

**FEMINISING THE PEACE PROCESS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN  
AND CONFLICT IN THE NIGER-DELTA (NIGERIA) AND KWAZULU-NATAL  
(SOUTH AFRICA)**

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A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in the Graduate Programme in Political Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation/thesis is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Prof Ufo Okeke-Uzodike

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Date

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

My FATHER in heaven, hallowed is thy holy name! Despite my frailties, YOU have come through for me once again. This time YOU have enabled me to attain the most important degree in my life, and for this I am eternally grateful! This is your doing, and the least I can do is to dedicate it to YOU alone. I pledge to use it to glorify YOU always as YOU take me to the next level with it.

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## **Abstract**

This study starts with the premise that the paucity of women in political leadership positions in society accounts for their absence from the formal peace table. Indeed, as many studies have shown, women are globally marginalized at all levels of public decision-making, and Africa is not left out of this trend. For a continent that is particularly plagued by armed conflict, Africa is generally known for masculinising the public space including political governance. In this way, women in the continent are formally excluded from peace processes despite not only the roles they play during and after conflict but also their disproportionate vulnerability to the after-effects. Therefore, this study hypothesises that involving women in politics and governance on an equal basis with men would enhance the peace process in conflict-affected societies in Africa. To test this hypothesis, the study investigates the extent to which women's participation in political processes or governance can enhance peace-building in conflict-affected communities using KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and the Niger Delta in Nigeria as case studies. Specifically, it poses the following questions: What is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas, and how does it define the women's reality with regard to the conflict cycle? How have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas? Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process? What societal notions and ideologies under-gird the role perception and construction of women as 'victims only' in conflict situations, and which help to fuel their exclusion from peace processes? And what veritable lessons can be learnt from women's involvement in conflict resolution in these case studies?

In grappling with these questions, the study utilises a combination of research methods and approaches in collecting and analysing data from the both secondary and primary sources. For example, it adopts a qualitative method which it combines with feminist research (perspective and practice) and comparative case study approaches. Using the questionnaire and interview instruments, the study relies on data from surveys of 295 women and 4 men drawn from both case studies. In KwaZulu-Natal, an additional 40 students (25 females and 15 males) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal were also surveyed in two focus group discussions. While all data were analysed by content analysis with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the questionnaire survey data were further subjected to statistical analysis (Chi Square and Logistic Regression Analysis) to test for the significance of the variables that could explain the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace building.

Mainly, the study found out that just as women are victims of armed conflict, they are also agents of peace. Second, women often articulate conflict and peace in different ways to men based on the ethic of care which defines their femininity. Third, women are active peace agents (as reconcilers and community builders) at the informal levels in their communities and they can be used for reconciliatory roles in the peace process – that is to break down gender dualism which perpetuates conflict. Fourth, in partnership with men, women make peace building more effective than if there are few or no women. Therefore, there is a need to mainstream women into politics on an equal basis with men, and men need to be carried

along in this project. Fifth, given the failure of male dominated politics to prevent and manage violent conflict, women need to be encouraged to come into politics as women so that they can bring their own values to bear. Finally, based on statistical analysis, some of the positive predictors of the characteristics of women which suggest that more women in politics would enhance peace-building include marital status, education and place of interview (context).

The study also explores some theoretical considerations for feminising peace-building. These include the human security paradigm, the human factor paradigm and John Lederach's moral imagination model of peace building. The relationship between these paradigms/models and peace building is located in their emphasis on the importance of the human agency in peace building discourse and action. For instance, while the human security paradigm emphasises the significance of factoring people into the security, peace and development calculus, both the human factor and moral imagination paradigms underscore the fact that the quality of the people that can make the difference between violent conflict and peace matters. For example, while positive human factor qualities such as integrity, accountability, selflessness and truthfulness can create a fertile environment for good governance and development, from a moral imagination perspective, relatedness, collaboration, love, empathy and tolerance are necessary and sufficient factors for creating a fertile environment for peace building. From a critical survey of literature on women, politics and peace building in pre-colonial African societies, this study found that women in Africa generally embody positive human factor traits and moral imagination capacities which reinforced the high moral authority society accorded them. Oftentimes, women drew on this moral authority, which was based on the ethics of care that defined their femininity, to exert themselves politically, economically and socially. For instance, they leveraged on this moral authority to assume peacemaking and peace building roles by mediating in intra-community and inter-community conflicts, educating children to value peaceful co-existence and, frequently, carried out peace sacrifices and purification/cleansing rites to reintegrate their warriors into civil society. Based on this, and the practical illustrations/stories of women's peace agency in parts of post-colonial Africa, this study contends that the values they represent can be appropriated and developed into an African feminist ethic of peace which can be utilised as both a conflict-prevention and post-conflict reconstruction model in other conflict-prone areas of the continent.

However, the potential of women's peace agency is clogged by their exclusion (by both men and women themselves) from the peace processes of their communities and nation-states, and this is perpetuated by the political marginalisation of women. Therefore, based on the finding that women (in partnership with men) make peace building more effective than if there are few or no women, the study makes a number of recommendations which are in line with the mandate of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. These include: African states should enact constitutionally guaranteed electoral laws and policies to enable women to appropriate their own political spaces. Second, the peace process should be engendered in ways that will enable women to continue to play traditional reconciliatory roles especially at the grass root level. Third, because men remain critical to the gender equality project, they should be carried along through re- enlightenment that will make them see women empowerment as an African renaissance rather than as a western imposition. In the same vein, re-socialising men to assume co-parenting responsibilities will help deconstruct the basis of patriarchy in society and in the process enthrone a new kind of civilisation. This is imperative considering that gender equality in private and public life is both a necessary and sufficient factor for peace building.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction/background to study

All over the world, women are victims not only of armed conflict but also its assorted social forms. In worst cases, they have been considered the spoils of war and as a means of ‘feminising’ and degrading the enemy as they are sexually assaulted, physically brutalized and raped as means of ‘getting to the enemy’ (Marshall; 2004:1, McFadden; 1994). Indeed, as Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf (2001) assert, “along with the deepening violence women experience during war, the long term effects of conflict and militarization create a culture of violence that renders women especially vulnerable after war” (Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf, 2001: 2). For instance, women and children are the main victims of warfare and its aftermath as they account for an estimated 80% of refugees and displaced persons worldwide and are as mentally traumatised as combatants, in addition to their vulnerability to physical illnesses that are specific to their biology and social status (Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf, 2001). According to Puechguirbal (2004:1), “women and children bear the brunt of armed conflicts when they lose protection, shelter, access to food and medical care”. Accordingly, as governance structures, the rule of law and peace time infrastructures become weakened due to conflict, social fragmentation is more pronounced.

In the same vein, in social conflict arising from the state’s inability to secure its peoples from poverty and other human security concerns before, during or after conflict, many women assume new roles which do not subtract from their traditional roles in these societies. For instance, women find themselves having to strive to feed, cater to and nurture their families when the male breadwinners are unwilling or unable to provide. The growing incidence of women-headed households is just one dimension of the global feminisation of poverty and inequality. Women remain marginalised politically and economically even though they are a little over half the population of the world. For example, women own only 1% of the world’s property, put in about 60% of all working hours but take home only 10% of all income. They

account for 60% of all illiterates and make up less than 5% of all Heads of state and cabinet ministers worldwide (Jackson & Soresen, 2003).

In Africa, the negative impact of armed conflict and poverty on women is particularly worse because it is a continent most ravaged by the scourges of war and poverty arising there from. African women also remain vulnerable to poverty occasioned by state weakness, which in itself is a potential source of state collapse. In assessing the feminisation of poverty in Africa, Lalthapersad-Pillay (2002:39-41) contends that women, who make up over 50% of the African population, constitute a bereft group even among the poor. According to her, women in Africa earn lower wages than men, have lower literacy rates and limited access to social services, and encounter more difficulties in obtaining employment (Lalthapersad-Pillay, 2002: 40). In this way, women in Africa fall into Hacker (1951)'s classification of women as a 'minority group' when in reality they are the majority in the continent. In terms of social insecurity, women and men experience the HIV and AIDS pandemic differently. For instance, women have a greater vulnerability to the virus because of their biological make-up and their powerlessness in negotiating sex (Leclerc-Madladla, 1997; 2001). According to Vallely (2006: 2), "they are forced into sexual activity earlier, are unable to insist on condoms, have fewer rights and resources to call upon and are sometimes forced to barter sexual favours to survive". Expectedly, of the 25 million people living with HIV and AIDS in Africa, approximately 57% are women (Petiffor *et al*, 2004; Vallely, 2006; SA NSP, 2007). Yet, these women (HIV and AIDS infected) remain vulnerable to sexual violence just like their HIV negative counterparts. For instance, "an HIV positive woman is nearly 10 times as likely to experience violence at the hands of her partner as a woman who does not have the disease" (Vallely, 2006: 2).

Although women are a marginalised group globally, they experience marginalisation differently. African women are particularly worse off in terms of vulnerability to socio-economic insecurities when compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Europe and the Americas for example. Although representing average figures culled from different sources, Table 1 below reflects these differences between average African and British women:

Table 1: Comparison of average African and British Women

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Africa</b>	<b>The UK</b>
Life expectancy	46	80
Chance of a girl going to primary school	60%	100%
Female literacy	53.2%	99.9%
Minutes worked per day	590 excluding Kenya	413
Births attended by a midwife	43%	99%
Deaths in childbirth a year (per 100,000)	920	13
Women using contraceptives	15% excluding Ivory Coast	NA
Average number of children	5.5	1.7
Deaths during abortion every year	29,800	8
Female MPs	6.5% (50% in Rwanda)	18.5%
Professional and technical staff who are women	46%	32%

Source: Adapted from Vallely (2006)

Indeed, the predicament of women is a worrying factor since the health and education of mothers have a direct influence on the welfare and future of their children. Clearly, this has huge medium and long-term implications for societal harmony, peace, and development if one considers that these children will form the bulk of tomorrow's society.

In apparent recognition of the impact of conflict on women and the significance of including them in decision making structures of pre-conflict and post-conflict societies, the United Nations (UN) Security Council passed its first Resolution on women (Resolution 1325) in its 4213<sup>th</sup> meeting on 31 October 2000. According to Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf (2001: 3) "Resolution 1325 is a watershed political framework that makes women – and a gender perspective – relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peace keeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies". It urges member states to ensure representation of women in all aspects of their local, national, regional and international life, both in

pre and post-conflict situations. Have member states of the UN, especially those who have ratified it, been implementing Resolution 1325? How do African states fare in mainstreaming a critical mass of 30% women into public decision making structures and processes?

Africa arguably presents a major challenge and fertile ground for conflict and peace studies because it has been more plagued by violent intrastate and inter-state conflict of various kinds since the 1960s than any other continent (Patel in Maloka: 2001:357). Recent examples from the 1990s include Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC Sudan and Ivory Coast. In the last 15 years (between 1990 and 2005 which is the reference period of this study), especially between 1990 and 2002, conflict has been a recurring phenomenon in certain regions within some states in Africa. These low intensity conflicts, so called because despite their usually violent and perennial nature, they do not engulf the entire state in such a way that leads to state collapse, are common in some states in West, Central and Southern Africa. Examples include Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Sudan and South Africa. Interestingly, such conflicts are also common outside Africa, for instance in Asia and Europe.

While a multiplicity of factors is responsible for these conflicts, they reflect the failure of national political systems to prevent them *ab initio*, or effectively manage their symptoms and mediate them when they occur. It is pertinent to note that the vast majority of world leaders, of governments and officials at all levels, of the presidents and boardrooms of transnational corporations are men (Brine, 1999: 16). It is therefore not far-fetched to make two assumptions; first, that global power is gendered in favour of men, and secondly, based on this, that conflict has a masculine character in terms of causes since men are mostly in charge of the structures and mechanisms that mediate conflicts in these states. These conflicts and low intensity wars are increasingly being fought in the continent's semi-urban and rural areas which house the majority of the African population, the majority of whom are women. How have women fared in these conflicts? Have they been active participants in peace processes and post conflict re-construction efforts in these regions? If so, to what extent, and has such political participation enhanced their well-being as women? And if not, what factors inhibit their equal participation and effective representation in the political processes of their societies?

Arising from this generic background, the focus of this study is to investigate the impact of women on the peace process through active political participation in formal structures. To determine this, this study used two low-level conflict prone regions in Africa: the Niger-Delta in Nigeria and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in South Africa. A main justification for these cases and not for example, Cassamance (Senegal), Gulu (Uganda) or Darfur (Sudan), is the researcher's first hand experience of some of these issues having lived in the Niger Delta and in KwaZulu-Natal. Also, the similarity in their period of occurrence (1990 to 2005), which coincides with the study's time scope, is also an important consideration.

### **1.1.1 Women and political representation in the Niger Delta and KwaZulu-Natal**

In Nigeria's Niger Delta, a region of 9 oil-producing states (Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers), armed conflict arising from the struggle for oil resource control dates back to 1849 with the imperial activities of John Beecroft, the British Crown's first Consul in the area (Osae & Odunsi, 1982). With a population of 20,160,682 out of which 10,431,862 are females,<sup>1</sup> the Niger-Delta is the only collection of states with a higher female than male population in Nigeria, which is one of the few countries of the world with a higher male than female population<sup>2</sup>. The Niger Delta region, Nigeria's oil belt, has been immersed in deep crisis characterised by an intense struggle for resource benefits from oil from the Nigerian state and oil companies since the 1960s. This struggle founded on state neglect, scant development attention, marginalisation and the poor development status of the region, has increasingly become more broad, political, combative and militant since the 1990s. This was accentuated by a number of factors. First is the economic crisis since the 1980s which exacerbated unemployment and poverty. Second, increased environmental despoliation occasioned by expanded oil exploitation as the Nigerian state sought more oil revenues to pay for foreign debts and reclaim

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are estimates of Nigeria's population demographics released by the National Population Commission (NPC) in 1999. It was based on an annual natural growth rate of 3.06% of the 1991 census figures thus putting Nigeria's population in 1999 at 113.80 million.

<sup>2</sup> Women constitute about 49% of Nigeria's total population (National Population Commission NPC, 1999). This was again confirmed in the 2006 census figures released by the presidency in 2007.

economic growth in the 1980s. This further escalated the dislocation of primary economies in the region, poverty and unemployment. Third, increasing awareness and consciousness of the regions' oil revenue contributions and the relatively scanty benefits derived there from began to generate considerable anger, social discontent and frustration amongst the people, especially the youths. Fourth, the region began to realise that its elite and elders, and their methods of political engagements have failed to elicit the much needed sensitivity and development benefits from the oil multinationals and the Nigerian state. All these factors transformed the tone and character of the conflict from a subtle approach characterised by court litigations and humanitarian appeals to a more politicised and militant approach characterised by protests, disruption of oil production activities, vandalism of oil facilities and violent confrontation of the state by youth militias. Added to this is the phenomenon of hostage-taking, which has also introduced a criminal dimension to a struggle that was earlier founded on ethnic and self-determination rhetoric.

Indeed, at the root of the militarisation of relations between the main actors in the Niger-Delta crisis; the state and its oil company allies on one hand, and the people of the region on the other, is endemic poverty and chronic human underdevelopment. For instance, poverty, characterised by chronic unemployment, illiteracy, disease and lack of access to shelter and clean water, has pitched the people against themselves manifesting in inter and intra communal conflicts on the one hand and against the state and oil companies on the other hand. Indeed, as Emeh (1996) argued on the national question in Nigeria, there is a relationship between poverty and adversarial relations within and between the various ethnic components of the Nigerian state. Such adversarial relations impede peace building, which is a contextual requirement for development.

As is the case in other conflict areas elsewhere in the world, the conflict in the Niger Delta and its causes and effects on the people has several gender dimensions, one of which is political marginalisation of women. Records show that despite their majority stake in the region's population, women constitute an insignificant proportion of governance at the local, state and national levels across the region. For example, results from the 2003 elections show that the 28-member House of Assembly in Delta state had only 3 women. In neighbouring Edo state, there were only 2 women in the

24-member House of Assembly, with 4 of the 19-member state executive council being women. This is the trend in Akwa-Ibom state and in other Niger Delta states, where only 3 women are part of the 13-member executive. The gender breakdown of political representation at the regional level is given in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Niger Delta State Assemblies election results by gender and states, 2003

State	Women	Total seats	% of women
Abia	1	27	3.7
Akwa Ibom	2	26	7.7
Bayelsa	-	26	-
Cross River	-	25	-
Delta	3	28	10.7
Edo	2	24	8.3
Ondo	1	26	
Rivers	1	30	3.3
Total	10	212	4.7

Source: compiled by the researcher, 2005

At the national level, of the 69 lawmakers who represented the region in the House of Representatives in the last electoral dispensation (2003 – 2007), only 3 were females, 2 from Delta and the other one from Abia. The situation is worse in the Senate where Senator Daisy Danjuma was the only female out of the 24 senators from the region. Perhaps this is reflective of the trend in the country where there are only 12 females in the 360-member Federal House of Representatives ([www.nigeriacongress.org](http://www.nigeriacongress.org) accessed 03/04/05).

In the absence of any constitutional framework that guarantees women’s political representation in the region and in Nigeria as a whole, the situation of low representation of women in formal politics is unstable, producing a mixed bag of gains and losses in different states. For instance, as shown in Table 3, following the 2007 general elections, although the total number of women in state houses of assembly in the region increased to 16 from 10 in 2003, individual states lost women representatives. For instance Edo state lost its two women parliamentarians while Akwa Ibom and Ondo made no progress as they retained their number of women (1 out of 26 in each case). Even though states like Bayelsa and Cross River had new

entrants (1 and 3 respectively), the total increase of 3% is insignificant for a four year period.

Table 3: Niger Delta State Assemblies election results by gender and states, 2007

State	Women	Total seats	% of women
Abia	2	27	7.4
Akwa Ibom	2	26	7.7
Bayelsa	1	26	3.8
Cross River	3	25	12
Delta	4	28	14.2
Edo	-	24	-
Ondo	1	26	
Rivers	2	30	6.6
Total	16	212	7.5

Source: compiled by the researcher, 2008

The same ‘mixed bag’ situation plays itself out at the national level where women in Delta state lost one of their seats in the 2007 elections. Although, the region produced 3 senators in 2007 as against 1 in 2003, and 5 House of Representative members as against 3 in 2003, these gains are still too marginal to be counted as serious achievements over a four years electoral period. The reality therefore is that women remain politically marginalised in spite of their numbers and disproportionate vulnerability to the crisis of underdevelopment and armed conflict in the Niger-Delta. As Anderlini (2007) posits, the paucity of women in political leadership and governance positions accounts for why they are absent from the peace table.

Comparatively, in South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the primary home of the Zulus, South Africa’s single largest ethnic group, the same kind of gendered contestation manifests in the province which has a 53.1% female majority out of its total 9.4 million people ([www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za) accessed 11/04/05). With a long history of political violence that engulfed the region in the mid 1980s which has left over 20,000 dead since 1984 (TRC Report; 1999), KwaZulu-Natal is the most politically violent province in South Africa. The violence came to a head in 1987 when open warfare broke out in the region with violent battles between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front (UDF) which was in alliance with the African National

Congress (ANC) and its military wing, *Umkhonto we sizwe* (MK). According to Taylor (2002), more than half the number of fatalities occurred in the post-apartheid era after a seeming negotiated settlement of the bitter power politics in the region. To him, the popular view adopted by many public commentators, the media and politicians that since 1994 there had been a significant downturn in the level of political violence in KZN, and explaining violence since then as ‘third force’, ‘faction fighting’ and ‘criminality’ only erupting at random flashpoints, is false. His study showed that the violence, which continued beyond the post-apartheid peace and power-sharing agreements between the warring parties in the region, are a “matrix of integrated issues that are rooted in what is a systemic problem in which the forces of law and order are implicated” (Taylor, 2002: 4). The point is that conflict is still a part of the province, worst between 1990 and 2002, and manifesting in 2009 in occasional political assassinations, inter-party clashes, and taxi-rank violence with women at the receiving end.<sup>3</sup> All of these are connected to the underlying bitter power struggles of the past. Also, the patriarchal considerations that defined these struggles in the past, irrespective of the role of women in them (Walker, 1982; Beall *et al*, 1987; Hassim, 1993) still play out in the political marginalisation of women in the region today despite the appreciable strides taken since 1999 by the provincial government to improve their participation in governance.

In essence then, compared to the Niger Delta, KwaZulu-Natal and indeed, South Africa has a better women representation in governance than Nigeria. This reflects in all spheres of governance of the state of which KZN is no exception. According to the province’s Office for the Status of Women, since 1999, there has been considerable effort by the premier to increase women participation in political governance from the provincial benchmark of 25% to 30%.<sup>4</sup> However, in relation to the population of women and their familial roles in society both at formal and informal levels, women are still largely marginalised politically. Although women participate in significant numbers in community governance in rural parts of the

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<sup>3</sup> As will be presented and discussed in chapter five, findings from a field survey of women in the study areas; Richmond, Shobashobane, and Nongoma, show that women lost relatives, properties, livelihoods and their dignity (rape) as consequences of conflict in their communities between 1992 and 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with MK, a director of the KZN Office for the Status of Women who preferred anonymity hence she agreed to be called MK.

province, women’s political marginalisation in rural areas is particularly evident in the fact that most of the women are excluded from deciding who their representatives are. For instance, 46% of the respondents in our study areas in the province felt women were politically marginalised in the province because they were not made part of the decision-making processes that produce women representatives in municipal governance, parliament and cabinet. To make the situation worse, most women in rural areas are neither aware of the rights and privileges that the gender mainstreaming efforts of the government bestows on them nor do they understand how government works.<sup>5</sup> These embody a deep-seated source and form of marginalisation, which needs to be addressed.

South Africa’s Independent Electoral Commission chair, Dr. Brigalia Bam gave credence to women’s political marginalisation in the province despite government’s effort to address the issue. According to her, “while women are in the majority on the voters roll, they are left behind in public office representation” making them “still overlooked”, a trend she said “leaves much to be desired” considering “55% of registered voters are women” (Helfrich, 2005: 3). Find below the gender breakdown of political representation at the regional governance level:

Table 4: KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Assembly election results by gender and party, 2004

Party	Women	Total seats	% of women
ANC	14	38	36.8
IFP	4	30	13.3
DA	1	7	14.3
ACDP	1	2	50
MF	1	2	50
UDM	-	1	-
TOTAL	21	80	26.2

Source: compiled by the researcher, 2005

<sup>5</sup> This came out from the data generated from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process in KZN. Both authors were part of the team that analyzed the data in April, 2006

At the national level, women make up 50% of KZN delegates to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) as out of the 6 permanent delegates, 3 are women. Unlike in Nigeria, this is reflective of a relatively high level of women's participation in governance in South Africa where, for example, out of the 54-member NCOP, 19 or 36% are females. However, how much this has benefited women in the region, majority of who live in rural areas, remains an issue worth exploring. And even though as table 5 shows women's representation has increased broadly from 26.2% in 2004 to 38.7% in 2009, the result has also been a mixed bag of gains and losses. For instance, IFP women went down from 2 seats in 2004 to 1 in 2009. The DA, ACDP and MF did not have any growth in this regard for 5 years. In keeping with its 50/50 quota policy, the ANC seems to be the leading party in efforts aimed at emplacing gender equality in politics as it progressed from 38.53% in 2004 to 49% in 2009. However, in the absence of constitutional guarantees, women's political representation remains unstable as is it based on the whims of the dominantly male structures that decide how and which women get appointed/elected. This goes a long way in compromising the quality of women's representation and the representativeness of the women population. Also, while voluntary party quotas seem to be achieving greater women representation in South African politics (Mbola, 2009), it also serves as a draw back to full gender equality in politics. For example, at the national level, the 50/50 policy was enforced to the letter by the ANC in the 2009 elections as women constituted 50% of the party's list of candidates for the National Assembly. Also, women constituted 54% of COPE's list of MPs. However, because other parties were not constitutionally bound to do the same, women ended up constituting 45% of the National Assembly. In a more competitive electoral system where seats are evenly distributed, women's representation would be far less than 45% unless all the parties make women to constitute 50% women in their lists of candidates.

Table 5: KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Assembly election results by gender and party, 2009

Party	Women	Total seats	% of women
ANC	26	53	49
IFP	2	18	11.1
DA	1	7	14.3
ACDP	1	1	100
MF	1	2	50
COPE	-	1	-
TOTAL	31	80	38.75

Source: compiled by the researcher, 2009

However, as this study will show from its findings, numbers alone do not automatically translate to qualitative change and development for women and society. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, apart from the feminisation of poverty and disease, patriarchy is still institutionalised whilst patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes remain at the informal levels of gender relations. Politically outspoken women politicians are still ridiculed, taunted as prostitutes and their abilities to cope with their role as politicians, wives and mothers constantly called to question<sup>6</sup>. These embody a deep-seated source and form of political marginalisation, which needs to be addressed as it has far reaching implications for women's peace building potential and agency.

This study argues mainly that although conflict affects women and men disproportionately, women tend to be agents of peace because of their natural (motherhood) and social make-up which values relationships, inter-connectedness and empowerment. From these values springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love which are necessary requirements for amicable resolution of conflict and for sustaining peace. In other words, based on the relational ethic of care motherhood and womanhood, women have the potential to prevent conflict, enable development and transcend the cycle of violence which fans the embers of conflict to make peace when politics fails to prevent violent conflict. Therefore, the challenge is to feminise politics in such a way that enables women to bring in their womanhood into the fray.

