambourne, 2004). Gender responsive programmes will not only facilitate women's empowerment but also aims to work with the whole of society. However, as will be seen later in this chapter, such considerations were not to the fore in the Delta amnesty process.

4.4 The Amnesty and DDR Process in the Niger Delta

Having accepted the recommendation for an amnesty programme, President Umaru Yar Adua set up a presidential committee chaired by Major General Godwin Abbe to implement the amnesty, with a focus on the disarmament and demobilisation of militants in the oil producing region. The committee proposed a budget of 50 billion naira and estimated that 10,000 militants would benefit from this. The programme started on the 6th of August 2009, it lasted for 60 days ending on October 4, 2009. It was agreed that those who surrendered their arms and entered the rehabilitation programme would be given 65,000-naira (450 dollars) stipend per month (Strouse, 2009). Once the amnesty was announced by the president, the militants had a sixty-day period to respond to the offer. Only those who accepted the offer would be pardoned and enlisted in the programme. Surrendered weapons would be exchanged for cash. The disarmed militants and groups would then be invited to an orientation camp for reorientation where their training needs for reintegration would be determined. The plan was then that successful ex militants will be sent on training and subsequently integrated into the private sector, government ministries, departments and agencies.

The militants in the Niger Delta were expected to make their way to the nearest screening centre, hand in their arms and ammunitions, take the oath of renunciation and receive presidential amnesty and unconditional pardon, then register for a rehabilitation and reintegration programme (Nigerian Tribune, 11 July 2010). The DDR process in the

Niger Delta followed three phases. First was the disarmament phase which was to take place between August 6th 2009 and October 4th 2009. There was also the collection of biometric data. The second phase was the demobilisation phase which was to last six to twelve months. It included the provision of counselling and career guidance to participants. While the last phase was the reintegration phase which was to last up to five years. This included the provison of occupational training and micro credits for the participants.

The disarmament phase of the Niger Delta Amnesty lasted for 60 days with over 15,000 militants surrendering their weapons (October 2009; *The Nation*, 26 June 2011). The demobilisation phase involved putting militants into camps at temporary centres with support packages to cover their basic needs and those of their families. It also included non-killing and non-violence transformational training. This phase ended on the 24th September 2011. The last phase, reintegration, was intended to enable the ex-militants to integrate into civilian life by helping them with training to increase their capabilities to take control of their lives (Agibiboa, 2013). The minister of Niger Delta Affairs stated that the ministry organised a job fair that would link the youths in the amnesty programme to prospective employers (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2011).

Conclusively, the amnesty programme was claimed to be a significant effort towards peace and reconciliation by the Federal government because most of the militants' leaders finally accepted the programme and engaged with it as a means towards peace and stability. This new administrative approach prompted a declaration of ceasefire by the militants and yielded some dividends, for instance the hostage taking during this period significantly reduced and Nigeria's oil production rose to 2.2 million barrels per day (Punch, 2009). Approximately 15,000 militants accepted the amnesty offer surrendering their arms and ammunition. Strouse (2009) states that about 95,970 rounds of assorted ammunition, 520 different categories of rifles and other weapons and 30 machine guns with NATO capacity etc. were surrendered.

The amnesty process was initiated locally and has been described as a home-grown DDR programme (Kuku, 2012). One of the reasons for the conscious effort to implement this process locally was that unlike other countries, where civil war led to situations where the governments had no dependable source of revenue, the Nigerian state could still

depend on oil revenues to run the programme. With the conflict in the Middle East and the global energy crisis, the Nigerian government reckoned that if they could bring stability to the region, they would gain from the rising oil prices. Furthermore, the historical experience of managing the post conflict nation building process after the Nigerian Civil war in 1970 without depending on international support motivated state actors to initiate the programme locally. It was considered that this would be an opportunity for nation building. They also felt that by overseeing the amnesty process, the federal government could regain the trust of the Niger Delta people. It must be noted that though the Nigerian state led the amnesty process, the international community contributed to the design of the programme. Before the amnesty programme the EU, US, UK and multilateral institutions like the United Nations and World Bank were involved in the development efforts in the region with estimates of funding of about one billion US dollars (Francis et, 2011, Egwu, 2013). The focus of these international actors before amnesty was the improvement of governance and the capaicity of institutions and human resources for sustainanble development in the region (Ukiwo, 2015), but this yielded little effort due to instability in the region.

Although the process was locally led, the United Nations was involved in the amnesty programme through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They provided the technical support for different consultations leading to the declaration of the amnesty programme. The UNDP supported the preparation of the 'Strategic and Operational Plan' for the DDR programme. The UNDP also supported the office of the special assistant to the Niger Delta Affairs, which was charged with the implementation of the amnesty programme (Onadipe, 2013). Therefore though this DDR was nationally driven for the above reasons, they were assisted by the UNDP which provided them with technical support.

4.5 Critical Perspectives on Amnesty and DDR in the Delta

The amnesty and DDR processes in the Delta are commendable because they pursued tactics of negotiation and promoted non violent alternatives to intra-state conflict. Despite this, the amnesty programme has been criticised for several reasons.

One reason relates to poor planning and the exclusion of important stakeholders (Ojeleye, 2013; Oluwanniyi, 2011; Akinwale, 2010). The programme has been described as top down and overly influenced by the ex-militant commanders without reflecting the needs and apsirations of the local people. Watts (2007) argues that amnesty was an outcome of peace negotiations with militant groups leaders in the region, rather than the result of engagement with the wider community.

Other critics point out that the amnesty has not demilitarised the Niger Delta. Instead the continued presence of the state's military forces in the Niger Delta continues to undermine the commitment of the Nigerian government to peace in the region. The presence of the military in the region prevents a wider engagement with local communities on their grievances against the state and the multinational companies. The mandate of the forces has been changed from repressing insurgency to providing security to oil installations, tackling oil bunkering, illegal oil refining, vandalisation and sea piracy. Yet, while maintaining security is important and beneficial to the state and the multinational companies, it should not be at the cost of peacebuilding and security initiatives which would be more effective if the local communities, youth groups, civil societies and former combatants are actively involved and considered partners in protecting the oil investments in the region (Ushie, 2013).

Though the amnesty programme reduced the violence in the Niger Delta and oil production in the country started to rise again, several authors like Omeje (2004) state that what prompted the amnesty program was not the environmental tragedy in the Niger Delta but the need to calm the militant groups' attacks on the oil facilities in the country which affected oil production. This means that the primary goal was to maximise oil revenues (Omeje, 2004). Furthermore reports have it that the Nigerian oil company is giving 3.8 million dollars a year to past militant leaders to have their foot soldiers guard the pipelines they once attacked. This has led to some describing the amnesty as a lucrative business rather than a transformational strategy (Hinshaw, 2012 and Oluwaniyi,

2011:52). Also the government framework for disarmament and demobilisation was not specified adequately.

Ukiwo (2015) states that there have been different assessment of the programme by various authors (Ikelegbe, 2010; Nwajiaku-Dahou 2013; Peterside, 2015, etc) and these assessments have suggested different outcomes. Firstly there is a broad recognition that the programme enhanced the resumption of oil production, meaning an increase in oil revenues earning Nigeria an estimate of 39 billion US Dollars in 2012. Secondly, there is an agreement among authors that the frequent attacks on oil infrastructure have significantly reduced. Thirdly amnesty has provided opportunities for the training of over 11,000 ex-militants in various professions. However the programme is said to have performed badly in terms of the human security in the region (Ukiwo, 2015). There is the concern that the programme promoted a culture of violence, because by rewarding the perpertrators, this has contributed to the distortion of socialization processes in the Niger Delta. Other assessments have looked at the deficiencies of the program for example in terms of ineffeciency to plan for employment and the reintegration of graduates of the programme. However, a central critical issue in relation to the amnesty and DDR is its utter gender blindness. Women were not part of the planning, considered as combatants or consulted about the vision for a post-conflict society.

4.6. Gender and the Niger Delta amnesty/DDR process

A central problem with the amnesty process was that although discussion about gender sensitivity in amnesty and DDR programmes is now considered important (as discussed above), the Niger Delta process was not gendered in any way. The amnesty process was directed towards men as combatants. Supporting this is Ekine (2008) who points out that the main beneficiaries of the amnesty and reintegration in the Niger Delta were men and in the same vein, Umujesi (2014) states that women could not participate in the DDR in the Niger Delta because of cultural factors that see only men as combatants. It is widely believed that because women are not the main perpetrators of violence, they are not relevant in the peace and security discourse. Hence their contributions are often relegated as trival things and reflecting their roles as wives and mothers rather than as

full citizens. As can be seen from the table below, women formed a tiny percentage of those able to benefit from the demobilisation and reitegration programmes.