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<sup>6</sup> Interviews with Mrs Lydia Johnson, Public Works MEC, October 2007 and Heads, Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Housing, Community Safety and Liaison, and Public Works (October 2007).

## 1.2 Research Task:

In the main, the study investigates how the political marginalisation of women impedes social relations and the peace processes in these cases, considering the linkage between gender relations and the notion of peace (Soest, 1995; Gagnon; 2003). As Tables 2 and 3 shows, women are marginalised in terms of political representation in both governance and the peace processes in individual cases of the Niger Delta and KZN. Although when both cases are compared, KZN, with 26.2%, has a higher female representation in governance than the Niger-Delta, the question is how significant a 26.2% representation is in addressing the concerns and wellbeing of women in the region, especially African women who were largely previously disadvantaged and the majority of who live in rural areas? How equitable is 26.2% women participation when compared to their 53% representation in the provincial population? And beyond the critical mass argument, why is poverty still feminised and ruralised in the province? For example, the demographics of KZN show that many of the women who make up the provincial population live in rural areas and they are African women (Ndimande, 2001). For instance, according to Statistics South Africa (SSA, 1995), 98% of the female non-urban population in KZN are African women. Of the total of 73% of Africans in KZN who live in rural areas, 54% are women with less than 8% each of white, coloured and Indian women living in rural areas (SSA, 2004). The ruralised nature of poverty and human underdevelopment in the province is also reflected in its unemployment figures; of the approximately 53% of the economically active women who were unemployed in 1998, 99.7% were African women (SSA, 1998, 2004)<sup>7</sup>. These obvious gender and racial biases are also reflected in the basic need of housing and access to housing loans in KZN (Ndinda, 2004: 61). The inequitable representation of women in the social sector, especially in residential construction work, poses serious questions and problems in terms of the representation of their views in decision making (Ndinda, 2002). Beyond the socio- economic marginalisation of the women folk, women politicians have to deal with a myriad of constraints within political parties, in governments and in their relationships to their constituents. Many of these constraints relate to perceptions, reinforced by patriarchy, which consider women's presence in

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<sup>7</sup> The general female unemployment rate of 49.9% in 2003 compares negatively with the 36.4% figures for males using the expanded definition of unemployment (SSA, 2003).

politics as an anomaly. Accordingly, the criteria used to judge women are different from those used to define men's qualifications as politicians and oftentimes these criteria centre on male defined notions of morality (Interview with MEC, 2007).

These problems are by no means peculiar to KZN as a gender analysis of the socio-economic demographics of the Niger-Delta also show that women are equally disadvantaged in the region. For instance, the majority of the region's women live in rural areas and compared to men they share a disproportionate burden of the effects of the dislocation of their local economies caused by environmental despoliation. According to Koripamo-Agary and Agary (2005), oil exploration activities in the region has left women, who mostly control the farming, fishing and pottery sectors, largely unemployed and without livelihoods. She contends that Niger-Delta women, especially those in the rural areas, continue to experience acute shortages of safe drinking water with attendant negative impacts on not only their livelihoods, but also their personal and family hygiene. Accordingly, largely illiterate, poor and with little access to information, and submerged in male dominated cultures and orientations that depoliticises them, women in the Niger-Delta are thoroughly constrained in terms of motivation, access, exposure and experience to participate in local government, state and national political life (Ikelegbe and Ikelegbe, 2006).

Apart from the feminisation of poverty and inequality, another effect of a masculinised politics is the proliferation of armed conflict<sup>8</sup> which generally leaves women worse off. For instance, women in KwaZulu-Natal and the Niger-Delta bear disproportionate burdens of the after-effect of the crisis of underdevelopment, political violence and armed conflict which bedevil both regions. The failures of male dominated politics and leadership to effectively allocate and equitably distribute state resources have been variously cited as a main cause of armed conflict in the Niger-Delta and in KwaZulu-Natal (CASS, 2005; Taylor, 2002). According to CASS (2005), where conflict of interests over resource allocation arises, and the social

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<sup>8</sup> There is evidence to suggest that violent conflict and war are male creations because men are socialized to be detached, confrontational, aggressive and independent. These masculine social constructions serve to obstruct peace and peace-building. According to Gagnon (2005), traditional masculine ideologies teach men to love through action and protection of others, especially women, therefore making men prone to war as means of resolving conflict (Gagnon, 2003:6).

relations of production and the superstructures (culture, law and political relations) on which they rest are not properly managed, they result in economic and political asymmetries. These asymmetries may find expression in violent and destabilising social action such as armed conflict or low-intensity warfare (CASS, 2005 7-8).

The whole trend of women's marginalisation in politics in both cases becomes more problematic when viewed against women's stake in the population and the strategic roles they often played during conflict, both as direct participants and as contributors to the foundation for peace, especially at the informal level during conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, a significant question this study tackles is why, despite their population and political superiority in these regions, women have over time assumed a minority status in political participation, a trend which reflects also in their socio-economic emasculation in these societies? Also, how does the political marginalisation of women affect peace-building in conflict-prone societies? In other words, do women represent a different approach and value to politics that is pro-peace? And if so, why, for instance, is a critical mass of women in politics in KZN not impacting more significantly in the lives of rural women and others generally in the province? And lastly, beyond the critical mass versus critical acts debate, are there other formal or informal factors that militate against women's effectiveness in politics?

### **1.3 Hypothesis**

Women can enhance the peace process if they participate equally (*vis-à-vis* men) in the political process as individuals in society.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to examine the extent to which women's participation in the political process can enhance the peace process. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Examine the mutually reinforcing impact that conflict has on women and how this defines the women reality.

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<sup>9</sup> This emerged from an interview with Jabulani Sithole, a Senior Lecturer at the School of Gender and Historical Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Mr Sithole, now an African National Congress (ANC) member, was part of several peace initiatives between the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) at the peak of violent conflict in KZN in the late 80s. These peace initiatives eventually culminated a peace agreement between the warring parties in 1991.

- Examine how masculine ideologies and social constructs built around patriarchal roots in society prevent women from being active agents of change for peace in the study areas.
- Determine if an increased political representation of women in decision making positions will enhance the peace process.
- Determine if there are veritable lessons to be learnt from women's involvement in conflict and its resolution in these cases.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

Specifically, it poses the following questions:

- What is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas and how does it define the women reality with regards to the conflict cycle?
- How have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas?
- What societal notions and theoretical frameworks undergird the role perception and construction of women as 'comforters', 'victims only' and 'those needing protection' in conflict situations?
- Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process?
- What veritable lessons can be learnt from women's involvement in conflict resolution in these case studies?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

The post World War II global system – especially after the Cold War – has altered and widened significantly the subject of security and peace. With its new and relatively unmatched emphasis on the sovereign authority of states (and peoples) as well as its collective security claims through the authority of the United Nations Security Council – and, as some would argue, the net unintended benefits of a nuclearised bipolar system –the world experienced an unprecedented era of state emergence, security and stability. Not surprisingly, for many states –particularly those in the developing parts of the world –this changed and more benign international security environment meant a concern not for external threats but rather for internally-based (albeit, perhaps, externally-supported) security issues.

Given this context, it seems that realist notions of security have changed over the years – they expanded and shifted substantially away from ideas about state quest for survival and inter-state wars to intra-state conflicts and wars that were stoked not only by the imperatives of the global East-West ideological battles but also the challenges associated with nation-building in environments that were often marked by severe resource starvation and competing interests. This global shift of security conception from the traditional state-centric realm to the human centred realm has also led to a corresponding shift in the discourse of peace “from the initial focus on difference *between* states to inequality *within* and *across* them”, which according to Brine (1999) is “linked to the dominant discourse of economic growth, and the resulting processes of industrialization and urbanization, and which when ‘successful’, not only creates wealth and a middle class, but generates social inequality and poverty” (Brine, 1999: 23). In a similar context, human security scholars like Peterson (1992) view structural gender inequality within states, expressed in the feminisation of poverty and violence, for instance, as human security threats to developing states. In her view, the masculinisation of politics and the state enables male violence against women both in the public and private arenas, thus stifling the agency of women’s instruments of change and development. According to her;

Women are the objects of masculinists control not only through direct violence (murder, rape, battering, and incest) but also through ideological constructs, such as “women’s work” and the cult of motherhood, that justify structural violence – inadequate healthcare, sexual harassment, sex segregated wages, rights and resources. The state is implicated in all these. (Peterson, 1992: 3)

From a relational perspective, these are usually the underlying causes of social and political instability, which in most cases in Africa result in armed conflicts between groups and communities within the states. Therefore, emphasis on a relational approach to politics and peace building is important as war is defined as psychosis caused by an inability to see relationships. For example, according to Soest (1995), “the neglect of relations cause separation and is instrumental in creating rivals and making enemies...this can be traced in part to the pervasive ideology of individualism

that supports a competitive, adversarial way of life” (Soest, 1995: 168). Viewed this way, peace is not just narrowly conceptualised as the absence of war between or within states, but rather in terms of social justice, i.e., the presence of an equitable and sustainable environment for development to thrive. For instance, according to Assefa (1993: 17 - 48), peace involves the transformation of destructive conflictual interactions into cooperative and constructive relationships; reconciliation, leading to healthy, mature, spiritual, ecological, social, and personal relationships of interdependence and justice.

Therefore, bearing in mind that peace as the constructive transformation of conflict is a contextual requirement for development, the prospect of this a study as a resource base and policy instrument for attaining peace and development in the poverty-stricken Niger-Delta is appealing, not only to me as a citizen of the region, but to the peoples of the region. This also extends to my second home, KwaZulu-Natal, where I have been resident for over 4 years. Succinctly, by arguing in favour of feminising the peace process through increased political representation of women in the study areas, this study contributes to:

- Engendering democracy as a tool for effective conflict resolution based on the principles of social justice and equity.
- Adding to knowledge and the expansion of its frontiers, as it is expected that this study will help to deconstruct the dominant masculine construction of society which enables and perpetuates the exclusion of women from the public space in contemporary African societies.
- Adding to already existing feminist literature, especially on the utility of an African cultural feminism around which we can develop an African feminist peace model for conflict-prevention and conflict management. Apart from being a useful tool for deconstructing patriarchy, educating men and mobilising women for the challenge of achieving gender equality in post-colonial Africa, an African feminist model also has the utility of creating a female consciousness and confidence with which to approach politics and add the value that women can and should bring to politics and *ipso facto* peace-building.

- Providing an insight into the demographic characteristics of women who are more likely to hold the view that more women in politics would enhance peace building.

At the policy level, based on its findings, this study came up with some recommendations which will aid conflict resolution and peace building through gender mainstreaming in the electoral politics of the Niger Delta and KwaZulu-Natal in Nigeria and South Africa respectively, as well as in other conflict-prone regions of Africa.

### **1.7 Methodology and Research Design**

The nature and objectives of the study required a combination of methods and approaches with some flexibility. Accordingly, the study adopted a qualitative method which it combined with the feminist research (standpoint and empirical) and comparative case study approaches. This was necessary for a number of reasons. First, the nature of the research questions required the use of qualitative data from both secondary and primary sources. Second, since women are the subject of the study, it was imperative to study them in their dominant locales (community case studies) and take their feelings and experience of conflict and the peace processes in their communities into account as feminist research dictates (Payne and Payne:2004). According to feminist standpoint theory<sup>10</sup>, the epistemic position of the human subject of a study is very closely tied to his/her social location. It argues “that social locations not only vary from an epistemological point of view, but that some social locations are more epistemically reliable than others” (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-social-epistemology/> Accessed 06/09/09). In this way, experiential differences lead to differences in perspective, and these perspectival differences carry epistemic

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<sup>10</sup> Feminist standpoint theory draws mainly from Marxist materialism which believes that one's social position with respect to material labor is inversely related to one's epistemic position. For example, according to George Lukacs, in the social relations between the capital owning class (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariats), the bourgeoisie class is unable to understand the exploitation of the working class upon which their capitalist privileges depend because their profit interests blurs their sense of objectivity (see Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006).

consequences which can enhance the quality of knowledge if taken into consideration. Therefore, in studying women, it is important for a researcher to acknowledge that women have an experiential understanding of their own lives, and that the knowledge derivable from such experiences can only become a useful epistemology if these particular experiences are taken into account. For example, according to Hartsock (1983), the activities of women that place them in a socially underprivileged position can form the basis of a privileged epistemic standpoint, through which a deeper understanding of patriarchal institutions and ideologies can be reached. However, the social standpoint theory of knowledge production has been criticised for suggesting knowers are unable to share knowledge across social locations (see Nelson 1990; Walby 2001). Also, “versions of standpoint theory have been criticized for failing to adequately account for phenomenon such as internalized oppression, in which the perspective of the oppressed is damaged by the forces of oppression and is therefore unreliable” (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-social-epistemology/> Accessed 06/09/09).

As a way of getting around some of the weaknesses of the standpoint theory of feminist research, scholars like Wylie (2003) have argued that the empirical investigation of a particular situation or context matter in how differences in perspectives and epistemologies can be positively appropriated. In this light, this study believes that an empirical observation and survey of women in their social locations in different communities helped to enrich the quality of knowledge on women and peace building that it produces. Lastly, since the study is across countries, a comparative approach was also adopted in the collection and analysis of data.

The main sources of secondary data were well researched books and journal articles, newspapers and magazines, government legislations, research reports and the internet. These were used to support primary data sought from the opinions of renowned scholars and civil society actors (men and women) who have researched conflicts in these regions and those engaged in gender advocacy work including local, provincial/state government officials. The main primary data came from a survey of rural women in the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal. Overall, data obtained from the survey of women in the selected communities were individually collated and analysed as aggregates within each region and comparatively across the regions.

A number of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were employed to analyse the secondary and primary data respectively. These include content analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Chi square and logistic regression analysis. According to Nueman, (2000: 292) “content analysis involves gathering and analyzing the content of the text: language, words, phrases, themes and symbols”. In a similar context, it involves examining the presence of words or phrases in a text in order to identify the specified characteristics of messages and to make meaning of them (Babbie and Mouton, 1998). The SPSS was used to undertake a descriptive analysis of the data and cross tabulations of dependent and independent variables. Also at a later stage, it became imperative to probe our data further through a statistical analysis of the variables. The essence was to produce knowledge of the demographic characteristics of women who confirmed the hypothesis; those who were more likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace building. To do this, we used the Pearson Chi-Square Test which was then further analysed with the logistic regression model to establish a cause-effect relationship between the binary dependent variable (probability of an increased political representation of women in decision-making positions would cause lasting peace in community/would not cause lasting peace in community) and selected independent variables, all expected somewhat to impact on the process of enhancing peace-building in conflict-affected communities in KZN, South Africa and Delta Niger, Nigeria.

Overall, the dominant methodological approach this study adopted was the comparative case study method. Small numbers of samples were selected randomly to represent large populations (cases) in each region and data was collected from these samples using a conceptual framework that was commonly applied based on the research questions above. Finally, the cases were compared across regions to assess the degree to which they confirm the research hypothesis.

According to Skocpol and Somers (1980:148), different forms of comparative inquiry facilitate the discovery of similarities among various contexts. One of such forms recognises both similarities and contrasts at the macro level and, as such, focuses on particular phenomena common to the societies being compared rather than a

presumed all round commonality among the societies themselves. It is this form of comparative inquiry that this research concerns itself with because it focuses on the reality (plight and views) of rural women, which is portrayed by the impact of conflict on these women and the impact that they, in turn, have on conflict resolution and peace building. This phenomenon is common to the selected study areas although in varying degrees. Therefore, women are the focus of the analysis, not conflict *per se*.

### **1.7.1 Justification for a comparative case study approach**

In a similar comparative study of Peace and Conflict Resolution Organizations in Northern Ireland, Israel/ Palestine and South Africa, Gidron *et al* (2002:24-27) reported valuably that in undertaking a cross-country, cross-conflict comparison, it was important that the contexts of the phenomenon studied be both similar and different in certain respects. According to them, the similarities accentuated the fact that the phenomenon studied was the same across countries and conflicts while the differences enabled the researchers to distinguish universal traits from particular ones (Gidron *et al*; 2002:25).

In the case of this study, the chosen conflicts provided a good ground for cross-country comparison of women because of their similarities and differences. For instance, while the conflicts in the Niger Delta and KwaZulu-Natal have different histories, duration, dynamics and trajectories, women in both regions engaged in the conflicts in significant measures and were largely excluded from the formal peace processes following various attempts in the 1990s to resolve them. Also, historically, both regions experienced British colonial rule, have female majorities in their regional populations, and the conflicts in these regions are underlined by the struggle for control and power to manage and equitably allocate the socio-economic resources. In this way, poverty, which is largely borne by women<sup>11</sup>, is a main feature of conflict in both cases. Also, conflict in each case study is undergirded by intervening social cleavages, ethnicity in the Niger-Delta and intra-racism in KwaZulu-Natal.

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<sup>11</sup> Okojie (2002) in a study on gender and education as determinants of household poverty in Nigeria, discussed at the WIDER Development Conference held in Helsinki supported the fact that women are most vulnerable to poverty in Africa. See also UNDP Report 1997; World Bank Reports, 1997 and 2001; Vickers (1993) and Nzimande, 2002).

In terms of differences, these societies have variations in their women population that mostly revolve around issues of size, class, age categories of those involved and worst hit by the conflicts, and literacy levels in various segments of the societies in each region. In KwaZulu-Natal, race is a major issue because it is multi-racial, unlike in the Niger Delta where ethnicity is a major issue. As a way of getting around some of these variations, the study adopted a conceptual framework of certain operational concepts to standardise data collection and analysis. These include conflict, peace process, feminisation and women reality.

### **1.7.2 Research setting and sample population:**

Women are the focus of study. According to Beall *et al* (1989:95) women are not a monolithic category considering the variations that exist in their populations. This is more so across cultures and states. Apart from defining an operational framework to get around some of these variations like in political history, social-cultural configuration, and such others as class, literacy levels and age, we surveyed a cluster of women in selected communities in each of the two regions. They ranged from women affiliated or belonging to the ruling political parties, to those in local, regional and national governance as well as women community leaders, women academics and female advocates/activists. These formed a fourth category of women surveyed; otherwise, there were three broad types of settlements that were initially identified for survey in the Niger Delta and KwaZulu-Natal. These are rural, urban and semi-urban communities where women between ages 18-35 form the bulk of the female population.

#### *1. Niger Delta:*

The Niger Delta region is now officially divided politically between nine Nigerian states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. Its total population is estimated at 20 million, of which 10,431,862 are females. It is a land rich in oil and natural vegetation i.e. soil, lagoons, mangrove, swamps, rivers and forests which define the people's main occupations of farming and fishing. The Niger Delta is a land of villages and town settlements. For broad geographical representation, we selected one community each to reflect our settlement categories across the region from west to east. Specifically we sampled one semi-rural community (Igbokoda) from Ondo along the western axis, one rural (Uzere) from

Delta, around the central section and one urban (Odi) from Bayelsa towards the eastern axis. The breakdown of the sample population is shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Niger Delta

Category	Communities	Total population	Women population
Rural	Uzere	96,000	48,000
Semi-Urban	Igbokoda	196,000	100,000
Urban	Odi	35,000	20,000

Source: National Population Commission (NPC) Census Report, 1999.

## 2. *KwaZulu-Natal:*

Often referred to as KZN, KwaZulu-Natal is South Africa's most populous province and is the home of the Zulu nation. Its total population is 9.4 million, 53.2% of whom are women, with a total land area of 92,100km ([www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za)). Apart from the industrialised areas located mainly in and around Durban, and the central coast of Richards Bay, the majority of the population, Africans, live in rural and semi-urban homelands which have a sustenance economy based mainly on cattle rearing and corn growing. KwaZulu-Natal has three different geographic areas: the lowlands region along the Indian Ocean coast, plains in the central section and two mountainous areas, the Drakensburg Mountains in the west and the Lebombo mountains in the north. The Tugela River flows west to east across the central section of the province. Also for geographical spread, we picked one community to reflect our identified settlement categories from each selected areas. Specifically, we picked one rural community (Shobashobane) from the south coast in the lowlands region, one urban (Richmond) from the plains in the central region and one semi-urban (Nongoma) from the Lebombo mountain area in the north. The breakdown of the sample population is shown in Table 7 below:

Table7: KwaZulu-Natal

Category	Communities	Total population	Women population
Rural	Shobashobane	100,000	50,000
Semi-Urban	Nongoma	188,996	100,996
Urban	Richmond	70,000	35,000

Source: [www.elections.org.za](http://www.elections.org.za) accessed 11/04/05

### 1.7.3 Sample size and composition

The initially proposed sample size of this study was 353 which represented 1% of the total population of women in the selected communities in the Niger Delta and KwaZulu-Natal regions. However, at the end of our field survey, the responses of a total of 295 (110 in the Niger-Delta and 185 in KZN) were found to be valid for analysis. The remaining 58 were rejected as ‘spoilt’ or invalid questionnaires’ for reasons ranging from unwillingness of respondents to continue with the survey, deliberate misinformation of the researcher by dubious respondents who claimed they could fill in the questionnaires on their own, to lack of meaningful information provided by some respondents who just turned 18 years at the time of survey. This last group, for example had very little or no knowledge/experience of the conflict in their communities and had no opinions to offer on other questions on women’s involvement in politics and peace building either. A total of 60 women; 30 in each case study, all drawn from the sample frame were interviewed in 5 focus group discussion sessions. These sessions took place in Igbokoda, Nongoma, Odi, Shobashobane and Uzere and participants were selected from a crop of community women leaders, local government/municipal councillors, social workers, women activists, and those with a tertiary education working in the study areas. Within this crop of women, 18 (11 in the Niger-Delta and 7 in KZN) were targeted for personal interviews. They include R. Umokoro, O Orimisan, Esejuwon, J. Ilara, E Ewarawon, A. Ogburu, Amafadeiei, wife of the Amayenabo (King) of Odi, Kumasiere and two anonymous (rape victims) in the Niger-Delta, and G. Hlomka, B Skhosana, D Cele, E. Zulu, N. Ntombela and two anonymous (rape victims) in KZN. The researcher also interviewed 4 men (2 each in the ND and KZN) who were resident in the study areas. They include Chiefs I. Akhorta and Lepe in the ND, and J. Sithole and Nyembe in

KZN.

A number of key person interviews were also conducted with 10 women (3 in the Niger Delta and 7 in KZN) who are citizens of both regions but were resident outside the study areas. In KwaZulu-Natal, those interviewed include Mrs L. Johnson, MEC for Public Works, Ms Pearl Sokhulu, Managing Director, GAGASI Radio, and Dr (Mrs) N. Mkhize of the Office for the Status of Women and the Heads, Department of Community Safety and Liaison, Department of Housing, Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, and Department of Public Works. Those in this category that were interviewed in the Niger Delta include Hon. Esohe Jacobs (MP) of the Edo State House of Assembly, Mrs F. E Iyoha, Chief Administrative Officer of Oredo Local Government Area of Edo state, and Dr (Mrs) Okolocha, politician and lecturer at the University of Benin.

Concisely, a total of 295 women were surveyed with the questionnaire instrument. From this 295, 60 women were selected to participate in focus group discussions while 10 others were interviewed. A total of 4 men were also interviewed. If we add the 18 women who were drawn from the 60 that participated in the focus group discussions, we will have a total of 32 personal interviews conducted for this study. Also in KZN, a group of 40 students (15 males and 25 females) were part of two separate focus group discussions aimed at getting the perceptions of university students on gender equality in politics. These were all analysed by content analysis.

#### **1.7.4 Sample design**

The ideal sample design for a community survey study of this nature is the cluster sampling design because the use of any other sample design requires identifying each element in the population to get a sample frame, which in this case is almost impossible considering the size of the sampling population. Having categorised women into settlements group types that we used as our clusters, we used the simple random sampling technique to identify and survey them at different levels to cover the variations (such as age and political affiliation) in the study population. In each study area, the research team randomly went from home to home to survey women in their immediate environment. The 60 women who participated in the focus group discussions were specifically targeted in the course of the questionnaire surveys and

invited to participate in the FGDs which were usually held in public places at the end of a visit to a particular community.

### **1.7.5 Limitations**

Using a delicate blend of methods and approaches requires an operational flexibility in order to accommodate the strengths of each and to mitigate their weaknesses as well as get around other methodological difficulties that were initially anticipated to arise in the course of the study. For example, using a semi-structured interview which is very useful for getting in-depth information from respondents actually helped to mitigate the disadvantages of the questionnaire tool, i.e., limited application, low response rate and lack of opportunity to clarify issues (Kumar, 1996:114). Also, the physical presence of the researcher/interviewer (flexible and yet committed to the study) in the interviews with women both in local and regional governance and political parties, also enhanced the quality of survey data as well as enabled “a move towards a collaborative, non-hierarchical and inclusive relationship entailing an equality of standing between researcher and researched”, which is a main concern of feminist research approach in its critique of conventional intellectual frameworks (Payne and Payne; 2004:90).