Participants in the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme

States	Males	Female	Registered
Akwa Ibom	155	8	163
Bayelsa	6900	61	6961
Cross River	159	1	160
Delta	3361	-	3361
Edo	450	-	450
Imo	297	3	300
Ondo	1198	2	1200
Rivers	6958	39	6997
NDDC	571	19	600
Total	20,049	133	20,192

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria -PAO Niger Delta Amnesty Programme.

From the table of statistics above, the gender imbalance between male and female is obvious with only 0.65% of the total registered participants' female. This raises questions about the exclusion of women from the amnesty process, since women have been active participants in the Niger Delta struggle even if they did not often carry arms (Ikelegbe, 2005). As was seen in chapter two, women were involved in the Niger Delta conflict in so many ways (as environmental activists, as breadwinners, as victims of sexual violence, as support staff to the combatants etc.), they should be given recognition in the peace process, but this has not been the case. Moreover, women's lives are inevitably impacted by a DDR process that directs economic resources to men only and empowers men further through reintegration processes aimed only at them. An exclusive approach to gender and amnesty/DDR raises questions about whether this process can address the underlying

grievances of the Niger Delta people which continue to be made manifest in criminality and violence (Ushie, 2013).

In many ways the amnesty/DDR process in the Delta was not unique in its gender blindness. Adding to this view is Takeuchi and Marara (2009) who state that DDR processes in Africa operate within exisitng structural constraints such as male land occupancy, traditional inheritance rights etc. which are not to the advantage of women. These restrictions relegate them to reproductive and domestic roles rather than empowering them to engage in publicly defined roles (Ortega, 2009).

Ozerdem (2012) states that the challeges facing women often starts with the peace negotiation process where the criteria for political processes leading to the DDR are often set. Gender discrimination in the post conflcit peace process in the Niger Delta is based on the socio-cultural differences between men and women and the differences in their gendered roles (Akinwale, 2010). Furthermore, the institutional norm that created the DDR in the Niger Delta focused on peace and security in order to restore production of oil in the region, hence failing to include the families of ex-militants. The government did not pay attention to the reconstruction of destroyed markets, hospitals, roads, harbours and other socio-economic facilities that would have facilitated an inclusive approach involing the women. An inclusive approach especially including the families of ex-militants in the DDR process would have provided women with the opportunity to participate in the processes. Instead, the absence of a solid inclusionary focus to the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta has contributed to the problem of sustainable peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. Ortega (2010) asserted that the failure of the DDR to address gender specific needs makes it difficult to ensure sustainable peace in a post-conflict environment. Despite the marginalisation the women have faced, however, they have been able to take some peacebuilding action and we shall begin to explore this in the next section and then further in reporting on the fieldwork undertaken for this study in the following chapter.

4.7. Peace building by women in the Niger Delta

The Nigerian constitution of 1999 section 42 (1) states that "a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination". In theory the Nigerian constitution does not discriminate against women in politics but practically, this has not been the case. According to the 2015 statistical report on women and men in Nigeria compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics, 94.3% of the seats in the National Parliament were occupied by men. There were only 8.3% of women in the upper house of assembly; 7.2% in the lower house of assembly, 26.25% represented as judges; 5.6% at the local government; and 9.8% women councillors. At the state level, only five women are deputy governors and Nigeria is yet to have a female governor in any of the 36 states. The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained at 6.7% in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the global average of 22.5%, the African regional average of 23.4% and the West African sub-regional average of 15%. This report clearly shows that the expected progress with regards to women's participation has not been achieved. Issues such as patriarchy, traditional and cultural practices, stigmatization, lack of funding, nepotism in politics and heavy monetization of the political process have resulted in the marginalisation of women.

Despite their absence from the formal political sphere, women have been able to take peacebuilding actions in a number of ways. Women activists in the Niger Delta have gone beyond inter-ethnic hostilities and grievances to act against oil companies. Women associations such as Gbaramutu, Isoko, Itsekir, Urhobo and Ogbakiri Women's Peace Forums have participated in environmental activism and peace initiatives. In 2002, thousands of women were reported to have occupied eight major oil facilities. Though the women from three different ethnicities had separately taken actions against the oil companies, this time around the women came together in a united action despite their different ethnicities.

According to Ikelgbe (2005), women's peacebuilding actions falls into five major categories which overlap, these include:

i.   Participation in formal mechanisms

ii.   General women's civil society organisations

iii.   Participation in mixed conflict civil society organisations addressing violent conflict.

iv.   Ad-hoc activism in response to specific incidences of violent conflict or to prevent conflict escalating into violence.

v.   Conflict management in organised religion.

Amongst the five categories mention above, as already shown women's participation in formal mechanisms (no. i) has been lacking. However, women's civil society groups and associations do exist and are the main facilitating vehicles in women's struggle for access to resources and empowerment. Especially at the local level the associational fabric has created a means by which the space for socio-political agitation and participation in local politics is possible (Soetan, 1995). According to Ikelegbe (2005), in Nigeria, women associations can be categorised as follows. First, there are local community women's groups that are in traditional governance structures. Most of the communities have such organisations whereby the women are not just organised but relate to the community governance. Secondly, there are different kinds of thrift, cooperative, kinship, religious and cultural associations. Then there are mid-level organisations that relate to the socio-economic occupations, interest groups, socio-economic sectors and socio-development. These groups are more concerned about socio-economic conditions. These groups tend to focus on women's concerns within the specific sectors and professions. However, these groups are very few and largely involve professional women.

In the Niger Delta, the associational life of the women can similarly be categorised into the following. The first is the local groupings of traditional organisations and the local socio-economic welfare support groups. These groups concern themselves with environmental maintenance of the community and the governance of women's affairs. They play significant roles in village ceremonies and festivals. The leaders of these groups receive grievances which are channelled to the community council. At the local level, these groups protest laws and activities of traditional governance structures and systems and against unjust and unfair practices. When the women feel strongly about issues and there is no strong resolution, they may threaten to relocate outside the communities in protest or may threaten to walk naked on the streets. The women of these groups also liaise with other communities' women's groups to resolve common problems such as sea piracy and youth violence. They also mediate in conflict resolution.

The second group is the community, clan and ethnic associations. These are also grass roots organisations that are usually called progressive associations and meetings. These groups are the socio-economic groups that by which the women support themselves mutually. They concern themselves with thrift, mutual support and welfare. Examples of these groups in Delta include Otu Njonu women's organisation in Ndokwa Wet local government and the Emu women's forum. The third is the pan ethnic and regional associations. While these groups are few in the region they include Voice of Niger Delta Women, Niger Delta Women for Justice, and the Federation of Ogoni Women's Association. As will become clear in the fieldwork findings, Ikelgbe's fifth category of involvement in religious peace activism and conflict management is also a key site of women's activism.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed previous attempts to bring an end to violence in the Niger Delta. Failed development-led approaches before the 1990s, were replaced by an amnesty and DDR approach in more recent years. However, this approach has its limitations most notably for its gender blindness and exclusion of women's involvement and perspectives. That said in the Niger Delta, women have been engaged in peacebuilding initiatives. With several women's group taking the lead in calling for interventions in the Niger Delta region. For instance, the Ketbetkache Women's Development Association is one of the women's groups that have facilitated women's participation in community affairs and advocacy. They started this by mobilising women in peace marches in Ogoni land. The role of the women in these demonstrations was to initiate and support dialogue among the elite and the company or the government representatives. It is important to note that the non-violent strategies of peace-building which these women have adopted in mobilising for social justice have become a significant development for peace building in the region. In order to mobilise for this kind of protest, women's groupings and associations have become the basis for mobilisation and struggle in the region. In the chapters which follow, fieldwork carried out with women in the Delta region will be reported on. Through focus group discussions and interviews, women's ideas and initiatives related to sustainable peace will be explored and the argument furthered about the importance of their inclusion if change is to be realised in the Delta.

Chapter 5 Field work Findings from the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

5.1 Introduction

My research looks at the gendering of conflict and peace in the Niger Delta region with a interest in the role of women in post-conflict peacebuilding processes and their perspectives on how to promote sustainable peace in the Delta. To achieve this purpose the research relied largely on qualitative data. As detailed in chapter one, the field research was carried out in Bayelsa and Delta State from February to April 2017. These are two of the states that form part of the Niger Delta Region and which have also been impacted by the decades of conflict, as described earlier in this thesis. The research methods included semi-structured interviews with local community and civil society organisation leaders and focus group discussions with women living in Bayelsa and Delta.

The aims of this research, as expressed in the thesis introduction and elaborated in the literature reviewed in the previous chapters, include furthering understanding of the following themes;

1. The gender dynamics of conflict and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta
2. Dominant approaches to peacebuilding in the Niger Delta since 2009
3. Women's peacebuilding activities and their potential contribution to sustainable peace
4. The obstacles hindering women's participation in peacebuilding and what can be done to overcome these obstacles.

These themes therefore were the guiding ideas around which the interviews and FGDs were organised and are used in this chapter to report on the research findings. While this

chapter reports the findings from the focus group discussions and expert interviews, the following and final chapter will analyse these findings.[1]

5.2 The Gender Dynamics of Conflict and Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta

In looking at this, the findings are divided into two sections. First is the gender dynamics during the conflict and second is the gender dynamics after the conflict which was majorly the amnesty phase.

5.2a. The Gender Dynamics of Conflict

As suggested by the literature reviewed in chapter three, violent conflict is shaped by gender. For example, younger men are likely to be called up as combatants, while women largely remain in civilian life. Yet, experiences in war, for example of conflict related gender-based violence are also part of wartime experience for many women. This section reports on women's experiences of the conflict in the Niger Delta. It shows how they felt during the conflict, how the conflict impacted on their lives and highlights gender roles during conflict in Bayelsa and Warri.

The participants agree that the long-term impact of the conflict was felt more by women than men, one reason for this being that although many men and young male adults who were directly involved in the violence lost their lives, women felt the impact of the loss of lives of either their husbands or children and had to deal with taking care of the family and supporting the community after the loss. This resulted in change in gender roles. For instance, when asked if the conflict impacted on men and women differently, FGD participants noted that while men were in greater physical danger, women bore the brunt of the changes in family relationships, as the following two quotes suggest:

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[1] The findings presented here are gathered from communities in Bayelsa (B) and Warri (W). A numbering system will be used to identify the source of comments drawn from FGDs. B1 Ikarama; B2 Imirigi, B3 Okodia; B4 Ayamabele; W1 Jeddo; W2 Ekpan and W3 Ubeji.

we feel that the conflict affects the women more than the men because we are the ones who take care of the home. During the conflict the men could not move about freely or go into the bush because if you are Itsekiri you will be afraid that if the Ijaws catch you they will kill you - especially those with the tribal marks were easy target. They even went on to telling us to speak out tribal language and when you could not speak the language, they would kill you.[2]

It affected us differently because, for instance, women oversee the kitchen and they must provide for the family because in most cases, the men don't really care. Also, some of the children were also involved in the conflict so these affected the women more.[3]

These remarks from the FGDs buttress the point made by Elshtain (1987), that women are more than just victims or outsiders of conflict. War brings about changes in gender relations and women are required to do even more to ensure family survival during conflict as seen from these quotes. The responses show a change in gender roles, where the women had to be bread winners because the men could not go out for fear of being killed. In the Niger Delta, the women's roles changed during conflict and these roles that women play during conflict situation needs to be recognised when the time comes for post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. The roles of women during conflict needs to be paid attention, women should not be treated as just victims of conflict since they do so much during conflict. The next section looks at the gender dynamics during the amnesty phase.

5.2b. The Gender Dynamics of the Amnesty Process

As explained in chapter two, a key moment in terms of peace efforts in the Niger Delta came through an amnesty process intended to create a ceasefire in the area. This section reports women's involvement (or lack thereof) in the amnesty peace process in the Niger Delta. From the interviews, the analysis of the previous chapter is confirmed – that women were not involved in the amnesty process and neither were their needs taken into consideration. This is symptomatic of the general political disempowerment of women in the Delta where "the women are not taken as part of the community - the women are marginalized….[and] when the women act too much in local meetings they are

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[2] B2, 22.2.2017 (Focus group participant Imirigi)
[3] B1, 10.3.2017 (Focus group)

sanctioned"[4]. The women in this focus group also suggested that sometimes local politicians looked for their support when they needed to mobilise the community but generally, the local leaders were aware of gender issues but did not act on them.[5] With regard to the amnesty, the women reiterated that "We do not know those who were involved in the (amnesty) process but we the women were not involved."[6] There was also a general idea that the amnesty was meant only for those who took up weapons and a source of income for militants. As the women in Imirigi said, "The amnesty was meant to be for everybody, but it became like a source of income for just the militants."[7]

5.3. Dominant approaches to peacebuilding in the Niger Delta since 2009

This section reports an assessment of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta after the amnesty process in 2009. Some of the women in the FGDs and the interviewees believed the amnesty process brought a measure of peace but others think that the amnesty brought no peace. This is because the women believe that peace is not just the absence of violence but favourable living conditions and social change, in the sense advocated by many Peace Studies scholars. From this perspective, peace includes not only the absence of war and hostilities but the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within society. For example, according to Ledearch (1997), peacebuilding touches on the underlying structural, relational and cultural roots of conflict. and seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, either to prevent them from arising initially or a recurrence.

Peacebuilding in this broader sense is therefore intimately linked to community development. Yet, as one interviewee stated, "the amnesty deal had developments aspects to it for the communities across the Niger Delta but till today nothing was done for the community and I have not heard of militants who protested to the Federal government for not implementing the developmental aspects of the amnesty deal which is not a good thing."[8] Mr. Dumbe noted that the amnesty deal met the immediate needs of armed

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[4] B1, 10.3.2017 (Women leader of Ikarama)
[5] B1, 10.3.2017 (Women leader Ikarama)
[6] B1, 10.3.2017 (Focus group Participant)
[7] B2, 22.2.2017 (Focus Group)
[8] **Mr. Dennis Dumbe 25.2.2017 (Community Leader Azuzama Kingdom)**

combatants and the only issue which exercises them now is if their demobilisation stipends go unpaid. The deal has done nothing for the wider security of communities in the Delta.[9]

This analysis of the link between the 'negative peace' of the amnesty and on-going insecurity and lack of development in communities was also recognised by the women in the focus groups:

> (The amnesty) did not bring peace because a lot of the young boys are still jobless, and the crime is still at high rate in the society. For example, organizations like Shell take our young boys to train them in some certain handwork skills but when they come back, they have nothing to start their business with. They teach them the handwork but no financial empowerment to start their business as a result they were left with no option than to go back to crime.[10]

His point was reiterated in FGD B2, where the participants noted that the needs of young men were not addressed in the process meaning **"most of the young ones went back to the crime life of stealing, cultism and robbery".[11]** The amnesty programme was meant to end the violent and armed militancy in the Niger Delta and create favourable conditions for peace. However, the discussions and interviews for this research showed that in many aspects the amnesty programme did little to promote the peacebuilding process in the Niger Delta. For example, there was the exclusion of victims from any consideration and the absence of structural frameworks for peacebuilding at the community levels. Due to these factors another interviewee, Mr Aba, likened the process to a:

> graveyard peace in the sense that the amnesty programme did not address the underlying issues that brought about the crisis. It is more of window dressing of isolating the troublemakers, give them some money and then we can do our oil business. Since the underneath issues of development is still unattended to, any time the conflict is likely to occur again because it is not totally peaceful. But we have seeming peace because one can travel in and out of the region.[12]

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[9] Mr. D. Dumbe (25.2.2017)
[10] W2, 2.4.2017 (Women Leader,Church of God Mission Ekpan)
[11] B2, 22.2.2017 (Women leader Immirigi)
[12] Mr Aba, 1.3.2017 (Director of SACCA (stakeholders alliance for corporate accountability) (date)

The quotes above illustrate the limits of the kind of peace that the amnesty established. When asked about the kind of peace that the women hoped to see in their communities, in contrast to the amnesty they tended to describe conditions of social and economic development and personal and political freedom. "The way the women see peace is different from how the men see peace. To us the women, if our children are going to school and are free to move about, we feel that there is peace. The men will always fight."[13]

Women stressed that peace equated to access to basic needs like water, electricity and provision of jobs for young people with a focus more on what will benefit their family and the community. They were clear however that these were far from being realized through the amnesty process:

> In this community, they did not consider the needs of women. For instance, AGIP (an oil company) agreed that they will provide us with diesel at the end of every month so that we can at least pump clean water and have light, but they only did this in the first six months and stopped. As women we do most of the cooking at night because we farm or go to our market during the day. The river is too far to fetch water at night, so it is very difficult for us as women. So, in this community one of our greatest need is that diesel so that we can pump water and have light. But AGIP has not held their part of the bargain; this means that they do not consider us relevant. [14]

In this section the limits of the approach to peace and peacebuilding adopted in response to the Niger Delta conflict have been made clear from the perspectives of the women in focus groups and the interviewees. This leads to consideration of what are alternative models of peace that can meet women's needs and those of the wider community. For peacebuilding to be sustainable and long lasting as seen from chapter four, it must be characterised by inclusiveness because studies have shown that peacebuilding activities characterised by exclusion have resulted in a relapse into violent conflict (Castillejo,

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[13] W2, 2.4.2017 (Focus group participant, Church of God Mission Ekpan))
[14] B2, 22.2.2017 (Women Leader Immirigi).