However, there were inconsistencies between the survey results and those of the logistic regression analysis which was employed to probe the survey data further. Although the inconsistency highlights the problem of relying on self-reporting as empirical basis for conclusions in social research, it could have been mitigated a bit by building in response authentication mechanisms into the questionnaire instrument from the outset of the project.

## **1.8 Conceptual clarification of key words**

This study utilised some key words which are hereunder explicated as they were deployed. These include conflict, feminise, peace, peace process and women reality.

### **1.8.1 Conflict**

A starting point of understanding conflict as used in this study is that conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in any society. In other words, it is an inherent dimension of human relations, an undercurrent of social relations. It arises out of, and shapes the

challenge of how to manage economic, cultural, political and social relations. Underlying this challenge is the problem of scarcity, which necessitates competition, and requires cooperation to resolve. According to CASS (2005), although conflict structures social relations by creating intersecting channels for societal (individual/collective/group) competition and cooperation, it also has to be understood in the context of disagreement over the values/ideals to inform the socio-economic and political organisation of state and society (CASS, 2005: 6 – 7). These include the social relations of production and the superstructure of culture, law and political relations, forms and systems of governance, structures and processes, including institutional ones, the distribution of and allocation of scarce resources and the direction and emphasis of public policies (CASS, 2005: 7). Viewed this way, there are different forms of conflict such as social conflict defined by economic scarcity that manifests in poverty (human insecurity) which impairs human existence, and armed conflict defined by socio-political differences that manifests in political assassinations, violent confrontations and low-intensity warfare. Another form of conflict which this study concerns itself with is inter-gender conflict which manifests in male violence against women (rape, physical abuse, cultural labelling and properticisation). All of these forms of conflict are undergirded by the breakdown of social relations between individuals (i.e. men and women) and groups in societies, between communities and between states. Concisely, conflict is inevitable and is rooted in relationships (see Lederach, 1997; CASS, 2005; Amisi, 2008).

### **1.8.2 Feminisation**

Feminise as used in this study means to equally involve women in the governance processes of their communities, localities, regions and nation-states as well as in the peace processes of peace making, peace keeping and peace building in conflict societies.

### **1.8.3 Peace**

This study conceptualises and utilises a relational notion of peace, not as the absence of violence, but as the constructive transformation and resolution of violent conflict based on gender justice, mutual respect, tolerance and inclusion. In this light, this study adopts a modified version of Assefa's (1993) definition of peace as involving three broad elements: the transformation of destructive conflictual interactions into

cooperative and constructive relationships; reconciliation, leading to healthy, mature, ecological, social and personal relationships of interdependence; and justice. In this way, peace involves restructuring relationships (male notions of relationships) that promote war so that they can instead advance peace. Our modification of Assefa's conceptualisation of peace is in the area of the relationship between gender relations and justice. Therefore, while agreeing with Assefa that peace involves the constructive transformation of violence (see Lederach, 1995) we add that it must be based on entrenching a politics of gender justice, mutual respect, tolerance and inclusivity. While these values are also found among men, we will argue that they are more likely to be exhibited by women<sup>12</sup>. In this sense, a critical mass of women in politics can bring them to bear and make the difference between violent conflict and sustainable peace.

#### **1.8.4 Peace process**

Based on our understanding of peace, the peace process entails a complex process of peace making, peace keeping and peace building and preventive diplomacy which lead to sustainable peace. These concepts are often confused and used interchangeably. However, each represents different stages of the whole peace process.

1. *Peacemaking* is the process of mediating a cessation of violence and settlement between disputing parties to a conflict. It involves the use of varying conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, negotiations and diplomatic representations. It can be either or both formal and informal. In formal peace making processes, professional negotiators/diplomats engage in direct negotiations with the main disputants with a view to agreeing on and drafting a workable peace accord. At the informal level, citizens (i.e. women) can also participate in the peace making process through moral suasion, prayers, peace protests and letter writings. Informal citizenship participation in peacemaking is becoming an increasingly common way to kick-start the formal peacemaking process.

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<sup>12</sup> We note that not all women have or exhibit these values, just as not all men have them. However, the social construction of gender and differentiated gender roles has generally socialised women to assume these values while men are generally socialised to assume the opposite.

2. *Peacekeeping* involves maintaining law and order by keeping disputants from attacking each other. Peacekeeping, which is usually done by neutral forces (army, navy, police), can take place simultaneously with peacemaking. The peacekeeping force(s) do nothing to settle the disputant's differences or help negotiate a peace agreement. Their task is often to prevent the escalation of violence by providing a buffer between the disputants.
3. *Peace building* involves the processes and activities involved in normalising relations and reconciling the latent differences between the disputing sides in a conflict with a view to enabling sustainable peace. It is an overarching concept that includes conflict transformation, restorative justice, trauma healing, reconciliation, development, and good leadership, which all have implications for conflict prevention. Indeed, good leadership underlain by spirituality and religion is a proactive action that can prevent armed conflict and or transform it positively when it becomes inevitable. According to Amisi (2008), because conflict is motivated by the immediacy of hatred and prejudice, transforming it requires focusing on the socio-psychological and spiritual aspects of it that are largely ignored by international diplomacy (Amisi, 2008: 6; see also Mazurana and McKay, 1999: 8 - 11). Both studies acknowledge that relationships are central to conflict transformation (peace building), and that when they are well managed, human relationships can prevent future conflict. In this way, we contend that if women, for instance, are mainstreamed into politics on an equal basis with men in ways that allow them to bring their femininity into the fold, their numbers and the relational values they represent can change the character of politics. These values: cooperativeness, non-confrontational, tolerance, empathy, love and care, can enthrone a more collaborative and development approach to politics that can prevent conflict *ab initio*. In this way, conflict prevention becomes part of holistic peace building which in itself emphasises relationships.
4. However, *conflict prevention* has developed into a distinctive sphere of peace building known as Preventive diplomacy, which in the context of this study, means a possible range of actions that can be taken to prevent disputes from turning into armed conflict. These are in the political, economic and social fields, applicable especially to possible internal conflicts. According to the

United Nations (1999), all the ranges/classes of preventive actions such as preventive deployment of forces, preventive humanitarian action and preventive peace building share common characteristic. For instance, “they all depend on early warning that the risk of conflict exists, they require information about the causes and likely nature of the potential conflict so that the appropriate preventive action can be identified, and they require the consent of the party or parties within whose jurisdiction the preventive action is to take place” [www.un.org/Docs/SG/Report99/prevent.htm](http://www.un.org/Docs/SG/Report99/prevent.htm) . These characteristics also apply to preventing intra-state conflicts.

### **1.8.5 Women reality**

The women reality as used in this study is the reality of women’s vulnerability and marginalisation in relation to conflict and post-conflict reconstruction respectively. It refers to the phenomenon of women’s victimhood in conflict even though they are usually not part of the decision making processes that led to such conflicts in the first place. The realities women face in regard to conflict also includes the fact that in spite of the disproportionate effects (compared to men) of such conflicts on them, they are conveniently excluded from peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts and dividends. They are either treated as minors who should be represented by their husbands and sons or as victims to be represented by male heads and elders in communities. Thus their experiences and contributions towards peace making during conflict are never factored into the peace, security and post conflict reconstruction and transformation equations. This contributes in many ways to perpetuating the cycle of violence as the political approaches that led to conflict in the first place remain unmediated or counterbalanced by a different approach which women can bring. In the ensuing cycle of social and armed conflict, women and their children remain the most vulnerable.

### **1.9 Overview of the study**

Chapter One introduces the study. It provides a general background of the study which includes a statement of the research task, objectives of the study, research questions, hypothesis, and significance of the study. It also explicates the methodology and research design as well as a clarification of concepts used.

Chapter Two is a review of the relevant literature on patriarchy and gender relations in Africa. It critically interrogates patriarchy in the continent from the pre-colonial through to the post colonial periods with a view to distinguishing between the different patriarchies that have evolved in Africa since the pre-colonial era. The overriding essence is to create a new understanding of African gender relations, which is useful for empowering women politically and enlightening post-colonial African men on the utility of empowering women. Chapter Two also engages critically with existing literature on the critical mass versus critical acts debate on the quality of women's political participation in the African context. The essence is to identify the intervening social variables that impact on the quality of women's political representation. The idea is to make a case for adopting a socio-cultural analytical approach to unravelling why women in governance are not making the expected difference especially to rural African women.

Chapter Three provides a theoretical framework for feminising politics and the peace process. In this regard, the study utilised the Human Security paradigm, a Human Rights discourse and the Human Factor theory popularised by Senyo Adjibolosoo (1995). The chapter ties these paradigms to the Moral Imagination Model of peace building theorised by John Lederach (2005). Within this human agency framework, where women's womanhood, experiences and needs as human beings are factored into the development equation, the study attempts to develop an African feminist model of peace building. This is rooted not only in African women's feminine capacities as mothers and their ethics of care and human relatedness, but also on a rich cultural history of women's peace activism, advocacy and agency in the continent. Elements of these are still in practice and can be appropriated into a feminist peace model that can be both a conflict prevention strategy and a conflict transformation model.

Chapter Four is an overview of armed and social conflict in the Niger-Delta which manifests in armed confrontations between ethnic/youth militias and the federal government, community versus oil company tensions, community versus community violence and intra community confrontations. It presents the study's findings and analysis on women, politics, conflict and peace building in the Niger-Delta from a

survey of 110 women<sup>13</sup> in the three case studies of Igbokoda, Odi and Uzere.

Like Chapter Four, Chapter Five is an overview of armed and social conflict in KwaZulu-Natal which, in this case, manifests in political violence and taxi-rank wars within different communities between a mix of political and economic actors. Also, underlying armed conflicts is extreme poverty which remains endemic in South Africa's most populous, third poorest and most politically violent province. The Chapter presents the study's findings and analysis on women, politics, conflict and peace building in KwaZulu-Natal from a survey of 185 women<sup>14</sup> in the three case studies of Richmond, Nongoma and Shobashobane.

Chapter Six is a comparative and statistical analysis of our findings from all the study areas in our two case studies (KwaZulu-Natal and the Niger-Delta). It compares the differences and similarities of the study's findings in both case studies, and presents the results of testing the study's hypothesis in individual cases, and compositely across both cases. The essence of the statistical analysis was to probe our findings deeper with a view to producing new knowledge on the characteristics (predictors) of women who are most likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace building in their communities and thus confirm our hypothesis. It also discusses the issues and lessons that emerged from the study's findings which relate to the hypothesis.

Chapter Seven is the concluding chapter. It summarises the study and makes poignant concluding remarks from which flows a number of recommendations and suggestions for further research on women, politics, conflict and peace building not only in the Niger Delta (Nigeria) and KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), but also in Africa generally.

On the whole, the study seeks to show that women, if they are mainstreamed into

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<sup>13</sup> As mentioned before, from these 110 women, 30 were invited to participate in FGDs within which another 11 were personally interviewed in the study areas, including 2 men. 3 other women who were not residents of the study areas were also interviewed

<sup>14</sup> Also, from these 185 women, 30 were invited to participate in FGDs within which another 7 were personally interviewed in the study areas, including 2 men. 7 other women who were not residents of the study areas were also interviewed

politics in ways that allow them to bring in their femininity into the fold, can be the instruments of the positive change that we all seek in African politics. Women represent and can bring in a different approach to politics that can be the difference between underdevelopment and transformation, and war and peace in Africa.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW – DECONSTRUCTING AFRICAN PATRIARCHIES

#### 2.1 - Introduction

An indigenous and inherent ‘tradition’ and an oppressive ‘culture’ of patriarchy have been implicated as the main cause or source of the masculinisation of African societies (see Leach, 1961; Gluckman, 1963; Tyler, 1971; Reiter, 1975; Wright, 1981; Cutrufelli, 1983). Tyler (1971), for instance, in describing gender relations amongst the Zulus, contends that “in intellect, African women are inferior to the men, but this is doubtless attributable to the drudgery imposed on them” (Tyler, 1971: 119). According to Tyler (1971:119), Zulu women, are strangers “to feelings of self-respect and sensitiveness under wrongs, characteristic of their more highly-favoured Christian sisters in Christian lands”. In attempting to portray women as culturally docile and traditionally submissive, Tyler posits “as a rule, African women patiently submit to their lot, unless tortured beyond endurance by despotic husbands; but their life is at best a hard one” (Tyler, 1971: 119). These kinds of sweeping propositions have tended to portray African societies as deeply patriarchal and African men as irredeemable machos with no regard for women. Consider for instance the implications of the following statement from Dessine L'Espoir in a write-up about the “Know Your Body Support Programme” in South Africa:

Although South Africa has one of the most affirming constitutions in the world, gender equality is far from a reality. 60% of all AIDS cases are women and gender bias remains a reality due to economic dependency that stems from a traditional patriarchy and an acceptance of violence against women.

<http://www.dessinelespoir.org/projects/knowyourbody/index.html> (Accessed 15 July 2006)

In a similar vein, Hassim’s (1993) inference that African traditional culture is inherently oppressive of women supports this stereotypical view of African masculinities. For example, in conceptualising the notion of motherhood and its

relationship with women's political rights amongst the Zulus, especially in the context of the liberation struggles in South Africa, she implied 'conservatism' as tantamount to African tradition with a deep-seated patriarchy that excludes women from politics:

Although Inkatha appears to construct the notion of mother of the nation within a revolutionary nationalist discourse, its content is conservative. It is a notion which reinforces women's subordination within the family by focusing on propping up existing relationships, and within political organisations by marginalizing them from decision-making as they are defined out of the mainstream of politics (Hassim, 1993: 18)

She goes on to give an Afrikaner parallel to this 'African patriarchal' notion of motherhood:

In terms of the volksmoeder concept, the Afrikaner woman is depicted not only as a cornerstone of the household, but also as a central unifying force within Afrikanerdom and, as such, is expected to fulfil a political role as well. The function which women are expected to fulfil as mothers within a society is idealized into an image of Afrikaner womanhood containing a spectrum of reproductive and nurturing characteristics (Brink, 1990: 273 in Hassim, 1993: 19)

These kinds of generalisations do not take cognisance of the evolution of African patriarchies over time nor do they echo the capitalist influence in transforming patriarchies and constructing masculinities<sup>15</sup> in the continent. They portray an assumption that the form of patriarchy that marginalises women in politics is characteristic of pre-colonial African societies, in this case the Zulu Kingdom. This is a false assumption, which not only does not take Africa's pre-colonial social history into consideration, but also fails to acknowledge the cultural, economic and ideological evidence of matriarchy as a distinct social system (Diop, 1989;

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<sup>15</sup> Like femininities, masculinities are fluid and dynamic and should not be considered as a homogenous category, as different forms of masculinities exist in Africa, just like elsewhere, and they are mediated by class, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. For instance, see Bhana (2006) and Pattman (2006) who underscored the need to speak of "masculinities" rather than "masculinity". Also, within masculinities, there are hierarchies as some are dominant or hegemonic while others are subordinated, marginalised or complicit (Connell, 2000: 10; Morell, 2001: 6-8.)

Amadiume, 1987 and 1997). It actually ignores a social history which presents facts on the matri-centric unit as the basic structure of African matriarchy dating back 2000 years before Africa's modern contact with Europe (Diop, 1987). Before then, "this non-confirmatory form of patriarchy, the modern patriarchy, had taken firm root in European ideation system" (Williams; 1997:238). This inspired the myth of the rational man/emotional woman and the ideas of pacification that justified slavery and the rape and subsequent colonisation of Africa (Campbell, 2003; McLintock, 1995; Saul, 1992). Otherwise, using examples from Southern Africa, how would one explain the strong historic political roles that women such as Queens and regents like Nandi, Mnkabayi and Mawa played before, during and after the reign of King Shaka, or the expansionist military roles played by Mma Mmanthasi and ordinary women in the army especially in the formative years of the Zulu Kingdom? Indeed, contrary to widely held beliefs that only affluent female chiefs/regents and prominent political leaders participated actively in pre-colonial African societies, ordinary rural women organised themselves politically and responded adequately to the socio-economic, religious and military imperatives of their time spilling into the colonial and post-colonial eras (Nzegwu, 2000; Ufomata, 2000; Weir, 2007). Sadly, this strand of Afro-pessimism about African patriarchies is bought and even resold by many Africans, such that men have become resistant, and women themselves indifferent to gender mainstreaming based on this kind of thinking. Therefore, an insight into the nature of African patriarchies and its evolution over time is a necessary first step to deconstructing this Eurocentric proposition of African patriarchies and its effect on the gender equality efforts of African states such as South Africa and Nigeria. There is indeed a need to interrogate critically the culture men refer to when they say things like "in our culture, women are inferior to men" or the culture that justifies sexual and other forms of violence against women which have become commonplace in post-colonial African societies. For instance, such misconceptions and misrepresentations of African culture and its patriarchies provide the operational *raison d'être* for contemporary male violence and the negative masculinities men now freely employ to perpetuate women's vulnerability to the HIV virus. For example, through not showing care to female victims of the virus, through male irresponsibility of keeping multiple sexual partners, through husbands beating up wives who dare to negotiate sex and condom usage, and through the phenomenon of rape in marriage, post-colonial Africa men exacerbate women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS (Isike and Uzodike, 2008).

In this way, these men exhibit traits of negative or hegemonic masculinities based on a false understanding of African culture, but which, on closer examination, are actually alien to authentic African patriarchies (Isike and Uzodike, 2008: 7 - 9).

As in most states of Europe, Asia and the Americas, most African societies have deep patriarchal roots that predate the capitalist mode of production. However, scholars who have written on African patriarchy have not brought to light the nature and features of these patriarchies with regards to how they benefited women in different pre-colonial societies across the continent<sup>16</sup>. We shall refer to them collectively as the “old” patriarchies of African societies. As we will show, the old African patriarchies are different from the “new” African patriarchies or “neo-patriarchies” which have been wrought on the continent by the forces of imperialism and colonialism. These new patriarchies are what subsist in African societies today. By not making the distinction between old and new patriarchies in Africa, most scholars distort the reality of patriarchy in the continent. This distortion has laid a false premise for understanding the phenomenon and this has had an attendant effect on the response of African men to affirmative policies on gender balancing, which manifests sometimes in dangerous masculine sexual behaviours that make women more vulnerable to the HIV virus and, in extreme cases, deliberately infecting some women (Leclerc-Madladla, 1997) or killing their partners (Sowetan, 23 August, 2000). This is particularly glaring in Southern Africa, for instance, where men generally oppose gender equity policies and actions based on their belief that ‘African culture’ does not permit women to be active in the public space nor be equal with men for that matter. For example, the opposition of Zulu men to gender equity action, based on cultural misunderstanding, is palpable in common arguments like “in Zulu culture women are inferior to men, and must never contest with men in politics” and “Politics is

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<sup>16</sup> This is not meant to suggest that women were not marginalised in pre-colonial Africa, nor is it an attempt to use culture as a basis to romanticise African patriarchy or mask the oppressive inequalities that existed in these societies. For example, in most of these societies, men had control of women’s sexuality through, for instance, dehumanizing widowhood practices, early marriages, food taboos and the belief in supernatural forces. This was the case also in even matrilineal societies like the Ashante in Ghana, Baule in Ivory Coast and the Luguru in Tanzania where female subordination was reinforced through cultural practices like long puberty rite which kept women in seclusion from the time of their first menstruation to marriage (See Aina, 2003). Rather, the idea here is to enable a nuanced, and as such, a better understanding of gender relations during this period; an understanding that can be useful in challenging the cultural basis of male bigotry in contemporary Africa.

culturally a man's domain"<sup>17</sup>. However, today's Zulu men are often ignorant of the fact that the transformation from agrarian patriarchy to capitalist patriarchy impacted on gender identities and relations which, though ever changing, has remained dominant in perceptions and attitudes of men towards women in contemporary times. For example, the migrant labour system in South Africa was an important factor in shaping gender relations, political resistance and the struggle for nations in the late twentieth century, and these remain dominant in perceptions and attitudes of men towards women in contemporary Africa. Indeed, as Waetjen (2004) argues, capitalism and economic exploitation across the country by the colonialists relied on gender and ethnicity for its maintenance and sustenance with concomitant effects for gender relations. Also, according to Sadiki (2001), violence against women in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere in Africa is an invention of modernity, "a new phenomenon that is both a novelty and serious contradiction of the values linked to respect for human life and for women, who were seen as the provider of life in pre-colonial African societies" (Sadiki, 2001: 445-446).

Arising from this background, the central aim of this chapter is to review critically literature on the nature and evolution of African patriarchies from the pre-colonial (pre-capitalist) to the colonial and present post-colonial eras. The idea is not to locate or rewrite women's place in history, but to distinguish between the various strands of patriarchies in Africa which have evolved over time with a view to deconstructing generalised and essentialised views of African masculinities that are held not only by their European inventors, but also by Africans themselves. Specifically, the chapter distinguishes between 'old' and 'new' patriarchies by first examining gender relations in the public sphere of political participation and peace building in pre-colonial African societies. Second, it examines the same subject in the colonial era with emphasis on the capitalist transformation of pre-colonial African patriarchies to what Mies (1986) calls capitalist patriarchy. These 'new' patriarchies have largely dominated the present discourse of patriarchy in Africa and its attendant

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<sup>17</sup> This came out from a Focus group discussion with 15 male Zulu students in a Humanities Access Programme class (Africa in the World) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on 25 October 2006. Of this number, 13 (86.7%) felt very strong about their masculinity. According to them, being dominant in their relations with females was part of being *ummunzane* (real manhood).

consequences for the participation of women in public decision making processes as African men now use them to justify their bigotry against women. The third section of this chapter carries on this argument by critically engaging with literature on the current trends of women's marginalisation in public decision making structures and processes in African states, especially Nigeria and South Africa. For instance, while agreeing with the liberal feminist notion that the dynamic relationship between capitalism and patriarchy in Africa has positive potential and opportunities for gender equality, the section argues that this must be within the context of an African feminist culture and discourse. Also, in grappling with the quality vs. quantity debate on women's effectiveness in politics, it contends that there is a need to refocus on the intervening variables that bring women up and the socio-cultural climate under which specific female politicians operate rather than just on the utility of numbers as a critical factor in ensuring quality women representation in politics.

It concludes that African women should be able to define their interests and roles within the framework of an African based feminism that will not in any way subtract from attaining gender equality in a fast changing world. This is because despite global similarities in the situation of women as a marginalised group, they are not a homogenous or monolithic category given class, political and cultural variations within and between populations. Indeed, as Postmodernist feminist scholars contend, ignoring the differences amongst women in their global experience of social, cultural and economic oppression amounts to imposing a false notion of homogeneity among women and perpetuating a false uniformity on reality (Barrett, 1992; Philips, 1992; Eisenstein, 1989; Molyneux, 1985).

## **2.2 Old Patriarchies: Women, politics and peace in pre-capitalist Africa**

Like masculinities, femininities are not monolithic so we cannot speak of a position of women in pre-capitalist African societies given the historical and socio-cultural differences that characterise the vast geographical space Africa occupies. However, as Coquery-Vidrovich (1994) argues, there are certain main tendencies, mediated by regional differences, which are discernable and common about women's places in pre-capitalist African societies. These prevalent commonalities will be explored at the social, economic and political levels of pre-capitalist African societies.

African women have a long history of consciousness and public participation that pre-dates colonialism and nationalism (resistance) politics in the continent. Contrary to Eurocentric and materialist history on African women (see van Allen, 1976; Wright, 1981), the authority and power of women in most pre-colonial societies was particularly evident in both the socio-economic and political spheres. Unfortunately, these have been largely neglected and obscured by analysis which emphasised domesticity and the unwaged role of women as primary producers and as subordinates to men in agriculture-based economies (Guy, 1987, Walker, 1990). For example, according to Nkiru Nzeogwu:

To read the formal history of states, kings and chiefs in West Africa as well as the treatises of political scientists, one would think that women did not participate in governance, existed only in shadowy spheres, and meekly accepted whatever their male lords and masters directed. These official treatises do not make it clear that a large part of women's present political and judicial powerlessness is not rooted in the culture, but in the encroaching "modern" male-privileging policies and programs unleashed since colonisation.

The appearance and actions of women such as *Edwesohemaa* Yaa Asantewaa the Ibibio, and the Igbo women are almost always exceptionalized and treated as rare. Circumscribing the prevalence of women so that they sporadically appear in history erases the relevant histories and epistemic meanings required to understand their actions (Nzegwu, 2000, available at <http://www.westafricareview.com/vol2.1/nzegwu2>)

Over-emphasising, and in the process essentialising the roles women played as primary producers/reproducers in pre-colonial African history tends to suggest that real power must lie in the control of both agriculture and women as primary producers and reproducers of labour (see Wright, 1981). However, in most of pre-colonial Africa, there is evidence of women playing active and prominent roles in public decision-making and maintaining social peace by regulating and preventing conflict (Sadiki, 2001). In these times, due to the flexibility of the gender systems of most

traditional cultures and languages, women assumed positions and roles that have today become the exclusive preserve of men and as such exercised considerable power and authority in society based on an entrenched system of matriarchy that enabled a unique dual-sex socio-political system (see Amadiume, 1987; 1997). For example, according to Amadiume (1997), pre-colonial African women retained autonomy as women within their societies through their social institutions of women's organisations and the Women's Councils, a feat that European women at that time never achieved (Amadiume, 1997: 100). Examples of such women include Nzinga, Muhumusa, Me Katilili, Nehanda (Angola), Amina, Idah, Aisha (Nigeria), Nandi, Mkabayi, Mma Mmanthatisi (South Africa), just to mention a few. It is noteworthy that apart from examples of royal women which were not a rarity in the different assortments of political systems that existed then, women leadership during this period was also demonstrated at popular levels of other spheres of society such as economic, social, religious, political and military (Nzegwu, 2000), prompting Amadiume (1997) to distinguish between African feudal queen mothers and the market queen mothers, who ostensibly were equally active in the socio-political and economic spheres of their communities as shown by the famous 1929 Aba Women's riots against colonialism (Amadiume, 1997: 89 – 104).