2014). In the next section the response of the research participants to questions about women's activities and possible contributions to sustainable peace were discussed.

5.4. Women's Peacebuilding Activities and Potential Contribution to Peace

The focus group and interviewees were asked why they would consider that it is important to include women in peace building. The range of responses were varied. Some people reflected on women's roles in the home and communities as providing them with insights and skills to build peace. Here, for example are the words of Mr Dumbe,

> I think that women should be involved because they are mothers and mothers know how they talk to their children and their husband and they will listen to them. One way or the other those who are involved in violence they are husbands and sons and if women are involved to an extent it will help peacebuilding because they know how to talk to them. For instance, girlfriends talk to boyfriends, wives talk to their husbands and things like that[15].

He further drew on tropes about women's inherent traits that might explain capacities for peace and their potential influence over men. "Women are emotional, for instance, when a woman talks to you, there is this attachment you feel and since most of those involved in violence are men. When women talk to these men, that natural emotion of women calms them (men) down and the men will listen to them"[16] A similar view was expressed by Mr Aba, who suggested that, "we believe that women have a lot of contribution to make because in Africa, particularly in the Niger Delta, it is believed that the heart of the man is in the hand of the wife. The person who controls the stomach of the man controls his decisions".[17]

Maternalism was also cited by some interviewees as providing the grounding from which women engage in peace. From FIDA, for example, the view was that, "from the maternal

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[15] Mr Dumbe (25.2.2017)
[16] Mr Dumbe (25.2.2017)
[17] Mr Abe (1.3.2017)

perspective mothers are caring and, they are nurturing. For Fida I think that women should be involved because we are better negotiators and our caring nature".[18]

Awareness of the impact of conflict on families was also cited as a motivation for women to engage in peacebuilding:

> The woman knows that when there is a conflict that degenerates into crisis, it's her children that suffers the most and they are the number one victims because moving from one point to another, they are the ones to carry the family luggage and to hide in the bush, so therefore the women make contributions in talking to their husbands and children to avoid making trouble anything that will cause conflict.[19]

A similar point was made by Mrs Johnson:

> Even though they say that women are the weaker vessels, an average woman knows that when there is conflict, it is the women and the children that suffer and bear the brunt… Just like I said the women are the one that suffer when there is conflict, so they are bound to look for every way out to make peace and champion the cause for peace. Also, it's the women that cook for the family and they know that when the men are hungry, they can do anything, so they know how to make the community happy (Laughs). Well I know that the women are doing a lot for peace and I think that they should be the ones to champion peace. The men may not care but the women have that heart to make sure all is well.[20]

At another point in her interview, Mrs Johnson stressed that when women become empowered "*they can use their resources to carry out peacebuilding activities*" and she *advocated that women should be ensured the quota of representation they are supposed to enjoy:*

> Do the women have the 30% representation that they are supposed to have in leadership caucus, especially in the Niger Delta? Because we have women who

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[18] FIDA (23.3.2017) International Federation of Women Lawyers (Bayelsa)
[19] Mrs Fidelia 23.2.2107 (Chairperson Fida Bayelsa)
[20] Mrs Johnson (27.3.2017 (Director Lift up Foundation Warri)

are enlightened and women who have been struggling to make sure that there is peace and they mobilize other women for peace activities. So, when committees are been set up for peace this group of women should be in those committee, especially the women leaders so that they can in turn empower their followers.[21]

From the range of interviewees, it is clear that there were a range of views about why it is important to include women. While some referred to natural instincts for peace that women can contribute, others suggested that women's roles in communities and families and the costs of war they experience should mean their voices are included.

5.5 Women Peace-building activities in the Niger Delta

This section reports peacebuilding activities done by women in the Niger Delta. While some of the women in FGDs expressed a view that very little was being done to include women in peace efforts, others identified specific actions and initiatives that women are engaged in. For example, the focus group in Okodia spoke about their activities in a justice network:

> Well in this community we have this women group called the Women for Environmental Justice Network and we are about peace as well, we want to ensure that there is peace in the community and in the family. We engage in different activities like peacebuilding, human rights, environmental justice.[22]

One theme that runs through all the communities interviewed was that at the grassroots level religious activities are seen as crucial to peace efforts. All the communities interviewed had a women's prayer group where they prayed for the peace of the community. As one community said, "talking about women standing for peace, you see them through the church groups"[23].

> We have been doing prayer meeting to bring peace to this community. But some of the women do not like what we are doing because they think that we are wasting

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[21] Mrs Johnson (27.3.2017)
[22] Mrs Johnson (27.3.2017)
[23] W2,24.2.2017 (Focus group Participant))

our time In the Okodia clan. I am a peace ambassador and we talk about peace. I am the one who introduced the prayer meeting.[24]

The quotes above suggest that women's self-mobilised grassroots activism for peace is based mainly in the church or mosque and reflects their beliefs in the importance of prayer and faith, and perhaps indicates that church provides one space where women can have the space to work collectively and exercise some agency. However, the interviewees from the NGO sector also discussed the work they do to mobilise women in the communities around gaining their rights, environmental justice and peacebuilding. The peacebuilding activities carried out by these NGOs are usually non-violent in their approach and amongst them are advocacy activities and awareness campaigns. Furthermore, peacebuilding activities are carried out through engaging the existing leadership structures of the community, including identifying women leaders. Mrs Johnson of the Lift Up Foundation described one such initiative in the following way:

I have been with a group called Otu-Udo, that's a peace group in Otuguaro The approach that has really worked for me is using their local leadership. You know that in any community, there is leadership. You have the women leadership, youth leadership, men leadership and the elders. So, what I do is that I pay advocacy visits to these groups individually.[25]

Similarly, Mrs Vivian spoke of the importance of supporting women's empowerment and local leadership:

We let them know that women are important in decision making. There are places where women are forbidden to enter but when we go there, we hold the meetings in open places making the women understand that they do not have boundaries. When we have projects in these communities, we involve the women and let them choose the projects that they want like literacy programs and computer skills or even skills like soap making, hair dressing and other hand skills that they can learn.

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[24] B2, 22.2.2017 (Women leader in Immirigi) (date)
[25] Mrs Johnson (27.3.2017)

She also stressed the importance of including women in resolving conflicts as they can have different priorities from the men and show more concern for long-term sustainable development for their families and community. Mrs Vivian told the following story which captures this dynamic:

> In of the communities I worked with they had an argument with one of the oil companies and the company felt that the best way to resolve the conflict will be to pay each family in the community an amount of money. When we asked the women, their opinion on this, the women took us to the school and showed us the state of the buildings and they also said that they do not have market. But the men wanted money. At the end the men compromised with the women and they built a school and a market. If the women and youth were not involved, they would not have achieved that. In some communities where it is only men in decisions, they just want cash to be paid and this money cannot go around everyone in the community, it's only the elders that benefit. The men think of now and the women see the future.[26]

The activities described above – from prayer circles to activism for rights and encouraging leadership – are examples of efforts for peace which address the uneasy, unstable situation left by the conflict and amnesty. However, such efforts can come at a price as illustrated by the experiences of women in FGD W2:

> Sometimes as women we have held town hall meetings and called the stakeholders to tell them what they are supposed to do for the community, but they don't listen or maybe they do some and then leave the rest. There was an incidence that happen when the women gathered at NNPC to protest and make a request for something, (the group did not explain this in detail) they were tortured.[27]

This last quote is indicative of the uphill battle communities are engaged in against the state and the oil companies. However, interviewees were able to identify some successes

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[26] Mrs Vivian, 8.4.2017 (Managing Director Rudolf, Warri Delta State)
[27] W2, 2.4.2017 (Focus group Participant Church Mountain of Fire Church, Warri Delta State)

in their efforts and some signs of sustainable peace and change. Mrs Fidelia recalled for example that,

> Based on some of our activities, we take the path of peace, for instance using the Biseni community if we had not intervened; the women would have lost their lives because the men were hell bent on not letting the women vote. Even though the women did not vote we helped to calm the situation through our campaign. So, this has helped the women to know their right without fighting and most times we encourage them to go through legal process which we are very much involved in instead of violence.[28]

Despite such hopeful examples however, in general, the perspective among the FGDs was that women remain politically disempowered and their needs are not considered in processes of peacebuilding. The many barriers women face to inclusion are considered in the next section.

5.6. The obstacles hindering women's participation in peacebuilding and what can be done to overcome these obstacles.

Although the topic of gender balance is raised in this region, the needs of women are still not considered. As Mr Aba remarked, there is still a fundamental gendered power imbalance in the communities, and this brings particular consequences for women:

> Women needs are considered but again it's not enough in the sense that among the policy makers 75% are men and about 25% are women. So, their voice is always drowning down by the majority. Though somehow the policy makers will tell you that they are meeting their needs, they are not really meetings these needs.[29]

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[28] Mrs Fidelia (23.3.2017).
[29] Mr Aba (1.3.2017)

The women in the focus groups also stressed this fundamental problem with having their voices heard. This is partly due to "culture and insecurity among the men"[30] as noted by the women of FGD1:

> We do not think that our voice is been heard, for instance the answer I had for you earlier, they are not paying attention to the gender aspect of things, there is no gender balance, they hear about it, but they are not been sensitive to it and no actions for it. The women do not have any say. In this meeting we talk but they don't listen to what we say, for instance I talk in the meeting and I tell them this is how things are supposed to be done and this is what the women want but they don't listen. Most of the men are not ready to hear anything concerning women – just few, if the community leaders are not ready to listen, it will be difficult for the government to listen.[31]

The traditional division of political power effectively disempowers women and this is embedded in the wider gender norms of the communities. *As Mrs Fidelia noted 'in almost all the communities we go to, the issue of gender inequality is there, women have not yet been completely accepted to be in leadership position especially in these communities.'*[32]Mr Aba also explained:

> In Europe it's women's world and in Africa its men's world. In Africa we have a tradition that is very strong; that the women will not be allowed to speak in a men's gathering. Women can talk in their women's forum but can't talk in a whole community where the men are present; the women can't get up to speak. She may be given a voice to speak but it will not be as strong as the men. The men dominate more than the women and that's a fact.[33]

The women in the focus groups reiterated this fundamental power differential between men and women:

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[30] Mrs Fidelia (23.3.2017)
[31] W1 (5.4.2017 (Focus Group church of God Mission Jeddo)
[32] Mrs Fidelia (23.3.2017)
[33] Mr Aba (1.3.2017)

> One of the obstacles is that the men are not encouraging the women. Even in the prayer meeting we the women have reduced in number because some of the men do not permit their wives to participate in the prayer meeting.[34]

However, women also drew attention to other related but also separate hinderances to their participation in relation to factors like lack of education, resources and the burden of care.

> One of the obstacles to peacebuilding in our community is the lack of finances, sometimes as a group we must travel for meeting or another to get to the government or mobilize other women, but we do not have the finances for it. Without finances we can't move around the community. [35]

Another reason is that as mothers in this modern age, the responsibilities have increased. In many homes, women are now the bread winners of the home, paying rent, training the children. Thus, the women are too preoccupied. When you call for a meeting the women are too preoccupied with fending for the home and meet up with their daily needs, they can't be available, so I would say that the economic situation of Nigeria impacts it a lot. Also, education is a big problem, many of the women are not educated, they have good ideas, but they do not know how to present it or sell the ideas out. Because of this, women are being marginalized and relegated to the background.[36]

In this context there will need to be substantive changes if women are to be included in peacebuilding and their existing activities strengthened and expanded. In the focus groups women simply expressed that:

> What we want is women's inclusion, we want women to be involved in anything they do even if it's one woman, and we just want a representative.[37]

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[34] B1,10.2.2017 (Focus group participant in Ikarama Community, Bayelsa)
[35] W1, 5.4.2017 (Focus group Church of God Mission Jeddo)
[36] W2, 2.4.2017 (Focus group Participant. Mountain of Fire Church, Ekpan, Warri)
[37] B1, 10.3.2017 (Women Leader Ikarama, Bayelsa)

How this is to be enabled was therefore the subject of some final ideas in focus groups and interviews. Some groups spoke of the need to challenge and change men's views of gender roles.

> If the women are recognized and empowered, they would go far but I feel that the men need to be enlightened. The women and the men need to understand that when a woman is empowered the whole community is empowered.[38]

They also argued for the vital importance of women having more access to resources as a means of empowerment:

> What we need to change in this community is that we want some women to be involved in positions so that those women will stand and speak on behalf of the other women. Because the men in position from this community are part of those squandering the money that comes but if we have some women who are faithful, they will remember their children and their fellow women, and the benefits can come to other women.[39]

> You know that this is an oil producing community so there are lots of contracts from the companies. We as women want some of those contracts, we need money as well, and we need some financial independence for ourselves. There are lots of things that we can do and there are lots of ways the oil companies can help the women and empower them.[40]

With more control over resources, more voice in their communities and more respect from men, women in these communities would be better able to implement their ideas and actions for sustainable peace.

5.7 Conclusion

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[38] B2, 22.2.2017 (Focus group participant, Immirigi)
[39] W1, 5.4.2017 (Focus group participant, Jeddo, Warri. Delta State)
[40] W2, 2.4.2017 (Women Leader Ekpan, Warri Delta State)

This chapter has reported on the findings of my fieldwork with women's groups and NGOs in Bayelsa and Delta states in the Niger Delta. The questions asked traced the participants' thoughts on the impact of the conflict on their lives, the attempt to build peace through an amnesty process, the aspirations for a deeper peace the women harbor, the on-going activities women engage in that relate to peace building and the obstacles to full participation these women face. The conflict in the Niger Delta undoubtedly has had an impact on the lives of the women. Though the amnesty deal in the Niger Delta was meant to bring peace, the findings above show that the deal did not address certain groups of persons, especially women. The participants of the interview felt that the amnesty catered only for those who carried weapons.

Through some of the activities they do in the region like prayer meetings and meetings involvement with NGOs like SACA, Fida and Lift-Up, one could say that the women are interested in peace building. However, gendered norms in the communities and other barriers like lack of finance mean they are not empowered to pursue all the activities for peacebuilding they would hope to do. Further analysis of the findings will be carried out in the next chapter, drawing on the theories about women, conflict and peace introduced earlier in the thesis.

Chapter 6 Analysis of Findings and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The earlier chapters of this thesis reviewed literature which shows that women often have complex relationships to armed conflict and share the burden that conflict places on communities. Moreover, the literature shows that they are marginalised in post conflict reconstruction and transformation processes. As the research and fieldwork has shown, women in the Niger Delta have been impacted by the environmental and economic situation which underpins the conflict. They are responsible for the maintenance of families through farming, fishing and trading and all of these have been impacted badly by the conflict. As the fieldwork revealed they are also concerned for the impact of the context on family life, particularly the lack of job opportunities and the likelihood of joining in violent gangs which their male children especially are susceptible to. Although their lives have been impacted by the conflict and its legacies, my research is chiefly concerned with examining the role of women in post conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta. This closing chapter therefore offers an analysis of the findings from the field work in the Niger Delta in the light of the research questions, drawing out analysis of the themes which emerged most strongly in the course of the fieldwork.

6.2 What do Women Consider as Sustainable Peace in the Niger Delta?

The literature on women and peace which was referred to at the start of this thesis, offers a range of perspectives. As recounted in the theoretical framework in chapter one, some writers suggest women are more inclined to peace by virtue of their biological or mothering roles, others base arguments on women's perspectives which emerge from the experiences of conflict. One argument my fieldwork does seem to support is that peace means different things to men and women. Justino et al (2012) argue that women's wider participation in peacebuilding beyond their family or immediate community is dependent on their understanding of what peace means. Men's understanding of peace emphasize predominantly the absence of violence and armed conflict in the community (which correlates to Galtung's idea of 'negative peace'), while women's understanding of peace is at a personal and community level which includes access to basic needs for their

families such as food and shelter, absence of violence in the home, the children's ability to attend school and unity in communities and families. One of the reasons for the struggle between the men and youth of the Delta and the government and multinational oil companies was originally for development and resource control. Yet it seems that the men and youth have taken a detour from this objective and instead are fighting for personal advancement, financial compensation and political objectives. On the other hand, the women's involvement in the conflict or even during protest has shown commitment for community development instead of personal grievances. For instance, as one of the FGDs in Warri had to say when asked what peace meant to them,

> Peace to us is happiness. In our communities we need empowerment because we are sitting on top of the oil and yet we are suffering. both the male and female children should be empowered to learn a trade a skill like hairdressing, sewing, etc. so that they can be responsible. When the young ones are empowered, they will not be nuisance in the community or join cults or gangs and this contributes to peace in the society.[41]

The field work shows that women are more empathetic towards the needs of the community. Another respondent says that because they are mothers, they are sympathetic with the needs of their children and the needs of the children are also the need of the community. From the literature review, Ikelegbe (2006) states that the demand of the women during the protest were connected to issues of unemployment for the men, poverty and environmental problems, and the neglect of corporate social responsibility by the multinational companies. Their demands were in these directions, which can be understood as in line with the idea of 'positive peace'. Galtung's idea of positive peace (Galtung,1985) claims that peace is more than the absence of violence and should encompass the social and economic conditions that allow for a flourishing life. From my findings in Warri and Bayelsa it is clear that women in the communities do have this broader understanding of peace.