In the economic realm, although patriarchy dictated relations in diverse African societies in varying forms before colonialism, yet, in general terms, it was a kind of patriarchy that respected women and retained significant economic spaces for them, as men and women complemented each other in varying ways. For example, Gordon (1996: 29) contends: "production and consumption were centered in the extended family where both men and women had vital productive roles in predominantly agricultural or pastoral societies". Therefore, while women's condition and position in various pre-colonial African societies obviously varied from one society to another according to the kinship structures and the role women played within the economic structure of each society, they commonly held complementary positions to men, although patrilineal and patriarchal kinship structures dominated most African societies. Women in most societies often controlled a range of economic activities. For instance, there was a distinct sexual division of labour, with certain crops, handicrafts, animal husbandry activities, and other tasks assigned to both women and men (Gordon, 1996: 29). Although Gordon argues that elder males tended to have

more control over productive assets than women as well as power over the labour and produce of women within the household, she concurs that “women often had enormous autonomy that helped to dilute tendencies toward male dominance” (Gordon, 1996: 29) such that, in some societies, they had parallel or dual authority structures which allowed them control over their own spheres of activity as well as a measure of economic independence and control over productive assets (Gordon, 1996: 29; Okonjo, 1976). Besides, this male dominance was also mediated by age, as elder women, just like elder men within these societies, were privileged over younger members of society based on recognition of women’s dual roles as producers and reproducers. For example, the societal position of a young wife improved as she grew older, bore children, and earned approval from its older members. She gained assistance from younger wives as she grew older, thus allowing her to spend less time in the home and more time engaging in activities outside the household – activities such as farming and craft making – which allowed her to provide the material resources needed in order to care for her family. Amongst the Yoruba society in what is now Western Nigeria, elder women had opportunities to participate in other economic activities such as manufacturing and trade. The responsibility of a woman to provide for her family included providing the material resources for such care. Women believed that providing such resources met and validated their responsibility as women and citizens. The work the women did was considered complementary to the work of men, and some women achieved impressive status in the economic and social realms of Yoruba life (Awe, 1977).

Socially, women had a value, as they were a symbol of fertility and, as such, a guarantee of children. Kinship groups, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, expected their married women to give birth to children to ensure the future of the group as such women’s fertility is at the core of the African existence. This in no small measure underscored the importance of women in these societies. At the religious level, while Coquery-Vidrovich (1994: 46), for instance, may have been correct to assume that “women’s role in ancestral religions appears to have been small”, perhaps because “enough research has not been done, most anthropologists being male”, strong evidence exists that women occupied positions of prominence in African traditional religions. For example, Mbiti (1988) uses mythology, proverbs and prayers to juxtapose the prominent place and role of women in African traditional religions in

pre-capitalist African societies. According to him, in a similar way as the family and economic structures, African traditional religions conceived the position of women as complementary to that of men even though, as aforementioned, men were believed to be superior to women and, to some extent, in control of women.

Also, as a measure of women's social value, Amadiume (1987) argues, based on her empirical study of gender relations amongst the Igbos of Nigeria that sexual duality in economic and socio-cultural division of labour and expectations was not rigid as is the case in the West, but was often mediated by the flexibility of gender constructions in language and culture (Amadiume, 1987: 17) which enabled both men and women to straddle each other's worlds without fear of stigmatisation or sanction. For example, she contends, "in Igbo grammatical construction of gender, a neuter particle is used in Igbo subject or object pronouns, so that no gender distinction is made in reference to males and females in writing or in speech. There is therefore, no language or mental adjustment or confusion in reference to a woman performing a typical male role" (Amadiume, 1987: 17). This flexibility in gender construction had implications for gender relations at the social realm as it meant that gender was separate from biological sex and that gender roles were not sexually defined. For instance, daughters could become sons and be treated as completely male just as daughters and women in general could be husbands to wives and consequently males in relation to their wives (Amadiume, 1987:15)<sup>18</sup>. It should be noted that flexibility in gender relations was not peculiar to only the Igbos of Nigeria, but was prevalent in other ethnic groups across pre-colonial Africa. For example, in Southern Africa, amongst the Lovedu and their neighbours who inhabit the north-eastern Transvaal, the Venda, Tonga and even the Zulu, daughters could also become sons and husbands and they, as such, enjoyed a higher status than wives (Weir, 2007: 6). In most of these societies, the queen, whose power is believed to be derived from divinity, shares power with the King as is the case amongst the Swazis (Swaziland), and she is referred to as the mother of the kingdom and the earth (Lebeuf, 1963:99-100).

Politically, pre-colonial African patriarchies provided spaces for women to participate in the public arena contrary to formal and circumscribed Western-invented history,

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<sup>18</sup> This fact has been extensively demonstrated in African folklore movies which highlight the power of women in pre-colonial societies. See, for instance, *My Son's Wife*, shown on *Africa Magic*, Channel 114 on the Multi-Choice Digital and Satellite Television on 12/03/08.

which perpetuates the view that before colonialism African women did not participate in governance and existed only in shadowy spheres and meekly accepted whatever their male lords and masters directed (Nzeogwu, 2000). No doubt, as Coquery-Vidrovich (1994: 34) notes: “men certainly asserted their political supremacy, but women always retained opportunities for power.” For example, in very patrilineal societies such as the Sherbro and Mende in Sierra Leone (West Africa), Ganda in Uganda (East Africa) and the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa (Southern Africa), there is evidence of women playing active roles and having a fair share in politics. Also, in matrilineal pre-colonial societies such as in the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Zimbabwe, Baule, Ashante and Bemba women, respectively, held sway politically. For example, the Ashantes had a female joint ruler with the King (Ashantehene), and she was indeed very powerful such that she participated in royal ancestral rituals, was involved in the selection, presentation and enthronement of a new king, and in his absence, took his place in war. This perhaps was a formal reflection of women power in a matrilineal society ruled by a patriarchal aristocracy where mother progeny relationships determined land rights, inheritance of property, offices and titles.

In diverse states such as Nigeria where there were variants of centralised and decentralised pre-colonial political systems, Igbo women groups such as the *Umuada* constituted a social base of political power and also served as checks on the abuse of power by the Council of Elders. This is not to mention, as Coquery-Vidrovich (1994: 36) put it that “Igbo women ruled among themselves by an assembly or *Ikporo-ani*<sup>19</sup> of related women, widowed, married, or not”. According to her, “these women heard spousal disputes, adultery cases, and quarrels between groups and villages among, and the existence of this body meant women could also impose rules on their village political authorities” (Coquery-Vidrovich, 1994: 37). Okonjo (1976) described the Igbo political system as a dual sex system in which political interest groups were defined and represented by sex such that every adult participated. As aforementioned, this is modified by Amadiume’s (1987) incisive analysis of the politics of gender in Igbo societies using her society, Nnobi, as case study, which showed that indigenous

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<sup>19</sup> The *Ikporo-ani* like the *Umu-ada* was a mother association of women groups prevalent amongst most Igbo societies and was headed by an *Omu* or queen, who according to Coquery-Vidrovich (1994: 38) was “the female equivalent of male power in the community, known for her wealth, intelligence, and character”. To date, the *Ikporo-ani*, though now more of a social group of women, exist in places like Onitsha in Eastern Nigeria.

Igbo society was not based on strict sexual dualism contending rather that sexual dualism and the parallel gender relations it spawned was mediated by flexible gender construction of language and culture (Amadiume, 1987). Therefore, sex and gender did not necessarily coincide in these societies as women played roles usually monopolised by men and were then classified as males just to underscore women's power - facilitated by their economic independence and the existence of a strong goddess-focussed religion (*Idemili*) which was the basis of women's political power at the extra-descent level of political organisation in Nnobi (Amadiume, 1987: 52-99).

Amongst even so-called patriarchal societies such as the Zulu in South Africa, women were central figures as they held chiefly positions of influence and demonstrated leadership in political, military and religious spheres. According to Weir (2007: 8), "the separation of women's leadership into spheres is rather artificial because in reality, their leadership roles involved all these activities in one way or another". She contends that politically, Zulu royal women such as Princess Mnkabayi, Mawa and Nandi exerted enormous influence in political groups irrespective of how they have been caricatured<sup>20</sup> by Eurocentric scholars such as Lugg (1978), Fuze (1979) and Hanretta (1998). Economically, Zulu women owned cattle, a phenomenon which was very central in economic and ritual life among southern Africa's pre-industrial farming societies (Weir, 2007: 5). According to Guy (1987), the categories of women who owned cattle include female chiefs, elder female relations of a chief (male and female), female *Isanusi* (witch doctor) and female heirs of religious leaders. Militarily, women held positions of influence in the *amakhandas* (Zulu military kraals) ranging from leadership, spying, war purification rituals and combat (Weir, 2007: 12). Other roles include mat carrying in times of war and protecting the King (Weir, 2007; Webb and Wright, 1982). According to evidence from the *James Stuart Archives* (Volumes 1 – 5), King Shaka had a female *ibutho* (regiment), which together with other female members of the Kingdom's army constituted about 40% of the total size of the regular armed forces with some of them such as Machibise and Ma Nthatis, who were not Shaka's relatives, emerging as strong army commanders<sup>21</sup>. Weir (2007)

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<sup>20</sup> They have been variously caricatured as opportunists who used their connection to royalty to appropriate power and benefit for themselves and whose activism was as such the exception rather than the norm (see also Webb and Wright, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> The *James Stuart Archives* is an extensive compilation of oral histories with statements from numerous informants collected between 1890 and 1920 by James Stuart, a colonial administrator.

records that according to one of James Stuart informants called Ngidi, “Tshaka used to go out to war with the *amakosikazi* as well as girls. They cut shields (*izihlangu*) and carried assegais, and had to fight when required to do so” (Weir, 2007: 14).

According to her, there were girls who fought like men, earned and wore the *iziqu* (medicine worn by warriors who had killed in combat), which was evidence of having killed an opponent (Weir, 2007: 14 – 15). When you add the array of other African Queen mothers, female regents and warlords like Queen Aisha of the Kanem-Borno Empire (Northern Nigeria), Empress Menetewab (Ethiopia), Queen Nzinga of Angola, Queen Idah of Benin (southern Nigeria) (Coquery-Vidrovich, 1994: 37-40), the picture of female power in pre-colonial African societies becomes clearer.<sup>22</sup>

In essence, we can correctly generalise from different ethnographic studies of gender relations that cut across different parts of Africa that pre-colonial African women held complementary, rather than subordinate, positions to men in their societies and played far more important roles in the economies of their societies, where many were involved in farming, trade, and craft production, than previously conceived in Europe or America (Terborg & Rushing, 1996). Although men appropriated political power and were dominant in most of these societies, social power, which was the base of political power, was generally based on seniority (age) rather than gender. The absence of gender and sexism in the pronouns of many African languages<sup>23</sup> and the interchangeability of first names among females and males strikes Sudarkasa (1987) as a further relation of the social de-emphasis on gender as a designation for behaviour. For instance, amongst the Igbo of Nigeria, you would typically hear a woman being addressed as “Ngozi, daughter of Okonkwo and the wife of Okoli”

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Although John Wright notes that majority of the informants were African males connected to chiefly families in both Natal colony and the Zulu kingdom, they still provide much useful information on leading women (Weir, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Clearly, men’s physical strength gave them huge advantages over women in ancient warfare strategies, which required physical combat. This was the case in nearly all societies in Africa as elsewhere around the world. Nevertheless, there were many cases of outstanding female military leadership and activities. Even in societies like Rwanda, which did not have a tradition of grooming women for combat, there is the historical figure of *Ndabaga*, a young woman whose warrior father had no son to replace him so that he could retire (as per tradition) from combat in his old age. Since she had no brothers, *Ndabaga* disguised herself as a man and went to war where she fought bravely and with such skill that she came to symbolise extraordinary courage and women’s leadership. See RDRC, (2004) *Demobilization and reintegration of military personnel, progress report*, November 2004.

<sup>23</sup> For example, amongst the Igbos of eastern Nigeria, no distinction is made between male and female in subject pronouns. According to Amadiume (1987: 89), the third person singular, *O*, stands for both male and female unlike the English gender construction, which distinguishes male and female as ‘he’ and ‘she’.

instead of “Mrs Okoli” which effectively denies Ngozi of her personage and that of her parents. Indeed, “many other areas of traditional culture, including personal dress and adornment, religious ceremonials, and intra-gender patterns of comportment, suggest that Africans often de-emphasise gender in relation to seniority and other insignia of status” (Sudarkasa, 1987:36).

It is well known that across pre-colonial Africa, the dominant cultural worldview that defined social, economic and political existence was underpinned by a communal ideology that was rooted in *ubuntu*<sup>24</sup>. The meaning and practice of *ubuntu* in Southern Africa can be inferred from a Zulu maxim: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which literally translates to “a person is a person because of other people.” This underscores the collectivism and agency of people as the means and end of development. *Ubuntu* captures the human essence of the African personality (male or female) and traditional society built around familyhood and which, according to Julius Nyerere, was an attitude of mind that was not taught but lived (Nyerere, 2000: 151-158). In conceptualising *ubuntu*, Desmond Tutu (1999: 35) observes:

a person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes with knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

Clearly, this was a worldview that valued and maintained relationships. It was not one that ill-treated, neglected or humiliated women since an injury to one was seen as an injury to all. Men did not need to feel threatened by women as each complemented the other in ways that allowed them to function cohesively as a social unit. Indeed, men and women co-existed in these societies, not as equals though, but as complementary subjects living in a mutual world of responsibility sharing, where differences were appreciated and celebrated (See Amadiume, 1997). Masculinities were understood in ways that regarded and respected women, where it was a virtue to protect women, not

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<sup>24</sup> This worldview of communalism has been variously conceptualized as *Negritude* (Sekou Toure), Humanism (Kenneth Kaunda), *Ujamaa* (Julius Nyerere) and African Socialism (Kwame Nkrumah).

just in ways that perhaps suggested that they were weaker beings needing men's protection, but out of consideration that women were equally deserving of deference and honour with natural abilities and powers to produce economically and reproduce existentially.

Also, gender ideologies and systems in most pre-colonial African societies were not rigid. Using the Igbos of Nigeria as example, Amadiume (1987) contends that women played roles usually monopolized by men, as biological sex did not always correspond with strict gender ideologies of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, since gender roles were not rigidly masculinised or feminised, no stigma was attached to breaking gender roles then (Amadiume, 1987: 185) The gradual subordination and eventual properticisation/objectification of African women started with European contact through the transatlantic slave trade and culminating in the colonial interruption of the continent's socio-cultural existence which also transformed existing economic modes of production and their accompanying gender relations. The colonial state and its later version, the post-colonial state, introduced and legitimated European forms of patriarchies and masculinities which perpetuated the domestication of women as objects that needed to be whipped back to line when they stepped out of turn. Therefore, the colonial state and its bureaucracy served not only to further entrench the subordination of women, for instance, by endorsing their domesticity and the unwaged services they provided within the private space, but it actually reversed their economic and political power which, in the case of Igbo women, dates back to much earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Amadiume, 1987: 140 – 141). Indeed, much of the legislation concerning women attempted to control them, their sexuality and fertility, further defining their subordination. The beginning of colonial rule brought to Africa the European notion that women belonged in the home, nurturing their family.

### **2.2.1 Women and peace building in pre-colonial African societies**

Women in different pre-colonial African societies had traditional peacemaking and peace building roles as they were involved in mediating and preventing conflict within and between societies. Women's peace agency in these societies can be located in their cultural and socio-political roles and contributions to the overall wellbeing of these societies. These roles were reinforced by perceptions which stereotyped women

as natural peace makers, as being more pacific than men<sup>25</sup>, and often symbolized as paragons of morality, sacredness, goodness and tenderness. Thus in most pre-colonial societies, virtues of patience, tolerance, humility and subtle persuasiveness were seen as essentially female attributes which were reinforced through socialization patterns that promote women primarily as child-bearers, good wives, caregivers, arbitrators of conflict and peace promoters in the family and community (UNESCO, 2003: 8). For example, according to Ntahobari and Ndayiziga (2003), in traditional Burundian society, women were considered to be bridge builders and symbols of unity between different families, clans, communities and ethnics through the institution of marriage. Accordingly, girls were socialised from an early age to be open-minded, adaptable and tolerant (Ntahobari and Ndayiziga, 2003: 20). This was the case in other societies such as in Nigeria, Cameroon, Namibia, Somalia and Tanzania (Awe, 1977; Ngongo-Mbede, 2003; Becker, 2003; Mohammed, 2003; Lihamba, 2003). In these societies, where women were expected to embody such virtues as compassion, patience, discretion, gentleness, modesty and self-control, which though were considered inherent in womanhood, required reinforcement through upbringing, so that women could fulfil their role as peacemakers (Ntahobari and Ndayiziga, 2003: 20). For instance, Mohammed (2003) records that in periods of conflict amongst the Somalis, there were times when a group of young, unmarried women (known as *Heerin*) from one of the warring clans paid visits to the opposing clan without the knowledge or consent of their families (2003: 103). According to him, on arrival, the *Heerin* told the people that they were unmarried women, and that they wanted to be married. “Because this was a well known tradition, the young women were welcomed, and preparations were made to ensure that they were married. This immediately stabilized the situation and set in motion a peace process that eventually resolved the conflict” (Mohammed, 2003: 103). This kind of peace approach was only possible and successful because of the moral authority women were granted. They also often used these qualities and authority to mediate in disagreements between men by advising their husbands to toe the line of peace knowing fully well that they (women) would

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<sup>25</sup> This is even where they have been known to be actively engaged in pre-colonial wars of conquest, initial resistance against colonial rule and the nationalist liberation struggles of the continent. For example, according to Becker (2003: 55 – 56) “it would be erroneous to assume that women and girls played no role in the encouragement of belligerent attitudes. Nor are there any indications that mothers would have raised their children in a way that would have discouraged their inclination to battle”.

bear the consequences of violent conflict more. Such is the potency of this moral authority that women in post-colonial Africa have drawn from them to wage peace in the DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Burundi and South Africa. For instance, in a comparative study of women and peace building, Mazuarana and McKay (1999: 20) contend that women have continually drawn upon the moral authority granted to them by virtue of their being mothers, that is, creators of life, to call for peace throughout Africa.

Traditionally, women in pre-colonial African societies were peace agents. According to M.A.C Nwoye<sup>26</sup>, women engaged in peace building through positive childcare; responsible mothering and nurturing of children in ways that prepared and socialised them towards peaceful co-existence. In most pre-colonial societies, a culture of peace, tolerance and an anti-war tradition are embedded in and transmitted through folktales, proverbs, poetry, songs and dance. Traditionally, women are often seen as the transmitters of these cultural values to their progeny and to future generations through such artistic expressions. For example, Mohammed (2003) used Somali stories, poetry, songs and proverbs to depict the important role of women as transmitters of knowledge and builders of a stable social fabric for society from the pre-colonial through the post colonial era:

*Mother! Without you  
It would have been impossible to utter the alphabet  
Mother! Without you  
It would have been impossible to learn how to speak  
A child deprived of your care  
Sweet lullaby  
And soft touches  
Would not grow up.  
Mother! You are the source of love  
The epitome of kindness.  
(Mohamed Ibrahim 'Hadrawi' in Mohammed, 2003: 102)*

Also, according to Mohammed (2003: 102), the following song captures the thoughts of a Somali mother describing the tyranny of the civil war in that country:

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<sup>26</sup> Online publication available in <http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/chinwenwoye.htm> accessed 12/02/09

*I am the foundation of the world  
And I am a woman  
I am the womb that gave birth to human beings  
I am the pillar of life.*

A very apt Somali proverb says: “The values with which children are brought up precede their actual birth” and Mohammed (2003) contends that they are transmitted by mothers even while the child is still in the womb. In this regard, Somalians believe that, “before becoming adults, we attend a basic school, and that school is mother” (Mohammed, 2003: 102). Indeed, in different pre-colonial societies, women used songs, proverbs, and poetry to transmit positive social capital values upon which peace is predicated. These values include patience, tolerance, honesty, respect for elders, communality and mutuality, compassion, regard for due discretion, gentleness, modesty, self-control, moderation, flexibility, and open-mindedness (M.A.C Nwoye).

Women in pre-colonial societies also engaged actively in peace making (conflict mediation). As mentioned before, age was an important social base of political power in these societies and respect was given to the elderly in general, and to elderly women in particular. For instance, M.A.C Nwoye reveals from the findings of her study on women and the peace process in six pre-colonial African states that ‘the elderly woman’ “was respected by all, and played a key role in crisis management and conflict resolution”. This was the case amongst the Tuburs in Cameroun, for example, where the *Wog Clu* (Old women) were solely responsible for conflict mediation and were consulted on problems which disturbed communal peace (Ngongo-Mbede, 2003: 32). Thus, as MAC Nwoye argues, “when a conflict degenerated into armed violence, an appeal would usually be made to a third party of mature years to calm the tension and reconcile the combatants. Such an appeal for mediation was usually made to a woman who enjoyed the consideration and respect of all who knew her” (M.A.C Nwoye). In the same vein, because of the sanctity attached to womanhood, women, mostly elderly women, were used as peace envoys to facilitate peace negotiations (Mohammed, 2003; Lihamba, 2003). This was only possible because during war women were the only ones who could move across the zones of conflict freely and without much danger and as such were used by warring parties to study the situation, assess the prospects for peace, and facilitate contact and communication between the two warring parties.

Women in most pre-colonial African societies also served as intermediaries in conflicts between human beings and nature. For example, according to Ngongo-Mbede (2003), in the land of Mungo of the Cameroon, any misfortune occurring in the community brought the latter to seek the mediation of the *Kalbia* (married women). In these communities, in general, misfortune and calamities were taken to imply the existence of conflicts between the people. For instance:

...in the philosophy of these communities, such a succession of misfortune was not fortuitous. It was the sign that love and peace were absent from the community, and prompted the women to decide to organize a *Mbabi*. The latter was organized in a grove or on a crossroads, after consultation of the oracles. It was exclusively a meeting of women who had reached the age of the menopause. The ceremony was presided over by a woman of very advanced years whose moral integrity was usually universally acknowledged. Men could on occasion, be associated with the *Mbabi*. Even in such exceptional cases, however, it was the women who organized and presided over the ceremony of reconciling human beings with themselves, with relatives and with nature (Ngongo-Mbede, 2003:31).

The study documents that amongst the Beti, Mangissa and the Eton in Cameroun, the *Mbabi* was a common purification rite aimed at restoring peace, and women frequently engaged in it both for peace, community building and development. Ngongo-Mbede (2003: 31), contends that the *Mbabi* ritual was an exclusive preserve of women who had reached the age of the menopause, and it took place in a grove or on a crossroads, after due consultation with the oracles. And although men could be part of it, the ceremony was usually presided over by a woman of very advanced years whose moral integrity was usually universally acknowledged (Ngongo-Mbede, 2003: 31). Even in such exceptional cases where men attended, “it was the women who organized and presided over the ceremony of reconciling human beings with themselves, with relatives and with nature” (Ngongo-Mbede, 2003: 31). This is also consistent with the purification rituals (*uutoni*), which women in Northern Namibia performed on soldiers returning from war. The idea was to cleanse them of the guilt of

and consequences of spilling blood during war, which if not done would have adverse effects for social harmony, peace and stability in their societies (See Becker, 2003).

Concisely, as M.A.C Nwoye concludes, African women's roles as mothers, wives, and aunts were put to effective use in peace building and conflict resolutions in pre-colonial African societies. Women participated firmly in inculcating the culture of peace in the children and in the practice of conflict mediation among warring factions within the family and the community (M.A.C Nwoye). They also commanded important positions in conflict resolution rituals and were significant peace activists through their roles as peace envoys in times of conflict. As we will show in Chapter three, though corrupted by the colonial interruption of Africa's socio-cultural existence, these values are still alive and can be used for promoting peace among warring families, communities and nations in post-colonial Africa. They can be developed into an African feminist ethic of peace which can be the cornerstone of effective conflict prevention, mediation and peace building.