It was also clear from the findings that women often understand their gendered roles in the communities as making them more inclined for peace than men. Women have shown

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[41] W2 (April, 2017)

themselves to be active peace agents by embracing peace and adopting cooperative methods of engagement. This role is often linked to something that could be understood as women's 'ethic of care' (Gilligan 1982). For example, two of the women leaders in the Niger Delta stated that women work towards peace because by their nature they are calm, and they are sometimes more patient than men in issues of conflict (Mrs Vivian and Mrs Johnson).

The costs of war to them as mothers and their wider families was also a major reason for engaging in peace. Another respondent during an interview stated that since the injured or dead during conflict are their sons and husbands, or brothers, they would rather embrace peace (B1). The major tools that women used for advocacy as peace agents in the Niger Delta includes suggestions to stakeholders for dialogue and persuasion of their husbands, sons and the local community leaders to embrace peace. Most of the women agreed that they could do this by standing on their moral authority from their gendered roles as mothers or wives. The women in the Niger Delta operate from the private family level using moral persuasion to convince their husbands and leaders not to be harsh in their approach to dealing with conflict. This means that the women have been able to deploy their gendered roles and perceived agency using their status as mothers to play roles in advocating for peace. This grassroots role of women in mobilizing for community development and social justice could offer an important dimension for peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and a significant development for sustainable peace.

6.3 Are Women Engaged in Activities that Could Contribute to Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta?

Earlier in the thesis it was clear from the overview of the amnesty process and the views in the fieldwork about that process, that formal conflict resolution processes in the Delta to date have not engaged women despite their perspectives on sustainable peace and their potential as peacebuilders. Women were not consulted, their perspectives on community development were not addressed and their concerns were not heard. Rather the amnesty process was entirely focused on compensating male combatants in return for an end to direct violence. This has not led to peaceful communities and women's peacebuilding

activities have still not been incorporated into official post-conflict efforts, however, this does not mean women are not engaged in peace activities at the grassroots level.

In relation to this question, using thematic analysis from the literature review and field work, several major themes emerged which reveal women as agents of change and potential as peacebuilders in the Niger Delta. This analysis also shows how these activities could contribute to sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. The activities are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Women Engaging in Non-Violent Activities

Due to gender roles in the Delta communities, women are not as likely as men to resort to armed violence. As an earlier chapter showed, during the armed conflict, many women were involved in supporting men in the conflict but were not fighters themselves. However, this does not mean that the women in the Delta are passive about the conflictual situation they live in. Through non-violent protest women have shown themselves to be successful negotiators. The women's protests are always peaceful and non-destructive. From the literature review we see that the use of non-violent protest by women in the Niger Delta resulted in negotiations for development dividends and several memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the multinational companies. This finding was confirmed in the fieldwork, with women still engaging in non-violent protest. For instance, the interviewees from the Women for Environmental Justice Network in Imirigi said one of the agendas of the group is campaigning for a clean environment through demonstrations. They stated that they have had meetings with the representatives of the multinational companies on issues relating to the destruction of the environment. Though this is ongoing, it is a significant development in contributing to sustainable peace, as the environmental issue in the Niger Delta is one of the major issues of conflict in this region, as shown at the start of this thesis.

Reconciliation/Religious activities

Porter (2001) noted that women often exhibit the ability to "dialogue across differences". In the aftermath of conflict, women are more likely to form inter-ethnic associations to deal with difficulties. One such association, as found in the field in the Niger Delta, is the establishment of cross community prayer groups. During the interviews, the women agreed that one of the ways they engage in peacebuilding is by holding monthly prayer meetings. These monthly prayer meetings cut across different ethnic communities in this region. The women believe that the prayers they hold have contributed to peacebuilding in the community. According to the women, they say that since they started the monthly prayer meetings they have seen changes in the lives of their youth and they are more willing to listen than resorting to violence.

In this case, the women see the prayer meeting as a medium of transformation for the community. The women agreed that because they all have reverence for God, they can share amongst themselves or talk amongst themselves because they feel they are before a superior being. For instance, women in the Niger Delta say that the prayer meeting forum is a place where they can communicate in trust because they must pray in unity (while conducting the focus group interview, the women in all the focus group agreed that the prayer meeting is very important). Apart from prayers, they talk about their experiences of conflict and how to move the community forward. "It is in this prayer meeting that we are able to stand and support each other especially women who lost their loved ones during the conflict" (W1 and B2). By listening to testimonies or the experience of each other, they create a shared space for women from different backgrounds to contribute to the healing process. This leads to an atmosphere for reconciliation which is a part of peacebuilding and the women help to relieve victims of emotional burdens that could potentially lead to hostility. For those who have been victims of the conflict, their experiences of the conflict must be voiced to facilitate forgiveness.

In addition, based on their religious conviction in the Niger Delta which is mostly Christianity the women could appeal to the moral conscience of those involved in the conflict, they could persuade the men and the youths that the use of weapons or violence is going against their religious beliefs. The impact of this in the Niger Delta signifies that religion offers spiritual, moral and social assets that when built upon can result in transformation and reconciliation in the community.

Building Social Capital

Another way in which women activities have fostered peace is around community development and enhancing social capital in line with the idea above of nurturing 'positive peace'. Many of the women argue that since their lands have been destroyed by environmental degradation, some of the women, using the help of civil society organisation like SACA, have been able to look for alternative sources of livelihood like fish pond businesses – which requires little capital. With the help of an NGO like SACA, the women have been able to form a local cooperative where loans can be given to women to do petty trading. In the Niger Delta, the women are engaged in petty trading which they use in supporting their households. It is known that when there is hunger, people can do anything to survive. If the women can provide for the family and sometimes send the children to school, it goes a long way to deter the young ones from getting involved in the conflict.

Although many of the women in the communities in Bayelsa and Warri do not have formal learning, they have been able to keep the community together and uphold the local culture which could prove significant for sustainable peace (Karae and Prestegard, 2005). For instance, in Warri, the women stated that they have local women associations where they pick a leader who can represent their interests and speak on their behalf every two years. The "women leader" as she is called works with five other women who are elected by the community. These leaders resolve all kinds of issues that the women face in the community. It is also the responsibility of that leader to speak to bring important issues affecting the community to the community heads which are men.

Women's Networks

As was also clear from the findings, some of the women have been able to form small networking groups. With this network, the women can educate other women like themselves about their rights in the community. A very good example is the Immirigi women who formed a network called the "Women for Environmental Justice Network". These women state that apart from educating other women about their rights, they also carry out advocacy activities, one of which is speaking up about the environmental damage in the communities caused by oil spillage. With this network, they can educate

other women about what they should do if they encounter spillage on their farms and the appropriate authorities to call. Many women have lost their lives when there is a spillage. This is because some of these women think that they can make money from the spillage and are usually involved in illegal oil bunkering, in the process of this, there could be fights with other women, accidents and even fire from the spillage. Furthermore, some of them go to the wrong persons, who instead of calling the attention of the oil company to clean up the spillage, are interested in trying to sell from that spillage (this is illegal oil bunkering). Through the network women learn how to deal with these kinds of challenges in ways which preserve their livelihoods and so protect their families and communities.

From the fieldwork with the FGDs and interviews, the role of women in building grassroots networks engaged in community support, dialogue and prayer and rights promotion became clear. However, the fact that these initiatives are limited to the grassroots arena was also clear. It is therefore important to identify, analyse and challenge the barriers to women's perspectives being heard and activism being recognised.

6.4 What factors Hinder Women from Participating in Post Conflict Peacebuilding?

Anderlini (2007) describes the role of women in peacebuilding as two parallel universes at play. She points out that on a grassroots, civil society level, women are very active and present but at the same time they are invisible because they are given limited roles in the management of power and in directing their own lives. This situation is serious given the argument that that sustainable peace can only be reached if both women and men can make themselves heard in the peace process (UNIFEM, 2005). The section above bears out Anderlini's point about the two spheres. Women in Warri and Bayelsa are active in grassroots networks and they do engage in activities like non-violent protests and networking through religious activities etc. Yet they remain largely invisible in terms of the management of power and political attempts at conflict resolution.

There is a large gap between rhetoric and women's everyday living conditions and these are conditions that are affecting women's ability to participate in peacebuilding. This research's finding reveal that women are faced with several challenges to peacebuilding which include problems from the cultural practices that relegate women to the domestic

sphere or customary norms, poor health care, domestic violence and lack of education. These cultural practices obstruct women from breaking away from domestic roles, and also hinder their development and empowerment (Edward 2011, Karame and Prestegards, 2005).

Cultural Barriers

There are harmful cultural and social norms and patriarchal values that discourage women from participating in political decision making (Duvvury, 2003). In the Niger Delta, women's roles are culturally assigned to the home. The women are discouraged from participating in political decision making in the community. From the interviews and focus groups, it emerged that women are limited to cooking and taking care of the family. In public meetings they are not allowed to speak. Cultural practices, stereotypical gender roles and patriarchal tendencies that regard women to be suited only for domestic responsibilities and nurturing, are major obstacles to women's participation in public affairs and politics. Women have been confined and prevented from participating in public life, in conformity with dictates of tradition, culture and religion. This also extends to conflict resolution and peace building processes. This is because most conflict resolution and peace building processes occur far away from the original abode of the women and sometimes last for weeks or even months. The particular function of women as mothers and home managers further jeopardizes their involvement in conflict resolution and peace building processes, as their reproductive role is used to undermine their potential public and political roles. Entrenched traditional gender norms also meant that female respondents in all communities showed a lack of awareness of the potential roles they could play in society. Key informants (Mrs Vivian) mentioned that organizations advocating for women's involvement face great challenges when explaining to women their rights.

Education

Women face inequality in accessing education, this makes them less literate and as a result, they are being insufficiently trained to participate in peacebuilding. Furthermore,

social norms and attitudes support restrictive gender roles that traditionally complicate women's participation. Respondents from the interviews in the Niger Delta stated that a lack of education is an obstacle to women's participation in decision making. Most times the women are not even aware of their rights. In this regards adult education for the women is important to teach them about the functions of the political system, civic rights and the meaning of document such as the UNSCR 1325.

Economic Barriers

Most of the women carrying out peacebuilding activities reported to the focus groups that there is limited access to appropriate levels of funding and resources to carry out their peacebuilding activities. For instance, one of the women's groups (the Women for Environmental Justice Network) in Immirigi stated that "to mobilise women in the communities takes a lot of work, it involves giving some money for transport and other logistics". "Also, if the women leave their trade, which is their daily earnings, we have to be able to give them something in return or some sort of support and we do not have the resources".[42] The leader lamented that most of the women would not to join the group voluntarily as their loss of daily earnings cannot be compensated. Furthermore, the women cannot take active roles in peacebuilding in the community because of poverty and economic inequality. Most times the women take a double burden regarding income generation for the family and this hinders their participation in peacebuilding. Overall, women in all the communities (and independently of NGO presence) reported limited access to appropriate levels   of funding, resources and support for peace-building work — which generally, requires intensive community engagement over long periods of time. In addition, transport and logistical costs, and loss of daily earnings, often prevented women from becoming involved in voluntary groups.

Lack of Women's Representation in Politics

In Nigeria and its constituent parts, there is on paper a mandate for equal gender representation. Yet in most instances, some women may be seated when decisions are carried out, but do not have the right to speak. There is a gap between national and local communities. The central government do not contribute to local level peace where

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[42] (W2, April,2017)

women play an important role. On the other hand, the women themselves do not view their own skills as relevant and do not see the links between their peacebuilding activities at the community level and peace decision making process at the central level.

6.5. How Can Women be incorporated into Peacebuilding Efforts?

The research for this thesis has shown that women have creative ideas about peace; they see it as something that comes from community development and family care and not from an elite level bargain like the Delta amnesty process. It has also shown their grassroots initiatives for this kind of peace – from prayer groups, to protests, to livelihoods schemes. Yet, they face cultural, political and economic barriers to making a bigger impact. So the final question to be addressed here is how women can be more incorporated into peacebuilding and the answer for this question will be presented as the recommendations from this research.

We have seen that the physical absence of war in post conflict societies does not necessarily mean the roots of conflicts have been dealt with. However, if structures for peacebuilding have been put in place and the roots of the conflict settled peacefully using strategies that are particular to a post conflict zone, like the Niger Delta, there is room for long-term and sustainable peace.

In other to achieve long term peace, there needs to be an incorporation of the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The need for women's organisations and civil society actors in peacebuilding cannot be over emphasized. Though this exists, it is confined to the grassroots level. More non-governmental organisations should pay attention to the importance of educating women in peacebuilding and encouraging them to put pressure for inclusion at other political levels. From the field work we have seen that some of the affected women formed women's groups to force governments or multinational to respond to their demands, and as a result activist grass-roots organising among women is increasing. The participation of women in such groups is an indicator that women see themselves as stakeholders in the conflict and post-conflict processes and are taking a proactive role, thus creating grassroots initiatives and pressure from the bottom-up.

There are three levels of governance in the Niger Delta, these include the community, local and state government. Women participate in their community meetings as a form of

involvement in politics, but their involvement is very low and does not extend to representation in the regional and national levels of governance. Nwadinobi (2017), states that Nigeria ranks significantly below the sub-Saharan African average at 20% with regards to women's representation in national legislatures. If the voice of women must be heard in peacebuilding, they must be given more opportunities in political participation, not just at the community level but at the local and national levels. In some parts of the Niger Delta, the women are not allowed to vote in their local elections, and as a result, they do not have a say in the decisions affecting the community. For example, during one of my interviews at Fida, they gave an example of how they had to intervene with men in a particular community to let the women participate in voting. After a series of meetings with the men, community leaders and public town hall meetings educating the community on the need to involve women, the women were allowed to participate in local meetings but were still not allowed to vote for their community elections. This was still on-going when I completed my field visit.

Despite the limits of what has been achieved regarding women's empowerment and political inclusion, women's participation in such local community groups does provide them with organizing experience, networking opportunities and a sense of empowerment, all of which are necessary for challenging gender inequalities and achieving sustainable peace. There should be more connections with local civil society actors who can empower women. The likes of SACA and FIDA are very helpful with regards to keeping in touch with local communities but there is also a need for NGO mobilisation work more specifically focused on gender and peacebuilding, involving civil society organisations that work specifically on gender issues and understand the day to day lives of women. They can develop the women's social capital and provide the financial resources necessary to build on existing grassroots work. This will ensure sustainable peace for women and will give an understanding of what women want with regards to peacebuilding.

Furthermore, as is made persuasively clear from the opinions of the women, peacebuilding needs to be inclusive and relevant to the development needs and aspiration of the people. This means that peacebuilding work should target the needs and perspectives of various group participants, such as community development that benefits families, educates children and prevents young men from turning to violence.

With regards to the oil companies one aspect that needs to be focused on, is the gender inclusiveness of corporate social responsibilities (CSR) of the oil companies and how these activities could include and benefit women. Furthermore, when some of these CSR projects are completed there is need for evaluation and monitoring. For instance during the field work, the women in one of the communities (Ikarama) highlighted that one of the oil companies provided a generator for pumping water and promised to provide fuel monthly for the generator, but this does not happen all the time and when it does happen it becomes a source of conflict as some of the individuals involved would want to sell the fuel for their personal interest. If the oil company monitors and evaluates how their projects affects gender and monitor these kinds of projects with regards to their corporate social responsibility, they will be able to come up with better ways to serve the community and in the long run promote peaceful living in the community. This is why the views of women should be taken into account when such projects are to be done.

6.6. CONCLUSION

The aims of this thesis were to analyze the Niger Delta conflict through gendered lenses, critically analyze the predominant 'amnesty' approach to peace, identify women's peace-building activities in the Niger Delta and their potential contribution to sustainable peace, while identifying the barriers they face. The theoretical framework presented at the start of the thesis considered why women might engage in peacebuilding, what visions of peace women develop and why gendered power inequalities imply that they struggle to have their voices heard.

The review of the experiences of conflict in the Delta, the findings as presented in chapter five and the analysis in this closing chapter, all confirm that gendered power inequalities structure women's experiences of conflict and then of peace. Women in the Delta were rarely combatants in the conflict though it impacted on their lives. Their voices and experiences were not accounted for in the Amnesty which concentrated on compensation for combatants and they continue to be marginalized in post-conflict politics and peacebuilding. However, the research also clearly showed that women are concerned with peace in their communities and do engage in grassroots peace, development and environmental justice initiatives.

From the interviews in chapter 5, we could see that women's grassroots participation in peacebuilding activities beyond their families was based on their understanding of what peace meant to them. The women discussed the concept of peace in ways that reflect the idea of 'positive peace'. This includes access to basic needs for their families such as food, the absence of violence in the home, educational access for their children and unity in the community. The Niger Delta women this positive peace, which includes access to basic services and freedom, as long term and more sustainable than sustainable over the 'negative peace' of the absence of war or violent conflict. These findings reflect the wider literature on women and peace, such as were reported by El Bushra (2000) and Moser and Clark (2001) where women defined peace and peacebuilding as meeting basic needs and access to stable livelihood. Grassroots women's groups involve themselves in peacemaking and peacebuilding because of concerns for their families' survival and knowledge that women and children are the primary casualties of indirect and direct violence during armed conflict. For many grassroots women's groups, peacebuilding means securing food for the family and a future for children, Issues of structural violence such as the economics of poverty and the degradation of the environment are of primary concern for many grassroots women.