### **2.3 Capitalist transformation of African patriarchies: Women, politics and the peace process in colonial Africa**

A plethora of literature by scholars of different ideological nuances exists on the negative economic, political and social impacts of colonialism on Africa (Nkrumah, 1965; Fanon, 1967; Rodney, 1972; Amin, 1972; Chazam *et al*, 1999; Mazrui, 1986; Betts, 1998). However, according to Chinwezu (1987), the most damaging impact of colonialism on Africa was not economic or political but rather psychological, which connotes a colonisation of the mind that the African is yet to break free from (see also *The Economist*, 2000 [www.arec.umd.edu/AREC365/economist051300.htm](http://www.arec.umd.edu/AREC365/economist051300.htm) accessed 13/02/05). A cultural persecution of Africa's traditional value systems and beliefs was a logical strategy the colonialists used to impose and perpetuate their own worldviews (Fanon, 1967; Chinwezu, 1987). Although Africa provided Europeans with a source of vital raw materials, it represented for them the home of oafish people on whom they could impose their views and whom they could exploit without the qualms dictated by their Christian assumptions and avowed values. In this way, colonialism undermined and eroded African socio-cultural values by weakening and distorting

them and by destroying the self-confidence and the worldviews of African people. Not surprisingly, gender relations were affected as part of that process. For example, with the creation and incorporation of African states into the international economic system as suppliers of raw materials, new patriarchal conceptions of the 'appropriate' social role for women dictated by colonial administrators and missionaries changed the position of women in economic and social endeavours by confining them not only to stipulated and marginalised roles in the emerging economies as secretaries, nurses, and housewives but also in the mainstay agricultural sector as bit players. Indeed, colonial administrators and Christian missionaries introduced the social basis and assumptions of European patriarchy into indigenous African societies. Their ideas of the 'appropriate' social role for women differed greatly from the traditional role of women in the different African societies. For example, the patriarchal European assumption that women belonged in the home, engaged in child rearing, an exclusively female responsibility, and other domestic chores was now being introduced and foisted on African societies. Accordingly, African societies were now expected to consider women as subordinate to men because Europeans considered women subordinate to men.

Thus began the psychological reorientation of African societies towards new forms of patriarchies, which further subordinated and marginalised women even within the home. Males began to dominate the cultivation of cash crops for the international market and confined women to the growing of food crops, which received lower returns. By targeting men as cash crop farmers, bureaucratic efforts to improve agriculture further encouraged the separation of economic roles of men and women that had previously complemented each other. The importing of cheap manufactured goods from Europe, and later from Japan, led to the decline of craft industry, except for a limited range of luxury goods, which in some regions affected the significant proportion of women engaged in such manufacture. Thus, the creation of the colonial economy tended to marginalise the structural position of the majority of women. According to Amadiume (1987: 119-143), colonialism led to the erosion of women's power as it oversaw the violent suppression of indigenous institutions and the subsequent imposition of new gender ideologies that accompanied the introduction of masculinised Christianity, Western education that made women invisible, the warrant chief system of local governance which became a short cut to power for men, and a

new capitalist cash economy that changed existing gender relations of production. Thus, for instance, the introduction of the modern state system effectively foreclosed all social (age) and cultural (female group rights) opportunities for women accessing political power, as winning elections became the new basis of political power. As Western values gained influence in colonial Africa, women lost some of their traditional rights to political participation. For the most part, women have not attempted to rise in their male-dominated societies and patriarchy continues to thrive.

By excluding women from the economy through legislation that confined them to the private sphere of domestic work and child rearing, the colonial state also radically altered the pre-colonial social position of women which laid the basis for their further marginalisation in post-colonial Africa. For instance, in pre-colonial African societies, part of a woman's responsibility included providing for food needs and material upkeep of her family by means of financial support; therefore, her traditional responsibility required her financial independence. Furthermore, many members of the extended family helped to rear the children, not only the mother. The colonial state thus tended to further marginalise the position of the majority of women.

African women responded to these changes and the restrictions placed on their structural position in various ways. For instance, women held a series of nationalist protests throughout the colonial period against particular colonial policies and against colonial rule itself. Examples of such women's social and political activism include the Aba women's riot of 1929 in Nigeria, women's civil rights struggles in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Campbell, 1999; 2003; Cutrufelli, 1983; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1994). The manner in which these protests were planned and implemented are a testimony not only of women's organisational abilities but also of their commitment to peaceful methods of engagement as a means of conflict resolution. In the case of the Aba women's riots where things turned violent leading to the death of over 50 women, it was due more to the violent response of the colonial authorities than it was due to the women's plan to perpetuate violence<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> This did not in any way mean that women were not given to violence then. In accordance with the Clausewitzian theory of war as a continuation of politics by other means, pre-colonial history is replete with African women who lead and fought nationalist wars against colonialism and its imperial policies

In sum, colonialism disrupted the traditional systems of production in pre-colonial societies and, in so doing, reinforced existing systems of social inequality by introducing oppressive forms of social stratification through the instrumentation of the colonial state. The resultant loss of power for women has been exploited by men, who, in an attempt to maintain the new privileges, often assume hegemonic or dangerous masculinities which are usually justified by a misconception or misrepresentation of African culture.

#### **2.4 Women, politics and the peace process in post-colonial Africa: trends of political marginalisation**

In sharp contrast to the predominance of the array of queens, empresses, regents and queens in pre-colonial Africa, more than 40 years after the colonial era, the continent had her first elected female president and Head of State, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, in 2005. The trend suggests that there was a decline not only in the quality of women power but also in their quantitative participation in the post-colonial political space despite their general numerical superiority in Africa's population figures. What is responsible for this decline? As Nzeogwu (2000) contends, the answer lies substantially in the colonial interregnum during which the region experienced significant disruptions of its pre-colonial socio-cultural order. The new order was wrought by the capitalist mode of production and the complementary extractive ideologies favoured by the European colonial authorities. For example, the modern state system, which essentially replaced the pre-colonial systems of political administration, did not have any express provisions for women's participation in politics. The confirmatory action provisions of the pre-colonial order, which allowed for women's political input, had been eroded and women simply lost out to the new economically driven imperatives of the colonising powers. The subsequent colonisation of Africa, along which came the Western version of Christianity, eroded the countervailing systems of the village community as "elite African men manipulated the new and borrowed patriarchies to forge a most formidable 'masculine imperialism', yet unknown in Africa" (Campbell, 2003: 283). Today, women in post-colonial Africa play a minimal role in politics even though their national constitutions

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in the continent. Examples include Queen Aisa Kili Ngirimarama of Kanem Bornu Empire, Empress Menetewab of Ethiopia, Queen Idah of Benin and Princess Mnkabayi of Zulu Kingdom.

guarantee their rights of participation in the political processes of their states. As we said earlier, these new patriarchies are what scholars mean when they refer to African patriarchy, and African men have used this to justify and fuel the marginalisation of women in politics and public decision-making processes of society.

A cursory overview of the political conditions of women in post-colonial Africa, using political representation, is pertinent at this point to underscore the relative level of decline in their political status compared with the pre-colonial era. Compared to the array of female regents and queens that bestrode the political landscape of different African societies in the pre-colonial era with some spilling into the colonial period, the only female monarchical heads of state the continent has had since the independence period include MaMohato Masentle Lerotholi, Queen-Regent of Lesotho (three times; 1970, 1990 and 1996)<sup>28</sup>, Dzeliwe Shongwe, Queen-Regent of Swaziland (1982 - 1983) and Ntombi Thwala, Queen-Regent of Swaziland (1983 - 1986)<sup>29</sup>. Elizabeth Domitien, Africa's first female prime minister, who served in the Central African Republic between 1975 and 1976, was appointed by Emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa, just as others after her were appointed. For example, Sylvie Kinigi was appointed Prime Minister of Burundi from 1993 to 1994, and during this same period, Agathe Uwilingiyimana was Prime Minister of Rwanda until she was assassinated in office. Also, in the 1990s, Ruth Perry, who was Chairwoman of Liberia's six-member National Transitional Council of State between 1996 and 1997, occupied such a leadership position by appointment. Between 2000 and 2004, four women were appointed as Prime Ministers in Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe and Mozambique. These were Mame Madior Boye who was Prime Minister of Senegal (3 March 2001 and 4 November 2002), Maria Baptista de Souza in Sao Tome and Principe (7<sup>th</sup> October 2002 to 16 July 2003), Maria do Carmo Silveira also in Sao Tome and Principe (8 June 2005 to 21 April 2006) and currently Luisa Dias Diogo in Mozambique (2004 to date). As aforementioned, it was not until 2005 that Africa had

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<sup>28</sup> She was Queen-Regent of Lesotho first from 5 Jun to 6 Nov 1970, from 6 to 12 Nov 1990 and from 15 Jan to 7 Feb 1996

<sup>29</sup> The Queen Mother of Swaziland has an official, constitutional role as joint-head of State and rules together with her son. This traditional role is part of their new constitution, which recognises Swaziland as a "Dual Monarchy" where the King and Queen Mother, the *Ndlovukazi* (Great She-Elephant), rule jointly.

her first elected female president and Head of State in the person of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia.

At the national parliamentary level, as Table 5 below shows, Africa in the immediate post-independence years (1960s and 70s), occupied the lowest rung of the ladder of women’s representation in national parliaments all over the world. Even though it now has the fastest rates of growth in female representation of any world region, it generally still lags behind by world standards. For example, according to Tripp (2001: 3):

By 1999, women held, on the average, 11.5 percent of the seats in parliaments in Africa compared with 6 percent a decade earlier (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1999, United Nations 1991). Thus, Africa had comparable rates with European women, who in 1999 held 13 percent of legislative seats (excluding the Nordic countries) but lagged behind the Nordic countries with 39 percent female legislative representation, and Asia and the Americas with 15 percent female-held legislative seats. Only the Arab states trailed Africa with a four percent showing for women legislators

Also, none of the best performing African countries (except Rwanda)<sup>30</sup> came close to proportionately representing women, who make up over half the population in most of these countries<sup>31</sup>.

Table 5: Percentage change in Representation of Women in National Legislatures worldwide

<b>Region</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>(%change) 1960-2000</b>
Eastern	23.11	25.37	31.10	9.10	11.44	-50

<sup>30</sup> According to Tripp (2000:3) “14 countries in Africa had over 12% female representation in parliament by the late 1990s. Some countries like South Africa had 30% female representation (up from 3% in 1991); Seychelles 23% (down from 46% prior to the 1993 elections) (Karl 1995, 91), Mozambique 30% (up from 16% in 1991) and Namibia had 25% (up from 7% in 1994)”. More recently, others include Rwanda 49% (highest in the world), Burundi 30.5%, Uganda 30%, Tanzania 22.3%, Eritrea 22%, Senegal 19.2%, with South Africa and Mozambique now having 36% and 34.8% female representation in national parliaments respectively (see Williams, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> It is noted that in different societies, women voice their interests in a wide variety of ways and mediums, so their political participation cannot be measured only in terms of proportions of women in national parliaments. However, we are concerned with the quality of women’s representation in formal politics, especially at the legislative level where change is debated and enacted in a democracy.

Europe/Eurasia						
Eastern Asia	5.98	6.33	9.16	9.88	11.92	99
Pacific	2.50	1.86	1.31	3.41	5.98	139
Mid-East/North Africa	2.00	2.06	3.39	3.52	4.84	186
South Asia	1.94	2.98	4.47	5.07	5.56	186
Scandinavia	9.66	10.42	21.24	31.86	37.58	289
Western Europe	3.25	3.21	7.16	10.61	17.49	438
North America	2.90	1.35	4.35	9.85	16.40	465
Latin America	2.00	3.74	7.54	9.44	13.18	559
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.94	2.21	6.46	7.78	9.90	953
Overall	4.93	5.41	8.74	9.14	12.21	148

Source: Data compiled by Tripp (2000: 2) mostly from “Women in Parliaments, 1945 – 1995: A World Statistical Survey”. Available in <http://democracy.stanford.edu/seminar/AiliTrip.pdf> (accessed 15/02/08).

Although, as Table 5 shows, Africa has had an increased rate of women’s representation in politics since the 1990s when women started becoming more visible in all spheres of politics, for instance, aspiring for presidential office in countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania,<sup>32</sup> yet, their participation in politics remains marginal both in terms of quantity and quality. For example, compared to their majority population size in most African states, their political participation is not proportionate to their numbers and amounts to mere tokenism thus perpetuating the reality of women as a largely underrepresented group. The case of Nigeria, Africa’s most populous state, is particularly appalling as women constitute only 5.8% (12) of the 360 members House of Representatives and 2.8% (3) of the 109 member Senate. Therefore, combined, women constitute a mere 3.2% of the 469 member National Assembly. At the executive level, women constituted only 17.65% of Federal Executive Council in

<sup>32</sup> For example Uganda's Wandera Specioza Kazibwe became the first female Vice President in Africa. Senegal also had a woman vice president in 2001. By the end of the decade, the Ethiopian, Lesotho, and South African legislative bodies had female speakers of the house and Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa had female Deputy Speakers.

2004, the highest ever in the nation's history (Ibrahim and Salihu, 2004). Not surprisingly, challenges for women include female genital mutilation, forced child marriages, harmful widowhood practices, domestic violence, land tenure systems that limit women's access to land and inheritance of valuable properties and economic trees as well as the resulting vulnerability to poverty, illiteracy and disease which they disproportionately bear compared with men.

In terms of quality, for example, with regards to influencing change in political culture, policy processes and social values as well as addressing the broader concerns of women as a group, especially those of rural women, women's participation remains questionable. Most of the women in positions of political power are usually appointees of men and they, at best, struggle to balance their loyalty between their male patrons and the concerns of women they profess to represent. Otherwise, they get into power and simply carry on just as men, thus justifying the argument put forward by critics of gender equality in politics that women do not/cannot make any difference in politics. Questions in this sense include: what values have women brought to politics in terms of changes in political discourse, political culture and policy processes and outcomes? Why is poverty still feminised in states like South Africa that has surpassed the 30% critical mass prescribed for women to make a significant impact in politics? Why is South Africa still notorious for its high level of violence against women? However, on the other hand, it is also possible to probe the quality of women's participation further by posing the following questions: Who designs and controls the quota systems that are predominantly used by most political parties to mainstream women in politics? What kind of women do these systems produce? In other words, which specific women break through Africa's political systems and what do they do? What is the impact of political party influence on women in parliament? What is the impact of informal socio-psychological barriers to the quality of their participation in policy making and implementation in parliament and other decision-making processes?

At the economic level, women in Africa do not participate in economic decision-making even though they comprise about 60% of the informal economic sector, provide about 70% of the total agricultural labour and produce about 90% of the food ([www.womenwagingpeace.net](http://www.womenwagingpeace.net) accessed 13 January 2007). Indeed, women contribute

to the economy through paid and unpaid work at home, in their communities and in their work places but are either absent from or poorly represented in economic decision making forums. According to the South African Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), this is due to a number of reasons some of which include the following:

- Economic frameworks do not acknowledge and address women's needs and economic status. For example, domestic labour is not accounted for in the GDP.<sup>33</sup>
- Women are not able to play a meaningful role in the economy outside of the home because they tend to have full-time domestic responsibilities.
- People don't see women as the main breadwinners.
- Women don't have the exposure and skills to understand macro-economics (CGE, 2000:25).

Gender balancing in this regard becomes more imperative because gender inequalities hinder productivity, efficiency and economic progress. By hampering the accumulation of human capital in the private space and the labour market and systematically excluding women from access to the public space (political marginalisation) the capacity of the economy to grow and provide for all is greatly diminished. When this happens, everyone in society suffers as there will be more poverty, which, in itself, breeds social conflict.

Indeed, it was in recognition of the potentials of women as global agents of positive change, peace, security and development that the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 in 2000. The resolution has been described as a landmark and watershed political framework in gender mainstreaming in politics, peace and security

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<sup>33</sup> The argument that women's domestic work, which usually includes child rearing and caring for the elderly, is unpaid and unaccounted for is particularly compelling here when you compare Africa with, for instance, Europe where the cost of domestic work is very high. Questions have been raised around the impact of women's reproductive and caring roles on Africa's economy. For example, according to the South African Commission on Gender Equality, "imagine what would happen to the workforce if women stopped playing their reproductive role? Imagine how much we would have to pay for the care of the elderly and children if women did not carry out this responsibility. Think about how much time (time is money) would be spent doing the work that domestic workers are responsible for." (CGE, 2000: 25).

issues (Rehn and Johnson-Sirleaf, 2002). For example, it specifically urges member-states to, amongst other mandates; ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

The resolution, adopted by the UNSC at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000, reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It also stresses the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts and at all levels, for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges member-states of the UN, the UN itself and other stakeholders worldwide to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girl children from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict (Resolution 1325, 2000; see also <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/sg2004.htm>). Before this landmark resolution, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) had in 1990 passed resolution 1990 on 24 May, 1990 which set critical mass targets to increase the *proportion of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 1995*, with a view to achieving *equal representation between women and men by the year 2000*, and should institute recruitment and training programmes to prepare women for those positions (UN Report, 1996).

How is Africa faring with regards to implementing Resolution 1325? Apart from Rwanda (49%), South Africa (36%), and Mozambique (31%), which have surpassed the 30% critical mass threshold set by ECOSOC, women's representation in national parliaments across Africa was 17.3% (IPU Release, 2008)<sup>34</sup>. This is definitely not

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<sup>34</sup> This is not such a terrible record compared to the world average of women's representation in the national parliaments of liberal democratic nations, which is about 10%. According to Mutume (2004:4), "despite being one of the poorest regions in the world, the level of women's representation in parliament in sub-Saharan Africa is higher than in many developed countries. In the US, France and Japan for instance, women hold slightly more than 10% of parliamentary seats (UNIFEM, 2002). However, the critical issue is the quality of this representation compared to female power in pre-colonial societies.

proportionate to their 50% average population stake in the continent. This is apart from the fact that no African country<sup>35</sup> was able to meet the target of 50% women representation by 2000 set by ECOSOC in 1990. The underrepresentation of women also resonates at other levels of governance in society where they play a minimal role in public decision-making despite their disproportionate vulnerability (compared to men) to the effects of pervasive underdevelopment in the continent. Ironically, even in countries that have surpassed the 30% critical mass threshold, poverty remains feminised while violence against women proves intractable. This is not unconnected to their increasing disproportionate vulnerability to HIV infection<sup>36</sup>, as studies have shown that there is a link between male violence against women and HIV infection in Africa ((Morrell & Makhaye, 2006; Walsh, 2001; Kaufman, 2001). Terry (2007: 139) adds a human rights perspective to the equation: “the rapid spread of HIV and AIDS in Africa is also tied up with the denial of women’s human rights, including endemic violence against women”. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that while progress has been made towards gender equality at the formal level in states that have crossed the 30% critical mass threshold, it has not translated to progress at the informal levels of society where post-colonial patriarchal values and the dangerous masculinities they spew remain prevalent. This continues to be a major challenge as patriarchy and the negative masculinities they spew at informal levels of relations between men and women circumscribe the quality of women’s political participation and representation.

## **2.5 Probing the Quality vs. Quantity debate further: why are African women in politics not delivering the goods?**

It remains debatable whether a 30% critical mass of women, or any other proportion of women in politics, can make the difference for women and for a more developed society (Grey, 2001; Childs, 2004); Crowley, 2004; Krook, 2005). Dahlerup (1988), in her pioneering study of the utility of the critical mass theory to women and politics,

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<sup>35</sup> Although no other country in the world met this target, it should not be an excuse for Africa as it should not always wait for the rest of the world to set the pace for it follow, especially given that Africa set the pace for matriarchy in pre-colonial times (See Diop, 1989; Williams, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> For example, see UNAIDS (2001) and Vetten & Bhana, (2001) whose studies show that women and men in Africa experience HIV and its effects differently with women being disproportionately affected and dying from AIDS more than men.

rejects critical mass in favour of *critical acts*, which she defined as initiatives that change the position of the minority and lead to further changes in their situation. Although she concludes that “the opportunity for women to form majority coalitions increases when they constitute 30 %, rather than 5% critical mass” (Dahlerup, 1988: 294), implying that numbers are also important, her main point is that change can also come through the qualitative actions of a few women in politics. In Africa, Goetz and Hassim (2003) use the case of South Africa (36%) and Uganda (30%) to interrogate the utility of critical mass in translating women’s representation in politics to effectiveness in the policy and reform arenas, especially on those that directly affect women. They argue, for instance, that while the structure of the state and party systems can advance women's political participation and representation, the durability of gains made is ultimately contingent upon the strength of society's general interest in gender equality (Goetz and Hassim, 2003). In the same vein, the case of post-conflict societies like Rwanda and Mozambique with 49% and 31% women representation respectively in their national parliaments have been cited as examples to underscore the limitations of the critical mass argument (Powley, 2005). In Rwanda, for instance, in spite of the achievements recorded by women in parliament since 1996<sup>37</sup>, challenges still include the fact that Rwanda remains largely underdeveloped and according to Powley (2005: 161), “the great majority of Rwandan women are disadvantaged vis-à-vis men with regards to education, legal rights, health and access to resources”. Goering (2006) was more succinct in highlighting that 75% of Rwanda’s poor are women, and that domestic violence, although declining, remains a major problem.

In our selected study areas in Nigeria and South Africa, an average of 60% of the women in both countries expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the performance

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<sup>37</sup> These include, for example, the formation of a women’s caucus; the Forum of Women Parliamentarians where women MPs work together, across party lines, on issues that affect women as a group. According to the forum, it has several roles: it reviews existing laws and introduces amendments to discriminatory legislations, examines proposed laws with an eye to gender sensitivity, liaises with the women’s movement, and conducts meetings and trainings with women’s organisations sensitise the population to and advise about legal issues (Powley, 2006: 160). A major success of Rwandan women in parliament was the 1999 revoking of laws that prohibited women from inheriting land. Also, according to Goering (2006), since the post 1994 genocide period, which has been marked by a prevalence of women in politics, primary school enrolment is near 100% and 55% of primary school leavers now go to high school, up from 9% before the genocide. She adds that women, who in 2000 made up 20% of university graduates, today account for 50%, according to government figures (Goering, 2006).

of women in government as they were of the view that these women have not made much difference in their lives as women. The question then is: why are women in South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda and Mozambique, which have all reached and or exceeded the 30% critical mass, not able to transform the life circumstances of the majority of women and their societies as a whole? Is it a question of increasing their numbers (i.e. exceeding the 30% critical mass)? Or does this depend on refocusing the investigation on the intervening variables that bring them up and the socio-cultural climate under which specific female politicians operate?

Studies have shown that the pervasiveness of endemic corruption and perennial bad governance which breeds more poverty further alienates the African people, especially women, from the state contending that women are not able to compete under such conditions. However, we contend that African women can be more effective in politics, especially riding in the current wave of increasing feminisation of politics, if research and policy efforts are refocused on the intervening variables that produce and nurture their existence in politics. Social structures in pre-colonial African societies catered in many respects for some of these variables; hence, the relative quality representation which women had in these societies was such that it made women a more powerful force in society compared to the bland representation that increased visibility offers in the present context. For example, in many of these societies, women automatically had political power by virtue of their womanhood and so were not appointees or surrogates of male leaders; they were conceived of as ‘mothers of the land’ and held in awe based on perceptions of their divine powers and did not have to look up to men for inspiration as their femininity was in itself the social base of their power which straddled the political, economic, religious and military arenas. As aforementioned, the confirmatory action provisions of the pre-colonial order, which allowed for women’s political input, were eroded by colonial influences and women simply lost out to the new economically driven imperatives of the colonising powers thus breaking the social fabric that defined gender relations and that made women to occupy the public space confidently as women without fearing male reactions or reprisals. The intervening variables that produce and condition women in post-colonial African politics are located in the social fabric and that is where attention should be refocused on to answer the question of why an increasing representation of women in politics is not translating to better outcomes for women as

proponents of women in politics and critical mass scholars have argued. Some of these variables include the following:

### **2.5.1 Socio-cultural climate of government institutions**

Indeed, while Africa's women's status generally improved (at least at the formal level) in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through increased political representation that has brought issues of concern to women to the fore, these gains have been blurred by continuous marginalisation at the informal levels of relations with men and society in general. Informal barriers to gender equality, because they occur in the subtle realm of social relations between men and women where 'traditional' male authorities continue to dominate, are actually more difficult to overcome as they cannot be simply legislated away. Unfortunately, their impact, not only on the deliberation processes of governance but also in the application of policy, actually does impede and undermine women's participation in the social, political and economic life of their societies (Fraser: 1997; Robinson: 1995). The prevalence of such a stifling socio-cultural climate in government institutions like parliament and their rules and norms that reflect a bias towards men's experiences and authority is antithetical to quality performance and effective political representation of women (Hawkesworth, 2003). In South Africa, this kind of compromise on the quality of women's political participation has been traced to informal-level discrimination against women politicians by their male counterparts through the use of invectives, labelling, innuendoes and sex-role expectations to undermine the women's authority<sup>38</sup>.

### **2.5.2 Male violence against women in politics**

There are extreme instances when men are not able to hide under the cloak of political correctness or use innuendoes and other subtle forms of verbal abuse to express their bias against fellow women politicians. Then they resort to physical abuse. Such a case was recorded in the Nigerian parliament in 2007 when a Senator slapped a female colleague right in the National Assembly gallery daring to 'challenge' him. Although he later apologized to the female senator, it was widely reported in the media then that

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<sup>38</sup> This came out from personal interviews with the MEC for Public Works, KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, Mrs. Lydia Johnson. According to her, men also use non-verbal communicative methods like expressing doubt about women's technical ability to carry out a task or simply ignoring them when they make contributions to certain debates in council (Interview with MEC, October, 2007).

it was a sexist action aimed at undermining the effectiveness of women in Nigerian politics. In other cases, women in politics have had to contend with violent backlashes from their spouses who fear a loss of hegemony at home as a result of the seeming political empowerment of their wives.

An interesting illustration of the relationship between male violence and women empowerment can be made using Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony. Building on Marxist theory, Gramsci used his theory of hegemony to explain the struggles of position and manoeuvres characteristic of social formations, depicting the relationship between the state and civil society in a neo-liberal political system. According to him, the bourgeois state, in order to ensure its maintenance and ultimate survival, cannot depend only on economic power (usually assisted by the use of force), but seeks to obtain the consent of a majority of its citizens in order to legitimise and reproduce itself (Gramsci, 1971: 2-12). Therefore, the state assumes a dominant position of hegemony, a process by which "spontaneous consent is given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci, 1971: 12) in ways that the dominant group not only justifies and maintains its domination but also succeeds in obtaining the active consent of the people. Hegemony as social control therefore takes two forms: domination and direction. Domination is the state's overt or external control of the people's behaviour usually achieved through law enforcement while direction is the state's internal control of the people's minds through the implantation of values and norms which the people accept as their own. Accordingly, a state is hegemonic if it succeeds in making direction the primary instrument of its rule, and only occasionally resorting to domination when the need arises. This stage of the hegemonic process where the ruling class has succeeded in persuading other classes in society that its class interest is tantamount to the interests of all other classes is referred to as "the universalisation of the particular" (Gramsci, 1971).

Nonetheless, hegemony also does not preclude opposition and resistance as according to Gramsci, it dialectically creates its opposite, counter-hegemony. This is because there is the likelihood that not all citizens will unquestioningly consent to the state's imposition of dominant values. As people become more conscious of the 'universalisation of the particular' fiction, they develop counter-hegemonic tendencies

and establish movements that challenge the state and its ability to use direction to control the state and its peoples. Owing to this failure of direction, the state often resorts to domination which further intensifies the people's counter-hegemony given that with each act of coercion the bourgeois state, by revealing its true nature, alienates an ever increasing number of people. This eventually creates a veritable ground for anarchy. The point here is that the state responds to counter-hegemony by violently countering the people's protestations against it and the end result is maldevelopment and anarchy.

Relating this to gender relations, we liken state hegemony to patriarchy and the hegemonic masculinities it spews. In this case, as women increasingly challenge and counter dominant hegemonic masculinities in Africa, men, fearing a loss of control, power and esteem, also increasingly resort to various forms of violence as a counter to women's challenge of the *status quo* which has come with some benefits for women (White, 1997: 19-22). In South Africa, for instance, studies have confirmed the nexus between increasing violence against women and gender mainstreaming cemented through various institutional mechanisms including constitutional guarantees on gender equality; the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE); and gender-friendly and affirmative legislations such as the Employment Equity Act, Domestic Violence Act, and Maintenance Act. As men feel threatened by the current tendency towards gender equality in all sectors of society, they feel, albeit wrongly, that the most appropriate response is to assert themselves forcefully even if that means perpetuating sexual violence against women "to teach her that I am the man". According to Kaufman (2000):

some men use violence to make themselves feel better; to compensate for their own feelings of weakness or insecurity; to compensate for not making enough money, having no car, being unemployed, being bossed around at work, not having enough women, feeling scared, and so on. To prove that we are still real men, some of us start hitting someone (available in [www.lac.org.na/grap/pdf/namec.pdf](http://www.lac.org.na/grap/pdf/namec.pdf) accessed 11/01/2008).

In the context of this analysis, that "someone" is most likely to be a female politician whose likelihood of facing violence from her husband is further exacerbated by the

possibilities of female empowerment through her position and by the gender mainstreaming policies of the state. And so the cycle of violence against women continues, getting worse as women become more politically conscious and counter male hegemony and men in turn lash women's resistance with more violence. These have the cumulative effects of compromising women's political participation and further alienating other women from politics as most would prefer to 'keep' their homes and marriages than risk losing them to new tensions created by their political participation.

### **2.5.3 Mode of entry: who gets what and how?**

The mode of women's entry into politics impacts significantly on their performance as it affects their attitude, behaviour, actions and influence when they get into office. For example, Childs (2004) posits that mechanisms of candidate selection combined with pressures for party discipline strongly determine what kind of women are elected or appointed into office. Corroborating this, Mutume (2006:8) argues that, "some of Africa's women politicians also have to deal with political systems that promote patronage. Under such systems, (female) politicians are beholden to the party hierarchy rather than to their constituents, which renders elected (or appointed) officials less effective in policymaking". Therefore, while asking questions around the effectiveness of numbers (critical mass) in ensuring quality political representation of women, focus should also be on the systems and mechanisms that bring women into politics and the kind of women politicians these systems produce as well as the impact these 'new women' have on the culture, practice and outcomes (social reform and policy) of politics.

In Africa, as elsewhere wherever women have increasingly become more visible in politics, the main instrument of gender mainstreaming has been the quota system (Ibrahim and Salihu, 2004). Quotas are a form of affirmative action in favour of women which requires that women make up a certain percentage of members of a political institution (parliament, executive, and judiciary) or governance structures. According to a UNRISD Report (2005), quotas on party electoral lists are the most common means of attaining the goal of gender parity in politics and they are in use in over 80 countries. In line with refocusing our interrogation of the quality of women's representation in Africa, an appropriate question therefore will be who

designs and controls the quota system that mainstreams women into politics in Africa? Usually, men are in charge of the political party processes and power politics that produce women in politics. Naturally, due to prevalent client-patron nature of African politics, the party leaders (men) tend to determine what women get into the system.

#### **2.5.4 Women acting as men**

Undoubtedly, the women who come out of such a process end up feeling obliged to their male patrons and tend to remain loyal to them and their causes (usually self-serving). For example, female politicians who come into positions of power as substitute candidates for male relatives (Mehta, 2002) usually end up acting no different from ‘men’ to fit into role-expectations of their political benefactors. In this way, women lose the essence and value of their femininity which in pre-colonial times was the basis of their qualitative participation in politics, even though men dominated the political sphere. This reinforces the argument in favour of ‘critical acts’ against ‘critical mass’ as the former supports our argument in this chapter that women had more influence and control of the political process in pre-colonial Africa even though their numbers in governance institutions were probably less than what today constitutes critical mass. Therefore, the tendency to overemphasise numbers at the expense of quality representation which is rooted in the very essence of African womanhood has compromised not only effective political representation of women in post-colonial Africa, but has also compromised womanhood.

#### **2.5.5 The influence of political ideology**

Links between political ideology and gender equality have been variously explored by different scholars (Gordon, 1996; Erickson, 1997; Molyneux & Razavi, 2002; Mohanty, 2003; Childs, 2004; Sen, 2005). For example, Childs (2004) argues that distinct party ideologies often create different opportunities for women to pursue feminist policy concerns. According to her, “right-wing parties tend to favour more traditional roles for women, while left-wing parties are often more open to new and even multiple gender roles” (Childs, 2004: 16), implying therefore that political ideologies and the socio-economic policies they represent, advocate and put in place when in power, impact on the political climate under which gender equality policies

and actions emerge and thrive best. Molyneux & Razavi (2006) allude to the link between political ideology and gender equality when they drew a comparison between the gender equality efforts of ex-socialist states and those of contemporary liberal states. They contend that under socialism, states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia had approximately 26% representation which plummeted by 50% after 1989 when previous communist party quotas for women were dropped. These had attendant consequences for employment and economic activity rates which dropped sharply after 1990, with the mass disappearance of jobs affecting women disproportionately (Molyneux & Razavi, 2006: 7).

Although it is not the objective of this study to be drawn into the ideological debate between liberal feminists and socialist feminists, we tend to agree in this respect with Gordon (1996), who contends that an anti-capitalist stance, in the face of statist policies that have stifled initiative and expropriated much of the returns on the labour of Africa's rural and urban poor as well as its producers, tends to "overlook the potential benefits and opportunities for greater gender equality capitalism can offer" (Gordon, 1996: 9). According to her, some of the opportunities that liberal capitalist ideology embodies include individualism, entrepreneurial effort, meritocracy and innovation which are, with some adjustments, compatible with feminist goals of freeing women from economic, cultural and political discrimination (Gordon, 1996: 9). She was, however, quick to point out that capitalism's liberal ideology and its potential to support gender equality in Africa is limited by a number of factors some of which include internal and external constraints on the full expansion of capitalism in the continent and the inherent contradictions of socio-economic (class) inequalities which capitalism breeds. Therefore, she contends that "activism on the part of African women is vital to assure that efforts to promote equity for women under a capitalist regime include minimizing class inequality, as socialist and radical feminists have argued" (Gordon, 1996: 10). We agree with April Gordon that this implies an alliance of some sorts not only between capitalism and feminism, but also between political and cultural ideologies as well as between women and men. However, this study adds that these alliances and the opportunity for gender equality they offer must be rooted in an African feminist base to be meaningful to African women. While we agree that full capitalism with its liberal notions of equal opportunity and human rights has potentials for gender equality in Africa, full capitalism and the Western cultural

baggage it carries with it cannot be “imported wholesale” into Africa and expected to fit successfully into the continent’s development efforts (see Ake, 1996). Apart from the fallacy of homogenising African and Western women’s needs which this entails, not factoring in the cultural specificities of African women into the gender equality agenda would be perceived as imperialist and as such resisted by African men and even women themselves as has been the case (Stamp, 1991; Caulfield, 1993).

#### **2.5.6 The absence of an African feminist base and ideology**

Closely linked to the influence of political ideology on the effectiveness of women’s participation in politics is the presence or absence of a feminist base from which women’s power should flow. As Gordon rightly attests, full capitalism or purely free markets are a useful fiction of economic theory and political ideologues, not a picture of reality, concluding in this regard that markets, and, by implication, capitalism, always operate within the context of social, political and economic institutions, constraints and choices that regulate, modify or distort them (Gordon, 1996: 187). In Africa, therefore, the socio-cultural context within which the political economy of capitalism can be transformed to realise its potential for gender equality and real development in the continent must be taken into consideration as some development scholars like Ake (1996) and Mabogunje (2000) have argued. In our opinion, the absence of an African feminist base and ideology that is rooted in African cultural realities is one of the internal variables that has compromised women’s political participation in post-colonial Africa and constrained the full development of capitalism in the continent as well. What then is the African cultural reality?

As we have tried to show so far, women in pre-colonial African societies had a feminist base: womanhood, from which their powers, authority and participation in the public space flowed. These women mediated the political, economic, social, religious and military arenas of their various societies as women and not as male substitutes, surrogates or appointees and were as such loyal to both their immediate constituencies (women) and to society at large bearing in mind the philosophy of *ubuntu* which dictated that the quality of their (women’s) existence is dependent on the quality of life of others (men) within society. In most of these societies, women were not seen as inferior to men but were rather seen as different from men with each complementing the other in ways that made peaceful co-existence possible. Men did

not oppose notions of women power because they knew that the empowerment of women served to enhance the quality of their own lives since in the long run “men are men because women are and women are women because men are”<sup>39</sup>. It is on the basis of this cultural reality that we question the basis of Gordon’s assumptions on African patriarchy upon which she mainly premised the failures of capitalism or quasi-capitalism, as she calls it, to develop the continent and or achieve the gender equality often associated with liberal capitalist states. Although she admits that capitalism is not against patriarchy per se and that in Africa there are links between the two from the colonial era to the present, we do not agree with her fundamental assumptions about the nature of African patriarchies in pre-colonial/pre-capitalist times. For example, she states that:

Patriarchy in Africa has its roots in African extended family systems and pre-capitalist familial modes of production that controlled both women’s productivity and reproduction. These pre-capitalist systems were not replaced by capitalism but have been utilized and reinforced by capitalism and the post-colonial African state to promote quasi-capitalist development....one reason for the failure of quasi-capitalism is the exploitative sexual division of labour, and the unequal gender relations on which it is based (Gordon, 1996: 8)

Our concern here is not whether men and women were equal in these times, neither is it our goal to use culture and tradition to justify significant aspects of pre-colonial African socio-cultural practices that oppressed women. Rather, the concern here is to, as Gordon herself concedes, show that women in most pre-colonial societies “often had considerable autonomy that helped dilute tendencies toward male dominance as they had a measure of economic independence and control over productive assets” and that “in some societies women had parallel authority structures to those of men,

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<sup>39</sup> Chirongoma and Manda (2008) reiterate how the ethic of *ubuntu*, which incurs reciprocity and interrelatedness, should also be applied in care-giving in the context of HIV and AIDS. They argue, based on the ubuntu philosophy which under girded pre-colonial African societies, that both male and female are interrelated; therefore they should have a reciprocal responsibility towards each others’ well-being, rather than leaving all the care-giving work in women’s hands more so since the ills afflicting society should be every person’s concern.

which allowed women control over their own spheres of activity” (Gordon, 1996: 29). Although she went on to show how patriarchal relations in pre-capitalist societies benefited capitalism, transformed African patriarchies and led to the underdevelopment of capitalism (quasi-capitalism), showing in the process, how African men benefited in the process, Gordon’s work does not contribute much to showing how pre-capitalist African patriarchy benefited women. For example, while men dominated different aspects of pre-colonial African societies, they did not see women only as housewives, mothers and food gatherers but saw them also and mainly as divine and spiritual beings (Ngubane, 1977; Amadiume, 1987; Coquery-Vidrovich, 1994: 34; Weir, 2007). Women in Eastern and Western Africa, for instance, had rights to income from their own crops and enterprise and never regarded politics as a male domain. Rather, they saw politics as an activity that was relevant to women’s everyday lives. This perception helped them to straddle the public space confidently as women, enabling them to manoeuvre within the limits of prevailing patriarchal structures to find a strong voice for themselves. By implication, women were more effective participants in the public space then than they are now because their participation then was rooted in a cultural ideology and communal worldview that recognised their womanhood and femininity as the social basis of their power. The prevailing influence of this cultural ideology and communal worldview is reflected in the fact that today, to quote Gordon, “most African women do not want to engage in conflict with their men folk but to work with them for their mutual benefit and for that of their families and societies” (Gordon, 1996: 101). This is the reality of the African woman and, as mentioned before, it is one rooted in the pre-capitalist worldview of communalism (*ubuntu* and *ujamaa* in Southern and Eastern African parlances) which was marked by accommodation and collectivism. African women activism were built around this worldview which had allowance for both women and men to come to the table in their differences and complement each other for their common good. It was a worldview of cooperation that fostered peaceful gender relations, one where men and women related with each other based on the philosophy that one could not survive without the other<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> This came from two Focus Group Discussions held with elderly women in Shobashobane, Richmond and Nongoma in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and Uzere, Odi and Igbokoda in the Niger-Delta of Nigeria between February 2006 and July 2007.

Surely then, although pre-colonial feminist cultural ideologies and socio-political worldviews have been eroded or distorted by colonial imperialism producing what Gordon calls quasi-capitalism and its negative effects on gender equality, they remain a useful tool for deconstructing patriarchy, educating men and mobilising women for the challenge of achieving gender equality in post-colonial Africa. For one, men need to be enlightened about authentic African culture to change their perception of women. If men were to understand, following a historical deconstruction of African patriarchy, that what they refer to as African culture when they say “in African culture, women are not meant to be in politics” or “according to African culture, women are inferior to men”, is actually a neo-patriarchal African culture created by colonialism and capitalism, and that the authentic African culture had spaces for women, they will stop their resistance towards gender equality efforts. In effect, men will learn to come to terms with change more easily if they are self-assured that gender equality is not a Western imposition but rather a reaffirmation and renaissance of African culture. Secondly, women themselves need a feminist base around which they can rally to be able to articulate and advocate for their strategic needs. An Africanist feminist base also has the utility of creating a female consciousness and confidence with which to approach politics and add the value that women can and should bring to politics. This will no doubt help to enhance the potential for change that critical acts has over critical mass as a strong African feminist base from which an ideology that will under gird women’s participation in politics will make their participation more qualitative in terms of policy and reform outcomes.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In summary, the feminisation of poverty and disease (i.e. HIV and AIDS) in post-colonial Africa is indeed a consequence of the masculinisation of the public sphere which has failed to effectively allocate societal resources. This masculinisation of politics is itself based on a distorted understanding of the continent’s culture and old patriarchies. Therefore, deconstructing the socio-cultural masculine stereotypes that inform the sexist attitudes that perpetuate the political marginalisation of women in post-colonial African societies is an overdue imperative. By implication, until men are re-socialised towards recognising and accepting the place of women as important parts of a whole without which their lives are incomplete, formal approaches to engendering development based on equality and justice will continue to grasp at

straws. Perhaps, reconciling the cultural rights of the past with the liberal freedoms of the modern age will help both men and women in Africa to negotiate peacefully the much needed change in gender relations today.

This is where the issue of modernising without Westernising becomes relevant. From the socio-cultural climate under which women politicians operate and the issue of women acting as men when they assume office, to the absence of an African-centred feminist base and ideology that can drive women's participation, our analysis of women's under-performance suggests that the challenge of attaining gender equality in African politics is rooted in socialisation. Contemporary African men and women themselves are products of a history of distorted patriarchies. Therefore, a deconstruction of African patriarchies and the negative masculinities they spew is a good first step towards creating new understanding that will eventually form the basis for reinventing African patriarchies to emplace new and positive masculinities and gender relations which are foundational for peace. The significance of creating this new civilization in African culture cannot be over-emphasised, especially given that social values do not exist in a vacuum nor are they culture neutral. Therefore, as we continue to search for mechanisms to wrestle with and emplace sustainable peace and good governance based on equity and justice in all parts of our continent, a good starting point will be to make the relevant distinction between old and new African patriarchies so that African men opposed to gender equality in the public space will have no traditional/cultural basis to justify their bigotry. This knowledge will also empower men to come to terms with the notion of gender equality in politics as it gains increasing ascendancy in Africa.

The point is that, African women have historically shown a capability for political engagement even in societies that were patrilineal. Also, since the old patriarchies recognised women's capabilities in this regard, gender balancing should not be frowned upon by African men as a result of Westernisation. Rather, it should be seen and accepted as part of the African cultural rejuvenation. In essence, the empowerment of women really represents the revival of traditional African values, which enabled societal harmony, peace and development of Africa before the modern contact with Europe and the subsequent colonial enterprise. This understanding should be incorporated into the African Renaissance project as part of the revival of

African traditional values which enabled women and men to live in a mutual world of responsibility sharing, where differences are appreciated and celebrated. This is what African matriarchy entails and it should form the basis of understanding African feminism, a cultural feminism that does not subtract from gender equity or equality, but one that reaffirms the special nature of women. The ethics that defined women's behaviour and contributions in pre-colonial societies are still relevant in today's largely masculinised politics which is devoid of development ethics, and they do not in anyway subtract from attaining the goal of gender equality or equity in political representation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMINISING THE PEACE PROCESS

#### 3.1 Introduction

Gender inequality hampers development. Therefore, striving to emplace gender equality should be at the heart of the development process and this means recognising women as subjects, not objects of the development process, recognising their value as human beings, and their right to participate in public life, and enabling them to do so. However, as the *critical mass vs. the critical acts* debate and other studies have shown<sup>41</sup>, putting more women in politics does not automatically translate to meeting the yearnings, aspirations and development needs of the teeming number of women, especially those in rural Africa, who remain poor, illiterate, excluded, oppressed and constantly abused. Why then do we need to feminise the peace process by involving more women in the political processes of conflict or post-conflict societies in Africa? This chapter explores this question and attempts to answer it from a theoretical perspective. In other words, the main question this chapter deals with is whether there exist valid theoretical considerations for feminising politics and *ipso facto*, peace building?

In grappling with this concern, we explore the human security paradigm, a human rights discourse, and their inter-relationship with John Lederach's moral imagination model of peace building to validate the call this study makes for feminising the peace process both as a conflict prevention measure and as a peace building strategy in post-conflict societies in Africa generally. The crux of our theoretical argument is that the emerging human security approach to development resonates with the imperative of feminising politics and peace building in the sense that for the human security paradigm, development is about people. If this is the case, it means politics and development planning will focus on the needs of people. In doing so, it becomes easy to see, recognise and prioritise the needs of women who always make up half of the

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<sup>41</sup> See Grey, 2001; Childs, 2004; Crowley, 2004; Krook, 2005

population of most states worldwide and have the potential to make a difference if they come into the fray of public decision-making. A human security approach to development therefore enables the state and society to recognise that women also have rights first as human beings and as women and that these rights need to be secured in accordance with the dictates of the human security approach. One of such women's rights is the right to political participation and representation, which, if validated, will empower women to come into politics as women, and bringing with them a different value and approach that is more conducive to peace building. Basically, we contend that women are richly endowed with moral imagination capacities based on their natural make-up and the ethic of care as mothers, which positively predisposes them to bringing in a less confrontational, more collaborative and interconnected approach to politics and *ipso facto* peace building.

We note radical feminists are wont to argue against this point based on radical feminist thinking that gender difference is socially constructed. They contend that perceiving women in the above light, especially in the African cultural context, serves to further entrench stereotypes that profile them as weak, subordinate and cultural beings. According to them, such subjectivities of gender difference are the root of gender inequality, and they provide legitimising grounds for the continuous propertization, marginalisation and disempowerment of women everywhere and as such serve to undermine the feminist goal of gender equality (see Tong, 1998; Brownmiller, 1999). However, difference feminists, such as Gilligan (1982) and Ruddick (1989) argue that women and men are biologically and socially different and that such differences should be recognised and factored into all aspects of societal life everywhere. For example, Ruddick (1989) contends that mothering is a reality of womanhood and a skilled activity, which though socially constructed, makes women to adopt the corresponding values of tolerance, non-violence and a relational ethic of care which makes women distinct from men. In the same vein, but focussing less on mothering and more on womanhood, Gilligan (1982) argues that women tend to adopt an ethic of care because of their traditional roles of caring for others, especially family and community members. In other words, whether a woman has her own biological children or not, she is traditionally saddled with caring roles within society that predisposes her to adopt an ethic of care, empathy and love. Thus while men will approach issues based on traditional moral theories defined by an *ethic of justice*; who

and what is right or wrong, women will typically approach issues from an *ethic of care* and *relational* perspective. Issues of concern in this regard will be the best way forward for everyone in terms of meeting needs and how to preserve the networks of relationships around people in conflict. This human-centred approach to life and its challenges is at the core of the human security paradigm, which is a much needed shift from emphasis on state security to people security.

Traditionally, security tended to be equated with state security and was thus viewed only from a state-centric and militarist point of view with the state as the sole actor (Booth 1991). However, new sources of threat to human existence emerged in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which poses greater danger to human existence than inter-state war, with the result that there has been an increasing need to rethink the concept of security. This rethinking has widened and deepened the concept to include people as referent subjects in the security calculus (Booth 1991; Buzan 1991; Peterson 1992; Tickner 1995). For example, in its 1994 *Human Development Report*, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) maintains that threats to human security occur in at least seven distinct areas of human existence (UNDP, 1994):

- Community security
- Economic security
- Environmental security
- Food security
- Health security
- Personal security
- Political security

This clearly places people at the centre of the security and development discourse, reinforcing their human rights to protection from social, economic and political vulnerabilities that impair their existence at peace time, and reaffirming the human capacity to “live and let live” knowing fully well that we reach our fullest potentials as humans when others reach theirs; that the ideal of the common good can only be promoted through building a community of shared or common human-hood where personal growth and healing is only achieved in relation with others (Koka, 1997). This is the “big picture” of peaceful co-existence which all humans have a capacity to see and aspire to. Therefore, the notion of relationship is central to

the nexus between the human security and human rights discourse because in every social setting of people, as Lederach puts it, “the quality of our life is dependent on the quality of life of others” (Lederach, 2005: 35). This resonates well with the African ideology of ubuntu, which means that a person’s true humanity is bound to others, “that you are bound up with others in the bundle of life, for a person is only a person through other people” (Tutu, 1999: 34). In this sense, recognising and affirming the rights of others (women) to exist and enjoy equal rights as ones’ self is a moral imperative, which is crucial to one’s own (men’s) existence. As we struggle to emplace gender equality, good governance and development in Africa, this is a human quality which can be positively appropriated to break the various dichotomies of “us” and “them” that fuel the cycle of social and armed conflict which plagues the African continent.

The remaining sections of this chapter explore each of these theoretical models, their utility, and nexus in engendering politics and peace building. This will be based on the notion that first, women, like men, are human beings who form a significant half, if not more of the population of their communities in the case studies as in most states in Africa. Second, that as citizens (people), women have human and women’s rights to demand equitable access to the socio-economic and political opportunities that are available in their societies. And third, that women have a different value and approach to politics which is more collaborative and less confrontational, and as such more peaceful than the dominant male approach which is zero-sum, more confrontational, competitive and conflictual.

### **3.2 The human security paradigm, women and peace building**

Traditionally, the notion of security is rooted in political realism which sees security from a state-centred perspective that restricts the application of security to threats in the military realm. Traditionalist security scholars equate security with peace and the prevention of conflict through military means like deterrence policies and non-offensive defence through public policy and law (Tarry, 1999:2). One of such scholars is Stephen Waltz who sees security as:

the study of the threat, use and control of military force. It explores likely conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and

the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent or engage in war (Waltz, 1999: 212).