Women's grassroots peacebuilding activities in the Delta are frequently personal, interpersonal and creative. As seen in the Niger Delta, women use imaginative activities to protest violence and advocate peace such as protest, threatening to dance naked on the street, holding demonstrations, vigils, peace camps, and peace walks. Religious activitie such as prayer circles for peace are particularly common. It is clear from the findings that women's peace activism is confined to the grassroots and women are faced with a range of difficulties stemming from gender inequality including lack of education, problems deriving from cultural norms and customary laws. Strengthening women's role in peacebuilding processes will require better accounts of the social, cultural and economic barriers faced by women. The research shows that women's role in peacebuilding is active and present but at the same time invisible because of the limited roles of power given to the in directing their own affairs or dealing with issues that concerns them. This marginalization is serious since sustainable peace can only be reached if both men and women are allowed to make themselves heard in any peace

process (UNIFEM, 2005). Side-lining women's interest is said to affect the whole society, threaten justice, development and political stability.

Twenty years ago, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 resolution called for an increase in women's participation at all decision-making levels in prevention, management and resolution of conflict but also for the support and involvement of local women's peace initiatives in conflict. This research project has shown that a wide gap still exists between the rhetoric of 1325 and women's everyday living conditions and experiences in the Niger Delta, as elsewhere around the world as recorded in the UN's own Global Study of the Resolution's implementation (UN 2015). Gender inequality continues to hinder women from participating in formal peacebuilding and it is important to account in order to implement the message of SCR 1325. This research also confirms however, that women in the Niger Delta have creative ideas about peace and confirms the importance of listening to women at the grassroots and empowering them to participate.

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APPENDIX 1 Interview Questions

Questions for Focus Group Discussion

A. Women and the Niger Delta Conflict

    1.   Was this community affected by the 1999- 2007 conflict?

- In what way and how?

    2.   Did the conflict affect men and women differently?

- If yes, how?

B. The gender dynamics of the amnesty process in the Niger Delta

    1.   Who was involved in negotiating the amnesty?

    2.   Were the women included in the process?

    3.   Do you think that the needs of the women were considered during this process?

C. Peace building in the Niger Delta since Amnesty Ceasefire of 2009.

    1.   Did the amnesty/ceasefire in 2009 bring peace to the community?

    2.   What does peace mean to you as women?

    3.   Do you think men and women have different ideas about peace?

4.   Are there organizations that work for peace building in your community?

D.   Peace-building activities in the Niger Delta

1.   Are there peace building activities in this community led by women?

2.   How do you think that this activity contributes to sustainable peace?

3.   Do you think that the voice of women with regard to peacebuilding is been heard by the government and community leaders?

D. Obstacles hindering women's involvement in the post conflict peacebuilding in the Niger Delta

1.   Are there obstacles hindering women's peacebuilding activities in this community? What are these obstacles?

2.   What needs to change for women to be included in peacebuilding?

Semi-structured interview questions for the organizations/NGO and community leaders

1. What communities do you work with?

2. Describe gender relations in the communities you work with

3. Since the Amnesty in 2009, do you consider that there is peace in the Delta? If not, why not?

4. Describe your peacebuilding activities in the Niger Delta? (What approach and why)

- Are there existing structures in the community that your organization works with for peace building?

5. Are women/men involved in these activities?

6. Does your organization specifically seek to engage women in peacebuilding activities? How is this done?

7. Why do you think that women should be involved in peacebuilding?

- (Prompt: gender equality, maternal perspectives, women's skills, grassroots connections etc.)

8. Do you think that women's needs are being considered by policy makers engaged in formal peacebuilding?

9. What are the barriers to women peacebuilding activities in the Niger Delta?

10. What has been the impact of your activities for sustainable peace in the Niger Delta?

APPENDIX 2 Information Sheet for Participants

Researcher - Ehizemoya Kenneth

Postgraduate Research Student (MLitt) Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin

Participants' Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you want to take part you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you want to take part.

Introduction

This research is about the role of women in peacebuilding in the Niger Delta, a region that has seen many long-lasting conflicts and attempts at conflict resolution. This

research involves a focus group interview which you are being asked to participate in. The purpose of this focus group is to understand the gender dynamics of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and identify women's role in peacebuilding in the region.

Why am I doing the project?

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 emphasizes the crucial role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and recognizes that full participation of women in peace processes can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. But this resolution is only weakly implemented and women's views are still largely excluded, marginalized or overlooked in peace processes. This includes attempts at conflict resolution in the Niger Delta. This research will identify women's active roles in conflict resolution in the region and explore how their perspectives can be included in the search for lasting peace.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you are a member of a women's civil society organization engaged in issues of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Niger Delta area.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed or join a focus group discussion with about five other members of women's CSOs. The interview will last no more than one hour/FGD two hours. If you agree, I will audio record the discussion, however that this your choice and you do not have to agree to have the conversation recorded.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

This FGD/interview is for research purposes and could be used for publication purpose with your permission. For the purpose of confidentiality, no part of this interview/FGD will be made available to anyone other than the research team and no part of this interview (audio or video) played in public forum. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous.

What are the advantages of taking part?

There will be no direct benefit to you, but the research will help to highlight the

neglected role of women in conflict resolution in the region.

Are there any disadvantages of taking part?

There is a risk that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics, for example if the group discusses experiences during the conflict or power dynamics in local politics. However, you have the right to omit individual answers to questions asked or withdraw from the group at any time you feel uncomfortable.

Debriefing

At the end of the group discussion, we will debrief, reviewing the session and allowing every member of the group to reflect on the experience. Members of the group can read the transcript of the discussion after the event and experts to be used in the thesis will be sent to the group for approval.

Contact details

Ehizemoya Kenneth - kennethe@tcd.ie

Dr Gillian Wylie (supervisor) - wylieg@tcd.ie

APPENDIX 3 Informed Consent Form

LEAD RESEARCHER: Ehizemoya Kenneth –

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH:

This research is about the role of women in peacebuilding in the Niger Delta, a region that has seen many long-lasting conflicts and attempts at conflict resolution. The research particularly focuses on how women promote sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. The purpose of this research is to understand the gender dynamics of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta and identify women's role in peacebuilding in the region.

PROCEDURES OF THIS STUDY

I understand that in agreeing to take part in this research, I will be interviewed or join a

focus group discussion with about five other members of women's organizations. The interview will last no more than one hour, or two hours if it is a focus group discussion. I understand that the interview or discussion will be audio recorded if all particpants agree to this.

I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from taking part in this project, however, the research will help to highlight the neglected role of women in conflict resolution in the region.

I am aware that there is a risk that I may feel uncomfortable talking about some topics, for example about experiences of the conflict or power dynamics in local politics. I know I have the right to omit individual answers to questions asked or withdraw from the interview/group at any time. At the end of the group discussion there will be a chance to debrief and review the session. I can also ask to read the transcript of the discussion and excerpts to be used in the thesis will be sent to me and the group for approval. I can withdraw my consent to having my data used at any time.

PUBLICATION:

I understand that this interview is for research purposes and could be used for later publication with my permission. Any extracts from what I say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous.

DECLARATION:

- I am 18 years or older and am competent to provide consent.
- I have read, or had read to me, a document providing information about this research and this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and understand the description of the research that is being provided to me.
- I agree that my data is used for scientific purposes and I have no objection that my data is published in scientific publications in a way that does not reveal my identity.
- I understand that if I make illicit activities known, these will be reported to appropriate authorities.
- I understand that I may stop electronic recordings at any time, and that I may at any time, even subsequent to my participation have such recordings destroyed (except in situations such as above).

- I understand that, subject to the constraints above, no recordings will be replayed in any public forum or made available to any audience other than the current researchers/research team.
- I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any question and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I understand that my participation is fully anonymous and that no personal details about me will be recorded.
- I have received a copy of this agreement.

PARTICIPANT'S NAME:

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE:

Date:

Statement of researcher's responsibility: I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study, the procedures to be undertaken and any risks that may be involved. I have offered to answer any questions and fully answered such questions. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

RESEARCHER'S NAME – EHIZEMOYA KENNETH

RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE:

Date:

CONTACT DETAILS:

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Dr Gillian Wylie (supervisor) - wylieg@tcd.ie

APPENDIX 4

Maps

- ➢ Map 1 showing the oil producing states in the Niger Delta showing the Oil Producing States in the Niger Delta Region (excluding off shore production beyond the lower limit of the continental shelf)

- ➢ Map 2 showing map of Bayelsa State. Source: Google

- ➢ Map 3 showing map of Delta State   Source: Google

Table 1

Participants in the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria -PAO Niger Delta Amnesty Programme.

Photographs

Photo 1 showing the researcher with the women of Imirigi

Photo 2 Researcher with some of the Ubeji women