In the same realist vein, Buzan *et al* (1998) restrict the security discourse to state security as insecurity is tantamount to threats to the existence of a designated referent object, often times the state, incorporating government, territory and society. Although this conceptualisation of security includes society as a referent object, its state-centeredness is clear as the threat to society here refers to external and not internal threats to the corporate existence of a state. Therefore, as Simpson argues, for traditional security scholars, once a state is able to preserve her territorial borders, her governing regimes and structures from attacks or any threat to its existence, as well as maintain its economic relations with the international community, that state or governing regime was perceived to be secured (Simpson, 2008).

Although many of these definitions position the state as the major actor within the international system, the post World War II global system, especially after the Cold War, altered and widened significantly the nature of security. With its new and relatively unmatched emphasis on the sovereign authority of states (and peoples) as well as its collective security claims through the authority of the United Nations Security Council, and, as some would argue, the net unintended benefits of a nuclearised bipolar system, the world experienced an unprecedented era of state emergence, security and stability. Not surprisingly, for many states, particularly those in the developing parts of the world, this changed and more benign international security environment meant a concern not for external threats but rather for internally based (albeit, perhaps, externally-supported) security issues. Given this context, it seems that realist notions have changed over the years – they expanded and shifted substantially away from ideas about state quest for surviving inter-state wars to intra-state conflicts and wars that were stoked not only by the imperatives of the global East-West ideological battles but also the challenges associated with nation-building in environments that were often marked by severe resource starvation and competing interests. This has been the experience in Nigeria, for example, where government dysfunctionality and ineffectiveness have had the net effect of exacerbating centrifugal tendencies and intra-state conflict arising there from (CASS, 2005). In these states, people have been killed in large numbers more from non-traditional

threats such as poverty, disease, environmental hazards, unemployment and crime, than from guns and nuclear weapons in interstate wars (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). This gave rise to a rethinking and broadening of the security concept beyond its traditional preoccupation with the state to encompass people as referent subjects, thus giving birth to the concept of human security.

Human security conceptualisation accommodates a wider range of issues that not only constitute threats to human existence, but also breed insecurity and societal anarchy. It views security from the perspective of human well-being and includes broad issues of human concern - security from poverty, disease, famine, illiteracy, environmental despoliation, and unemployment, which singly or jointly contribute to the impairments of human existence<sup>42</sup>. Kaul, in equating human security with the security of people, and not just security of nations, underscores the primacy of human security in contemporary times thus: “what is needed today is not so much territorial security – the security of the state – but human security, the security of the people in their everyday lives, one that that is reflected in the lives of our people, not in the weapons of our country” (Kaul, 1995: 313-319). Viewed this way, human security can be summarized as “freedom from want and freedom from fear” (Annan, 2005:2). According to Axworthy (1999), human security conduces to

safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition of being characterised by freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety or even their lives.... It is an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or government

Therefore, the human security paradigm tends to conceive security from the perspective of people who make up the state, making people the subject and focus of political and security as well as development analysis. In this way, the issues of concern will include security from poverty, famine, illiteracy, environmental

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the human security paradigm, see the UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) 1994, New York: Oxford University Press, 22 – 23; K. Anan, “Secretary-General Salutes International Workshop on Human Security in Mongolia.” Two-Day Session in Ulaanbaatar, May 8-10, 2000. Available in [http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000508\\_sgsm7382.doc.html](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20000508_sgsm7382.doc.html) accessed 27/01/08

despoliation, unemployment, disease and crime, which singly or jointly contribute to the impairments of human existence and lead to armed conflict. Accordingly, questions of security viewed from this perspective will include “who and what threatens people in their everyday lives?”, “how are people vulnerable to these threats?”, “what are the causes of their vulnerabilities?” and “how do these vulnerabilities lead to conflict?” Also, within such a people-oriented approach to politics and development, we can locate the gender question and interrogate which gender group is more vulnerable to human insecurities and why. In this light, feminist scholars such as Peterson (1992) have attempted to factor women into the human security discourse by contending that the narrow conceptualisation of security in traditional militarist terms does more to decrease the security of women than to increase it. She argues that the pre-eminence of state sovereignty is a primary source of insecurity for women, because it reduces the construction of political community to masculine and patriarchal institutions and policies which are basically gender blind or oppressive of women (Peterson, 1992: 32). In essence, the concept of human security is woven around issues of human emancipation (Booth 1991:539), social justice (Peterson 1992) and human dignity and the environment, if they have political outcomes (Ayoob, 1995).

In practical terms, vulnerabilities from non-traditional sources threaten human existence, global peace and security more than inter-state war and aggression. For example, according to Boutros-Ghali (1992), poverty, disease, famine and states oppression of their citizens join to produce 17 million refugees, 20 million displaced persons and massive migrations of people within and beyond national borders. Africa, with its weak state structures and failed economies occasioned largely by bad governance, remains vulnerable to human insecurities, such as environmental degradation, poverty, HIV/AIDS and illiteracy, which are rife on the continent. Economically, despite its enormous wealth in natural resources, African states are at the bottom of the list when it comes to measuring economic activity such as per capita income (often less than US\$200 per year) or per capita gross domestic product (GDP) – both measured in the UN Quality of Life Index (Isike *et al*, 2008: 29). For instance, in 2006, 34 of the 50 nations on the UN’s list of least developed countries were in

Africa<sup>43</sup>, underscoring the fact that it is disadvantaged in the globalisation process and that its marginalised status is not in doubt. Socially, the continent has some of the worst records of insecurity as for instance, while 10 % of the world's population live in sub-Saharan Africa, an enormous 64% of all people with HIV live in this region, including 77% of all women living with the virus (South Africa, 2007). According to Edge (2006: 6), AIDS related fatalities have also resulted in a rapidly growing number of so-called AIDS orphans; more than 12 million in Africa have been orphaned as a result of AIDS and expectedly, female children constitute the majority of this number.

The environment deserves a mention here because a good number of other human vulnerabilities are largely generated from environmental hazards associated with resource exploitation in the continent. For example, an estimated 500 million hectares of land in sub-Saharan Africa, including 65% of agricultural land, have been adversely affected by soil degradation since 1950 and the resultant decrease in food production constitutes the food security dilemma in parts of Africa, especially southern Africa, where food insecurity manifests in food scarcity, malnutrition and hunger (Swatuk and Vale, 1999; Saundry, 2007). Also, drought and desertification, both serious environmental challenges that threaten sustainable development in Africa, have far reaching negative impact on human health, economic activity, food security, physical infrastructure, natural resources and the environment (Isike *et al*, 2008: 27). From the economic and social to the environment, women and men experience insecurities differently, as women have a disproportionate share of the effects of these human security vulnerabilities compared to men including the armed conflict that spew from them.

The analytical distinction between traditionalist and the non-traditionalist notions of security is not meant to suggest that consensus among the latter has been reached either. Indeed, there is disagreement between two sub-groups, the so-called 'wideners' and 'deepeners' (Tarry, 1999:1). The wideners, like Mohammed Ayoob, argue that a predominantly military definition does not deny that there are other

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<sup>43</sup> Africa's share of income decreased steadily over the past century. In 1820, the average worker in Europe earned about three times as much as his African counterpart. By 2002, the average European worker earned twenty times as much as the average African. Although per capita income in Africa has been increasing steadily, it is still below that of other parts of the developing world such as Latin America

threats to state survival such as environmental, social and economic, but that these must be sufficiently politicised to enter the national and international (humanitarianism) security agenda. The deepeners, on the other hand, are concerned about 'those whose security is threatened' and thus, support the construction of a definition that allows for individuals or people, for instance women, to be the referent subjects of security beyond the abstract entity called 'state'. According to Anderlini (2007), the human security paradigm resonates strongly on two counts for women. First, the security issues that are raised under that paradigm (poverty, illiteracy, environmental despoliation, unemployment, disease, crime, gender-based violence) are ones to which women relate and no amount of statist security strategies in form of military might can resolve the problems of poverty, HIV and AIDS, malaria, or rape. She contends that while the state must lead the efforts to address these problems, it cannot do so without the input and participation of its own population, majority of who are usually women (Anderlini, 2007; 195-196). Also, in terms of satisfying methodological utility, which is the widener's main concern (see Ayoob, 1995; 1997), these issues and the women question have become sufficiently politicised to enter the security calculus as most states now problematise gender inequality in the public sphere and accordingly make conscious effort to include more women in their public governance structures.

Second, because it focuses on people and their life circumstances, the human security paradigm also opens space for a more inclusive discourse where not only can women participate directly, but they can also demand and effectuate their human rights to life, work, good health, involvement in decision-making and remedy through active political participation. This implies, therefore, that human security and human rights are two sides of the development coin as a human security approach to development is rooted in human rights while both reinforce each other. For instance, for poor women, just realising that they have certain rights can be very empowering, and when they demand these rights from a government that is people-focussed and get a policy response, there is a move towards development. This is the catch in utilising human security as a theoretical basis for first feminising political processes and *ipso facto*, feminising the peace processes in Africa.

### 3.3 The universalism of human rights and women rights

The concept 'human rights' refers to the idea of human beings as having universal entitlements, or status, regardless of legal jurisdiction or other localising factors, such as ethnicity, nationality, and gender (Isike, *et al*, 2007). Human rights are based on the human dignity that is inherent in being human, from which derives their universal and inalienable character. The existence, validity and identification of human rights continue to be the subjects of controversy. Legally, human rights are defined in international law and covenants, and further, in the domestic laws of many states. However, for many people, the doctrine of human rights goes beyond law and forms a fundamental moral basis for regulating the contemporary geopolitical order. According to previous studies, there are 'three worlds' of human rights, which underscore the variants or typologies of human rights. These include the Western, (or First World) approach, the Socialist (Second World) approach and the Third World approach. The First World approach emphasises civil and political rights such as the right to vote and be voted for, the right to freedom of expression, movement and association, equal protection before the law, and the right to self self-determination. The Socialist (Second World) approach focuses on economic and social rights such as the right to employment, work under favourable conditions, housing, health care and social services. The third approach to the matter of human rights is that of the Third World, which emphasises self-determination and economic development. Rights in the Third World category include cultural rights such as minority rights, as well as economic rights such as those that border on environmental rights (see Donnelly, 1993; Freeman, 2002). However, in reality, these categorisations are not exclusive as the three variants overlap in different degrees (Isike *et al*, 2007).

The basis of human rights and its global applicability have been a subject of controversy from its pre-1945 conception as natural rights, to its revival by the United Nations' (UN) proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 (Isike *et al*, 2007). According to them, a major issue in this controversy is the absence of common agreement on the philosophical justification for human rights, which in itself, has compromised the universalisation of human rights (Isike *et al*, 2007:22). Arguments for and against the universalisation of human rights range from

notions of human dignity, humanitarianism, internationalism and utilitarianism on the one hand, to cultural relativism, moral relativism, legalism and imperialism on the other (See Donnelly, 1989; 1993; Nussbaum, 2000; Freeman, 2002 and Isike *et al*, 2007). Donnelly (1993), for instance, makes a case for universalism when he argues that human rights are based on the moral value of human dignity, which every human being, irrespective of culture, race, class or gender is entitled to on account of their humanity. According to him, these rights, which are social and political guarantees that protect individuals from the standard threats to human dignity posed by the modern state and market, are fundamental to human flourishing and a life of virtue (Donnelly, 1993: 14). On the other hand, cultural relativists argue that human rights have to take cognisance of cultural diversity and the different conceptions of what constitutes the good life, or of what is good or bad, right or wrong since all of these are culturally, socially, historically and personally relative to particular circumstances (Renteln, 1988).

However, irrespective of where the pendulum swings, apart from the fact that cultures are dynamic and constantly interacting with one another, there is common agreement on certain human rights that are fundamental to the existence of people. Some of these rights, as enshrined in the UDHR include the right to life, liberty and security of person, freedom from slavery or servitude, freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, equality before the law<sup>44</sup> amongst others. For example, Article 1 of the UDHR specifically stipulates that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”<sup>45</sup> and this is universally recognised and accepted even by states that are yet to ratify the UDHR.

Since 1948, most member states of the UN have signed up to and ratified numerous other declarations, treaties and conventions that elaborate the UDHR. Some of these that specifically affirm the rights of women, and which Nigeria and South Africa have signed to, include the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), Convention for the Elimination of

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<sup>44</sup> See Articles 3 – 7 of the UDHR 1948

<sup>45</sup> Article 1, UNDRH, 1948

Discrimination against Women, 1981 and Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, which seek to protect the girl-child from early marriage and its associated harmful health consequences, and from harmful cultural practices like female genital mutilation. Other global efforts which have strengthened women's human rights include the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna 1993, which specifically affirmed that "the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights"<sup>46</sup>, the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) as well as the fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995. And in October 2000, the UN Security Council(UNSC) passed Resolution 1325, which has been hailed as a landmark resolution that mandates member-states of the body to recognise and implement the political rights of women to be involved in decision-making at all levels of governance, and in the peace processes of their societies.

The foregoing international legal and policy instruments seek to address the gendered gap of development underscoring the fact that women's issues have become central components not only of human rights advocacy, but also in policy and development circles. Essentially, the concern here pertains to non-discrimination against women as people and paying adequate attention to issues of their vulnerability and empowerment (U N Report, 2000). Women and girls, being the "weaker" sex, are known to be among the first victims of discrimination. Their vulnerability to human insecurities outlined by the UN Human Development Report of 1994 makes them to suffer disproportionate disempowerment in socio-cultural, political and economic realms compared to men as is, for instance, reflected in the "feminisation" of poverty phenomenon (see Okojie, 2000; Ndimande, 2001; Therborg, 2004).

However, beyond the legal and constitutional provision of these rights and the obligation on both states and people to exercise them, there is a corresponding moral obligation to effectuate these rights, which is predicated on fairness, equity and justice. When rights are executed from a wholly legal point of view, this can easily be abused to become a stumbling block to the full exercise of the rights of others. Therefore, a moral conception/interpretation of rights is one that is cognisant of the

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<sup>46</sup> Article 18, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action available in [www.ohcr.org/english/law/vienna.htm](http://www.ohcr.org/english/law/vienna.htm)

rights of others, without necessarily losing its legal foundations. In essence then, apart from removing formal impediments to women's involvement in the public sphere and protecting them from discrimination and violence through legislation, there is a need to confront barriers at the informal level of relations between men and women which are still largely defined by post-colonial patriarchies, and which constrain the effectiveness of the few women who are able to break the cultural glass ceilings into the realm of top-level politics. Also, and most importantly, these informal level barriers impede the empowerment of women and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres on society is fundamental for the overall development of society.

The foregoing analyses reveal that a right-based approach to development entails a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process. According to the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, the object of rights-based development is the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development. It also entails the fair distribution of the resulting benefits. The human rights approach to development is, therefore, "integrated and multidisciplinary" (United Nations, 2000:1).

What is the catch in utilising a human rights approach to validate calls for feminising politics and peace building? And how does it relate to the human security paradigm? The salient features of the human rights approach to politics and development include local ownership and people-participation which are essential elements of the human security paradigm. These elements require that the affected/target population assumes higher levels of empowerment and ownership both in policy conception and implementation, as well as freedom of active political participation. In other words, the beneficiaries should be initiating and driving their own development.

Another component of the right-based approach to politics and development is the emphasis it places on the need for a deeper and holistic analysis of the human security realities of developing societies (environmental degradation, illiteracy, gender inequality and poverty) as a basis for designing appropriate responses and long-term development planning. Indeed, such a proactive and people-based approach resonates

well with the issues women face as it provides an opportunity for them to come to the table with issues of concern to them which often coincides with overall community development needs.

However, studies such as those of Owusu-Ampomah (2001) have shown that a human development approach to development (within which we can locate the human security/human rights approach) does not on its own guarantee transformation and development. According to him, “the human development paradigm has, thus far, failed to improve the living conditions of the majority of the poor people of the world, particularly, in Africa, and it is no more likely to succeed in addressing the problem of underdevelopment than its predecessors; modernization and the Washington Consensus” (Owusu-Ampomah, 2001: 47). In his view, the main reason for this is failure of the human development paradigm, and others before it, to appropriate the *human factor* in development planning and implementation (Owusu-Ampomah, 2001). What then is the human factor and how can it be appropriated in the context of peace building?

### **3.4 The Human Factor paradigm**

The main exponent of the human factor (HF) is Senyo Adjibolosoo. According to him:

Human Factor is spectrum of personality *characteristics* and other *dimensions* of human performance that *enable* social, economic and political institutions to *function* and *remain functional* over time. Such dimensions sustain the workings and application of the rule of law, political harmony, a disciplined labor force, just legal systems, respect for human dignity (rights) and the sanctity of life (Adjibolosoo, 1995: 33).

The personality traits that enhance human performance in all spheres include integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness, commitment, selflessness, truthfulness, loyalty and discipline. Others are love, tolerance, sharing, wisdom, imagination, creativity and collegiality. Similarly, the human factor paradigm holds that there are six broad dimensions of human performance and these include *spiritual capital* (knowledge of and connection to the laws of the universe); *moral capital* (sense of

right or wrong); *aesthetic capital* (sense of beauty and ugliness); *human capital* (knowledge and skills); *human abilities* (competences) and *human potential* (dormant talents or untapped part of Being). These personality traits and dimensions of human performance are *sine qua non* for the attainment of the development aspirations of any society (Adjibolosoo, 1995; 1998; Owusu-Ampomah, 2001). Neglecting them in any development paradigm, planning and implementation process is a recipe for failure. As Owusu-Ampomah (2002: 66) puts it, without the human factor, the quest for sustainable human development is a wild goose chase, as the human factor represents a paradigm shift that places premium human values and positive qualities, not capital, institutions or policies. According to Adjibolosoo (1999: 62), human factor underdevelopment and or decay is the primary cause of the social, economic, political and educational problems of all societies, not lack of capital, inadequate political and economic institutional arrangements, or bad policies. In other words, negative human factor traits and dimensions is a source of underdevelopment, socio-political disorder and conflict, while positive human factor traits and dimensions is a necessary and sufficient condition for good governance, sustained economic growth, human-centered development and peace.

Apart from putting emphasis on human beings as the agency and end of development, the bottom line of the human factor is that the quality of people who should power or enable the development process also matters. Therefore, the process of good governance must begin with human quality development<sup>47</sup> that will create an environment that is conducive for good governance, which in the context of this study will go a long way in preventing conflict *ab initio*. According to Adjibolosoo, the absence of truth-telling, integrity, responsibility, accountability, trust, commitment, and transparency creates a fertile environment for serious social, economic, and political problems to thrive. This underscores the significance of good governance and political leadership in preventing and managing armed conflicts<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> In a public lecture hosted by the School of Politics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg on the human factor and good governance, the guest speaker, Prof Senyo Adjibolosoo said “personal growth in positive human factor qualities such as integrity, accountability, responsibility, commitment, selflessness and truthfulness create a fertile environment for good governance” (10 July, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Conflict arises when those in political positions fail to allocate scarce resources in a manner that wins the goodwill, trust, confidence and loyalty of citizens. Often times, the resultant breakdown in relations between citizens and the state, and within citizens in the competition for access to increasingly scarce resources, manifest in violent conflict.

### **3.4.1 The human factor, women and peace building**

The human factor paradigm tells us that beyond the human security and human rights (people-centred) approaches to development, the quality of people who can make peace and development possible also matter. In other words, there is need to focus on the character traits and human dimensions of people who are more likely to make peace and development happen, and appropriate their services accordingly. For example, while according to Adjibolosoo (1995), positive human factor qualities such as integrity, accountability, selflessness and truthfulness can create a fertile environment for good governance and development, Lederach (2005), sees relatedness, collaboration, love, empathy and tolerance as necessary and sufficient factors for creating a fertile environment for peace building. Within this context, the question is who, between men and women are more likely to approach politics with these positive human factor traits and dimensions? Just as armed conflict takes place within a political context, there is also a political dimension of peace making which requires a kind of politics that is crucial for conflict transformation. This is the politics of responsibility, accountability, tolerance, empathy, accommodation, love, truth-telling and forgiveness. Are women in the Niger Delta, KwaZulu-Natal and Africa sufficiently disposed to both the human factor characteristics and dimensions which make development and peace possible? This is a pertinent question that this study hopes to answer from our findings on women's perceptions and dispositions towards conflict and conflict transformation in the study areas. Before then, we shall explore the human factor potential for peace building at a deeper level through the lens of John Lederach's moral imagination model of peace building.

### **3.5 The Moral Imagination model of peace building**

According to John Lederach, the moral imagination is "the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist; the potential to find a way to transcend, and to move beyond what exists while still living in it" (Lederach, 2005: 27-29). In reference to peace building, Lederach contends that it is the capacity to imagine and generate constructive responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the day-to-day challenges of violence, transcends and ultimately breaks the grips of those destructive patterns

and cycles within which conflict is perpetuated (Lederach, 2005: 29). Viewed this way, the moral imagination has two qualities, transcendence and creativity, as it implies a break from orthodox wisdom and convention that governs social, political and economic relations between people, communities and states, to discovering new grounds and ways of doing things which is rooted in the human capacity to rise above the ordinary. Therefore, it is the capacity to perceive things beyond and at a deeper level than what initially meets the ordinary eye, leading to a critical turning point that will make the difference between violent protracted conflict and sustainable peace (Lederach, 2005: 19 - 27). Of the four stories Lederach used to illustrate the moral imagination in action leading to the critical turning points that made the difference between conflict and peace that of the peace meeting between the Konkombas and the Dagombas in Northern Ghana is particularly poignant. This is reproduced in box 1 below:

**Box 1: On touching the moral Imagination: A story from Ghana**

“I call you father because I do not wish to disrespect you”

During the 1990s, northern Ghana faced the rising escalation of ethnic mixed with the ever-present tense undertone of Muslim-Christian relationship. In the broader West African region, Liberia had collapsed into chaotic, violent internal warfare, spilling refugees into neighbouring countries. The chaos seemed simultaneously endemic and contagious. Within a short period of time, Sierra Leone descended into cycles of bloodletting and cruelty that were unprecedented for the sub-region. Nigeria, the largest and most powerful regional country, walked a fine line that barely seemed to avoid the wildfires of full-blown civil war. In such a context, the rise of inter-communal violence, and even sporadic massacres had all the signs of a parallel disaster in the northern communities of Ghana.

These were not historically isolated cycles of violence. The roots of the conflicts between several of the groups, particularly the Konkombas and Dagombas, a group with a sustainable and powerful tradition of chieftaincy, have a social and leadership structure that loaned itself to negotiation with European slave traders. They were the most powerful and dominating group in the north of the country; their allies to the south were the people of the equally strong Ashanti Empire. Chiefly groups retained royalty, culminating in the paramount chief, whereas groups in Ghana referred to as non-chiefly no longer had or were not accorded a chiefly political structure.

The Konkombas, on the other hand, were more dispersed. Principally agriculturalists, “yam growers,” as they at times were denigrated and stereotype, the Konkombas did not organize around the same social and royal features. They were a non-chiefly tribe, not necessarily by their choice. High chieftaincy in this part of the world brought benefits and a comparative sense of importance that translated into superiority. For example, the chiefly groups gained advantage from collaboration with the slave trade; the non-chiefly were fated to live the great travesty of and exploitation incarnated in this trafficking of men, women, and children. Following the period of the slave trade, the chiefly group again benefited during the period of colonization. They received recognition and their traditional power and sense of superiority were further

ingrained. The seed of division sown during the period of slavery flourished in the period of colonial rule.

In subsequent centuries their conflicts were played out over control of land and resources. The arrival of religious based missionary movements added more layers of division to their relationships. While some groups remained animists, the Konkombas followed Christianity, and most Dagombas, including the powerful royal houses and paramount, with their emphasis on education, provided school that gave access and entry to rising social status for the Konkombas. This would eventually have an impact on the communities and politics.

As Ghana gained independence, the country moved toward democracy based on election. Politicians with aspirations for votes understood the existing divisions and fears and often exacerbated them in order to get the support of their respective communities during election campaigns. Electoral periods became regular cycles of and repeated and ever-greater violence. Even little events, like a dispute between two people in a market over a purchase, could spark escalation violence, as was the case with the Guinea Fowl War.

In 1995 the cycle threatened to explode again. A dispute over land claimed by both groups in a small town in the north suddenly exploded into overt violence during the electoral campaign. The killing sprees spread rapidly, spilled well beyond the locale of the original dispute, and threatened the stability of the whole northern region. The images of recent chaotic collapse in Sierra Leone and Liberia were fresh in the minds of many people. This cycle of inter-communal violence in Ghana appeared on the verge of creating yet another destructive full-blown civil war. In response, a consortium of nongovernmental organizations working in the northern region of Ghana began to push for a peace building effort. A small team of African mediators, led initially by Hizkias Assefa and Emmanuel Bombande, began the process of creating space for dialogue between the representatives of the two ethnic groups. Eventually this process would find a way to avoid the escalating of violence to civil war and would even create an infrastructure for dealing with the common recurrence of crises that in the past had translated into deadly fighting. But it was not a smooth road.

In one of their early encounters those involved in the mediation observed a story that created a transformation in the process and in the relationship between these two groups and therefore changed the fundamental direction of paramount chief arrived in full regalia and with his entourage. There were moments of the meeting he assumed a sharp attitude of superiority. Taking tacking the Kokombas. Given the traditions and rights afforded the highest chiefs, little could be done except to let the chief speak.

“Look at them.” he said, addressing himself more to the mediators than to the Kokombas, “who are they even that I should be in this room with them? They do not even have just come from the fields and now attack us in our own villages. They could have at least brought an old man. But look! They are just boys born yesterday.”

The atmosphere was devastating. Making matters worse, the mediators felt in a very difficult bind. Culturally, when facing a chief, there was nothing they could do to control the process. You simply cannot tell a chief to watch his mouth or follow ground rules, particularly in the presence of his entourage and his enemies. It appeared as if the whole endeavour may have been misconceived and was reaching a breaking point.

The Konkombas spokesman asked to respond. Fearing the worst, the mediators provide him space to speak. The young man turned and addressed himself to the chief of the enemy tribe.

You are perfectly right, Father, we do not have a chief.  
We have not had one for years. You will not even  
recognise the man we have chosen to be our chief. And

this has been our problem. The reason we react, the reason our people go on rampages and fights resulting in all these killings and destructions arises from this fact. We do not have what you have. It really is not about the town, or the land, or the market guinea fowl. I beg, you, listen to my words, Father. I am calling father because we do not wish to disrespect you. You are a great chief. But what is left for us? Do we have no other means but this violence to receive in return the one thing we seek, to be respected and to establish our own chief who could indeed speak with you, rather than having a young boy do it on our behalf?

The attitude, tone of voice, and use of the word father spoken by the young Konkomba man apparently so affected the chief that he sat for a moment without response. When finally, he spoke, he did so with a changed voice, addressing himself directly to the young man rather than to the mediators.

I had to come to put your people in your place. But now I feel only shame. Though I insulted your people, you still called me Father. It is you who speaks with wisdom, and me who has not seen the truth. What you have said is true. We who are chiefly have always looked down on you because you have no chief, but we have not understood the denigration you suffered. I beg you, my son, to forgive me.

At this point the younger Konkomba man stood, walked to the chief, the knelt and gripped his lower leg, a sign of deep respect. He vocalized a single and audible “Na-a” a word of affirmation and acceptance.

Those attending the session reported that the room was electrified, charged with feeling and emotion. It was by no means the end of the problems or disagreements, but something happened in that moment that created an impact on everything that followed. The possibility of change away from century-long cycles of violence began and perhaps the seeds that avoided what could have been a full-blown Ghanaian civil war were planted in that moment.

This possibility of change continues, In March 2002, the king of the Dagombas, the Abudu and Andani II, was killed in an internal feud between the two clans of the Dagombas, the Abudu and Andani families. As long-time adversaries of the Dagombas, the Konkombas could have been expected to take advantage of the internal strife among the Dagombas. On the contrary, they met at grand Durban of all their youths and elders and issued an official declaration on Ghana television. First they expressed solidarity with the Dagombas in the time of their grief and loss. Then they pleaded with the Dagombas to work together in finding a long-term solution to their tribesmen to undermine the Dagombas because of the internal difficulty they were experiencing. They concluded by suggesting that Konkombas who took advantage of the internal strife within the Dagombas to create a situation that may lead to violence would be isolated and handed over to the police.

Reproduced from Lederach (2005: 7 - 10)

According to Lederach, the moral of this story and the three others he tells in his book is that it was neither the technical expertise of the international peace mediators nor the nature and design of the peace process that made the difference. It was not the local or national political power, exigencies, the fears of a broader war, nor the influence and pressure from the international community that created the shift. Neither was it political, economic or military power. Rather, what created a turning point that was critical to breaking the age-long violence between the Dagombas and Konkombas was the appearance of the moral imagination displayed by the young spokesman of the Konkombas (Lederach, 2005: 19). His attitude and tone in addressing the Dagomba Chief, calling him “father”, his gesture of kneeling before the chief and grabbing his lower leg (a deep sign of respect in Ghanaian culture), were characteristic of the moral imagination, the capacity to rise beyond violence by taking personal responsibility, acknowledging relational mutuality and in the process giving birth to something new. As Lederach himself sums the story, “the possibility of change away from century-long cycles of violence began and perhaps the seeds that avoided what could have been a full-blown civil war were planted in that moment of the serendipitous appearance of the moral imagination” (Lederach, 2005:10 and 19). Exploring the nexus between the moral imagination and peace building further, Lederach contends that there are four elements or disciplines that, when held together and practiced, form the moral imagination that makes peace building possible and each of which requires imagination. These are relationship, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk. Combined, the presence or practice of these elements make the moral imagination and peace building possible as shown in Lederach’s case studies where the peace processes were defined by the capacity of actors to imagine themselves in a relationship, a willingness to embrace complexity and not frame their challenge as a dualistic polarity between “evil vs. good”, “us and them” which drive the cycles of violence, acts of enormous creativity that spring forth new possibilities, and lastly, a willingness to risk, to step into the unknown, the mystery that peace is. All of these were present in the story of the Konkombas and Dagombas and they led to complex initiatives of peace building defined by critical moments that created and then sustained constructive change (Lederach, 2005: 40). However, in the light of its significance to this paper, we shall dwell on the element of relationships and its nexus to feminising the peace process. According to Lederach, relationships remain central to peace building because it is both the context in which cycles of violence happen

and the generative energy from which transcendence of those same cycles burst forth. He argues that the centrality of relationships provides the context and potential for breaking violence, “for it brings people into the pregnant moments of the moral imagination: the space of recognition that ultimately the quality of our life is dependent on the quality of life of others” (Lederach, 2005:35). This resonates well with the African social ideology of communalism or *ubuntu* which is rooted in the web of human relationship within which people reinforce and validate one another.

Clearly then, relationships are central to the notion of the moral imagination as it oils the ever-evolving web of social interactions. In the process, it fosters inclusivity and interconnectedness as every member of society see themselves as part of the web and plays his/her role based on a moral understanding of their personal responsibility, and acknowledging the relational mutuality or interdependency of the human existence. This is why Lederach concludes that peace building requires a vision of relationship as if there is no capacity to imagine the canvass of mutual relationships and situate oneself as part of that historic and ever-evolving web, peace building will collapse. It is in this light masculine social constructionists contend that masculinity is an obstacle to peace as it is based in part on the rejection of feminine ideologies which prioritise relationships, collaboration, sharing and mutual empowerment as opposed to masculine ideologies that promote independence, individualism and aggression (Gagnon, 2003: 5 – 9). However, masculinity itself thrives in relationships even though they are relationships that breed conflict. For example, military camps provide traditional masculine communities, where men find brotherhood, comradeship and a sense of connection with themselves, which, unfortunately, perpetuates violence and war as such camps also become centres where men are socialised to love through action (war) and protection of others, especially women, thus making men prone to war as a method of conflict resolution (Gagnon, 2003: 6). In this way, men are socialised to see fighting for their nations as acts of devotion, loyalty and love which they must seek and appropriate within masculine worldview that prioritises power, domination, zero-sum competition and aggression before, during and after conflict.

Lederach’s model of the utility of the moral imagination for peace building within a web of human relationships relates to this study in three significant ways. First, it means that women and men exist in an interconnected social reality where they are

meant to complement each other. This means that relationships should not be perceived as a feminine but rather should be seen as human because both men and women are existentially connected, and both have need for, and yearn for connection with others in the bid for survival and self-actualisation. According to Gagnon, for men, the problem is not that they reject connection; the problem is that men reject feminine forms of connection. Therefore, the challenge is for men to deconstruct and transform masculine relational ideologies, which breed conflict and war, into more inclusive foundations that would be more conducive to peace building. This leads us to the second point of connection between the moral imagination model and calls for feminising peace building in Africa, namely, that men can and should morally imagine and recreate a society that promotes peaceful relations within itself and with others outside it.

Therefore, because they remain critical to success of gender equality efforts, men have the challenge of transcending the orthodox wisdom and convention of patriarchy that governs gender relations in post-colonial Africa, to create new forms of relationships that are conducive to peaceful co-existence and holistic development. According to Gagnon (2003), peaceful relationships, starting from those between men and women, are necessary to negotiating mutually amicable resolution to conflicts even though as a result of social construction of masculinity, men have learnt to reject the essential value of relationships. In Gagnon's words, "while masculine construction may be a cause for war and a deterrent to peace, it also holds the potential for transformation as the very qualities that would be necessary to pursue such ideal change are often associated with constructions of masculinity – courage, fortitude, resolution and the drive for success – and peace would not be possible without them" (Gagnon, 2003:7).

Third, women generally are richly endeared with the moral capacity to embrace curiosity and complexity as they are wont to rise above the historic traps of dualistic divisions which drive the cycles of violence, and in this way, transcend orthodox gender stereotypes and the oppressive relations they spew. This is possible because women are more relational than men and as such view the same phenomenon differently, for instance, women have the capacity to imagine themselves in a web of relationship even with their enemies (see Lederach, 2005: 34). And as we shall show

in the next section, African women have the capacity to perceive things beyond and at a deeper level than what initially meets the ordinary eye, leading to a critical turning point that will make the difference between violent protracted conflict and sustainable peace. Indeed, pre-colonial African women demonstrated and continue to portray the moral imagination which the Konkomba spokesman displayed when he chose to be humble, tolerant and conciliatory in the face of aggression, treating the elderly enemy chief of Dagomba as his father, and therefore creating a wiser and inherently more fatherly response from the aggressive chief to validate the relational mutuality of their (Dagomba and Konkomba) existence. Indeed, elements of this moral imagination, which enabled males and females to relate to each other without fear where both co-existed peacefully in the knowledge that their fates are interconnected, and that individual greatness depended largely on their collective greatness, governed gender relations in pre-colonial African societies where women were very active and powerful actors in the socio-political and economic lives of their communities.

### **3.6 Towards an African Feminist ethic of peace**

Apart from the aforementioned theoretical considerations for feminising the peace process, African women have a rich history of peace making and peace building experience which dates back to the pre-colonial era as mentioned in chapter two. According to Amadiume (1997), there are two unique contributions that African women have made to world history and civilization: matriarchy and dual-sex character of African political systems, which is directly related to the matriarchal factor (Amadiume, 1997: 100). She contends that African matriarchy was a fundamental social and ideological base on which African kinship and wider social and moral systems, such as *ubuntu* or *ujamaa*, rest (Amadiume, 1997). In her view, authentic African matriarchy had “a very clear message about social and economic justice as it was couched in a very powerful goddess-based religion, a strong ideology of motherhood, and a general moral principle of love” (Amadiume, 1997: 101). This was opposed to imperialist patriarchy which has a basic masculinist ideology that celebrates violence, valour, conquest and power in varying degrees, and which, according to Diop (1989), denied women their rights, subjugating and propertizing them in a strict hierarchical system of family where the man (husband or father) was supreme and had power of life and death over the woman.

On the other hand, pre-colonial African matriarchy and patriarchy co-existed in what Diop (1989) refers to as a “harmonious dualism” between men and women, and what Amadiume (1997: 93) describes as “fluid demarcation”. According to her, this “embodied two oppositional or contesting systems, the balance tilting and changing all the time” (Amadiume, 1997: 93 – 94). In this regard, she concluded that genders in pre-colonial African societies were fluid as they were a means of dividing, but also a means of integrating and co-opting in dynamic ways that enabled stability and order based on justice, equity and fairness. This enabled a system where women’s power became based on the centrality of their economic role in relation to men, and men’s general belief in the sacredness of women as mothers. This was given expression in widespread goddess worship across different communities including those that were patriarchal. According to Amadiume,

In indigenous African religion, mystical powers and worldly prosperity are gifts inherited from our mothers. The moral ideals of this system encouraged the matriarchal family, peace and justice, goodness and optimism and social collectivism, where the shedding of human blood was abhorrent (Amadiume, 1997: 102)

Even in pre-colonial patriarchal cultures like those of the Zulus of today’s KwaZulu-Natal, women were traditionally able to stop fights by falling over the person being beaten. According to a study by Rakoczy (2006: 202), one of her respondents indicated that Zulu women’s ability to stop fighting in this way may be due to respect for women as “the persons who bring children”, the life-givers. She contends rightly that this tradition is also commonplace amongst the Sotho people, narrating how a woman’s brother was rescued by another woman who heard his cry as he was being beaten by several men. The rescuing woman “stepped into the fray, put a blanket over her brother and probably saved his life” (Rakoczy, 2006: 202). The rescuing woman did not have to know who the man being beaten was to intervene for the violence to stop. She knew instinctively as a mother who cared for her children that she had to act, more so in the understanding that she is connected to him as a human being living in the same community. The aggressors on their part knew that they could not continue beating their victim once the woman intervened in the way she did.

Continuing would have meant violating the woman as well, and this they were not prepared to do as men because of the socio-cultural implications.

The crux of our argument here is that women's existence and power in pre-colonial African societies was based on an ethic of care that was rooted in their motherhood and their nature, which was tolerant of difference, collaborative, non-violent and, as such, peaceful<sup>49</sup>. Their peace activism and agency was in itself rooted in a broader communal ideology (*ubuntu, ujamaa, negritude*, humanism or African socialism) which operated on the basis of the mutuality of human interests through a web of relationships where everyone played their part for the good of the collective and the validation of the personal. In these societies, women never saw or placed themselves in a dichotomous relationship with men, rather, gender relations were fluid, dynamic and complementary in difference as Amadiume (1997) espoused. Today, the feminist ethic of care, though corrupted by the eroding influence of Eastern and Western patriarchies that subsequently accompanied the advent of Islam and colonialism in Africa respectively<sup>50</sup>, is still very much alive amongst African women. This is daily being expressed by women in the face of their marginalisation and oppression at the private and public levels of society including in conflict situations. For example, in the heat of the bitter Tutsi and Hutu civil war in Burundi, Hutu women of Busoro near the Burundi capital of Bujumbura, joined their Tutsi counterparts in the neighbouring Musanga village to march peacefully to the local government secretariat where they both demanded for an end to the killing. According to Fleshman (2003), one day the women of Musanga got fed up with the chilling consequences of the war and collected what food and clothing they could for victims in Busoro and subsequently rallied their Busoro counterparts to march for peace, clasping their hands to sing "Give us peace. Give us peace now!" for hours before making their separate dangerous ways back home (Fleshman, 2003: 1 – 2). Although, as Fleshman recorded "the war continued, something important had changed. The road that

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<sup>49</sup> This is not to say that all women are necessarily pacifist as there are also records of women who have taken decisions to go to war, and where women actively participated as combatants. Even pre-colonial African history shows records of women regents waging war. However, as Noddings explained "women's acceptance of war does not seem to emerge from seeing striving as a virtue but rather from a desire to remain in positive relation with those who worship striving" (Noddings in Soest, 1995: 168).

<sup>50</sup> For example, according to Amadiume (1997: 104), "Islamic patriarchy in Africa was followed by European imperialism and finally the present subjugation of African societies and people under European-imposed nation states. It has introduced a new gender politics, favouring men and undermining the traditional system of balance of power politics between African men and women"

divided them now connected them, and through their local peace group, *Twishakira amahoro* (we want to have peace), the women of the villages have worked to keep the connection strong” (Fleshman, 2003: 2).

In the same vein, another example of post-colonial African women acting locally, often spontaneously, to reach across battle lines in pursuit of peace is that of the Congolese women who rallied across partisan, ethnic and other sectional interests to organise for the broad public desire for peace in Africa’s most protracted conflict state, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Ahead of the formal peace talks (Inter-Congolese Dialogue) in Sun City, South Africa, which were urged by the UN, and which included only 40 (12%) women among 340 delegates, women from across the DRC, including representatives from the warring parties, government and civil society gathered in Nairobi to forge a common position of peace. At the end of the Nairobi debate, the women discovered that, “however deep their differences, they shared an overriding desire for peace, a broad commitment to the Lusaka peace accord and significantly, a common determination to remove constitutional and legislative obstacles to women’s equality after the war” (Fleshman, 2003: 15). This much was contained in a joint declaration and programme of action that offered a gender perspective to the dialogue issued by the women (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). Specifically, the declaration and programme of action called for “an immediate ceasefire, the inclusion of women and their concerns in all aspects of the peace process, and adoption of a 30% quota for women at all levels of government in any final settlement” (Fleshman, 2003: 15).

Challenged by the lack of a critical mass of women in the actual peace negotiations in Sun City, the women selected 33 of themselves to join the official 30 women representatives to the peace talks as advisers. Excluded therefore from the formal peace talks, the 33 women advisers functioned effectively as facilitators of the peace process as they prepared technical documents and position papers for the official delegates, lobbied the men for peace and generally served as conduit between the masses yearning for peace back home and the peace delegates in Sun City. Of note here is that the women adopted traditional African women’s instruments of drama, poetry, and appeal to motherly sacredness including, sometimes, civil disobedience to make their presence felt and tilt the negotiators towards peace. For example,

reminiscent of pre-colonial women's power to withdraw conjugal rights from men if they refused to listen to women's appeal for peace during conflict with neighbouring communities<sup>51</sup>, the Congolese women's caucus subtly threatened to denounce the men back home, telling them that "if they went back home without peace the people would beat them" (Fleshman, 2003: 16). And when at the end of the peace talks, the parties could not reach an agreement, "the women's caucus blocked the doorway and announced to reporters that delegates would have to remain in the meeting hall until peace was agreed". However, in general, cognisant of the centrality of relationships in enabling sustainable peace and the significance of maintaining their relations with men, which was a main concern of pre-colonial African matriarchy, the women caucus chose to avoid confrontation with the men, knowing that if it was to impact on the process from its outside position, it was necessary to establish and maintain good relations with the men. This was important because men traditionally resented actions that appeared to challenge 'traditional' gender roles and more so that the Congolese men, in the first place, reluctantly agreed to the modest increase in female delegates (Fleshman, 2003: 16). The account of one of the women caucus members, Ms Bibiane in this regard is poignant enough to be reproduced:

At first the men were hostile because there was this group of women entering 'their' space. But we approached them in a way that made them feel secure. In African culture, the woman is your mother. The woman is your wife and your sister. If your mother or sister is talking to you, you have to listen... We didn't demonize the men or try to take their place (in Fleshman, 2003: 16)

Clearly, this resonates well with the moral imagination as the women displayed a capacity to transcend every day conventions of human relations based on ethnic, partisan or gender sentiments by generating constructive responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the day-to-day challenges of the DRC conflict, would ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles within which the conflict is

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<sup>51</sup> See Amadiume (1987, 1997) and Nzeogwu (2000) for more details on how pre-colonial Nigerian women used their conjugal powers to serve as checks on the excesses of male-dominated politics. They contend variously that women in different communities used the threat of their nakedness to leverage policy advantages for themselves and for society in general since often times their needs were communal in focus.

perpetuated and dragged. In this way, the women laid a foundation for eventual peace as they planted the seed of a “yes we can” mentality amongst a people who’s over 50 years experience of conflict has probably blotted their capacity to imagine that peace is possible.

From Senegal, the conflict-ridden Mano River basin countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone to Burundi, the DRC, South Africa and Mozambique, there are many more such examples across Africa where women are using their traditional weapons to wage peace, or in the least, ask questions of a masculinised and zero-sum politics characterised by corruption, competition, intolerance and conflict, which underlie and perpetuate a cycle of chronic under-development in the continent. The peace work of the Mano River Union Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), a transnational women’s organisation consisting of women from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, is well known in this regard, especially in mediating the escalating conflict between Liberia and Guinea in 2001. This feat, according to Fleshman (2003: 18), demonstrated the potential of women’s peacemaking efforts in Africa. Defying nationality differences and rather focussing on the things that hold them together as women, mothers and daughters of Africa, MARWOPNET was able to get presidents Charles Taylor of Liberia, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone and Lansana Conte of Guinea to meet, a feat that previously proved fruitless for the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the sub-regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the full complement of their diplomatic arsenal. Although the women drew the respect of President Taylor for being “courageous” enough to meet with him to convince him to attend a regional peace summit with president Conte, it was the women’s meeting that was seen as more audacious. According to Fleshman (2003), realising that their strategy of focussing on human insecurity implications of conflict which worked with President Taylor was not working with president Conte who remained adamant that he would not meet with Taylor, the women changed tactics. The women, through one of their representatives, told president Conte point-blank:

You and President Taylor have to meet as men and iron out your differences, and we the women want to be present. We will lock you in this room until you come to your senses, and I will sit on the key (Fleshman, 2003: 18)

Fleshman records that when her comments were translated into French for President, there was a long silence, and then he started laughing after which he commented: “what man do you think would say that to me? Only a woman could do such a thing and get by with it”. Crediting the women for changing his mind to attend the peace summit, the president said:

Many people have tried to convince me with  
President Taylor, but only your commitment and  
your appeal have convinced (Fleshman, 2003: 18)

The point of rendering these reports is to underscore the fact that the feminist ethic of care, based on motherhood and women’s sacredness that was appropriated by pre-colonial African women to wage peace and maintain societal harmony, are still very much a part of the core of contemporary African women. And these can be reinvented and developed into a model of African feminist peace building which women in conflict-torn African states or regions can utilize as an ideological rallying point to transform politics and create an environment conducive for development to take place. Indeed as Gasa (2007) admonished, there is nothing wrong with Euro-American and Occidental feminist tradition just as there is nothing wrong with or limited about Arab, Asian or African feminisms. However, “we must acknowledge the different historical and situational realities which may call for a different approach and an adjustment of a particular framework” (Gasa, 2007; 228). In her view, the connection between the detail, pattern and big picture of African feminism will assist African men and women in “understanding our location, developing tools of analysis that are appropriate to our own situation, and applying them in a way that illustrates and illuminates rather than obscures our real and lived experiences and their multiple meanings” (Gasa, 2007: 228). As mentioned before, motherhood qualities of care and nurturing and women’s positive dispositions towards collaboration, interconnectedness and peace do not imply weakness. Rather they portray strength, as they are consistent with the affective and relational foundation of people’s existence with each other. They are also consistent with Lederach’s story of the Konkomba spokesman who invoked the moral imagination by transcending the conventional to turn around a protracted conflict towards sustainable peace.

According to Nodding (in Soest, 1995: 166), these qualities are the foundation of a feminist perspective and ethic of peace rooted in receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness. She contended that such a relational approach to peace building may be more typical of women than men<sup>52</sup>, arguing further that an approach based on law and principle is the approach of the “detached one” (men who are detached from the experience of nurturing children and community), and therefore suggested that a feminist view, which is concerned with people (human security), is an alternative that men can embrace as well as women (in Soest, 1995: 167). Drawing from the utility of the relational ethic of care, Dorothy Van Soest argues that “a relational ethic concentrates on the moral health and vigour of relationships, not individuals, and recognises that moral judgements and decisions about how to act must take into account the relations in which moral agents live and find their identities” (Soest, 1995: 167).

As this study will show in its findings presented in chapters four and five, the defining features of this peace model include a caring and nurturing nature based on motherhood, empathy to community needs which makes women less corrupt than men, tolerance of difference, sharing and collaboration, all of which are under girded by the notion of relational mutuality, i.e., that men and women exist in a web of relationships where their existence are intrinsically connected. For example, women’s commitment to non-violent peace making was displayed by South African women at the height of apartheid in 1956 when over 20,000 women from all races defied state warnings in order to peacefully march in protest against the pass laws which restricted women’s movements and as such threatened their personal and community security. Before the August 9, 1956 women’s march, it is estimated that in the first seven months of 1956, “approximately 50,000 women took part in 38 peaceful demonstrations against pass laws in 30 different centres” (Walker, 1982: 193). In the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria, women have been known to be more result-oriented in their non-violent struggles against state oppression and MNOCs exploitation. When they have to protest, and often they do only as a last resort, they are usually well coordinated, non-destructive and peaceful even in protest. According to CASS (2005: 59), women protests in the region “traditionally push issues beyond a threshold

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<sup>52</sup> This has been validated by this study as % of women in both study areas concede that women are more suited for peace building because of their natural roles as mothers who care, maintain and nurture

because the women folk are regarded as more patient, respectful and morally compelling”. As a result, their engagement with the oil companies has been more effective in producing community development results than the violent tactics of the youths (mostly male), for instance, have produced. For example, women’s non-violent protests in the Niger-Delta have led to several Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between women, their communities and the MNOCs (Ogbodo, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2006). In his study of the July 2002 Ijaw women protests against Chevron in Delta state, Ogbodo (2002) observed that apart from the MOUs, the company (Chevron) also granted concessions to the women and their communities in terms of providing sustainable community development, local business development training and skills development as well as employment opportunities for their children (Ogbodo, 2002).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The crux of our theoretical argument is that the human security approach to politics and development is consistent with the practical imperative of feminising politics and peace building because from a human security perspective, development is about people. Such a people-centred paradigm opens up the political and development spaces for people’s needs and human rights to come to the fore. In this way, the realities and challenges of women’s existence, their vulnerabilities and relation to armed and social conflict become part of the security, human rights and development discourse. A human security approach to development therefore enables the state and society to recognise that women also have rights first as human beings and as women and that these rights need to be effected in accordance with the dictates of the human security approach. One of such women’s rights is the right to political participation and representation, which, if validated, will empower women to come into politics as women, and bringing with them a different value and approach that is more conducive to peace building. This feminist perspective to peace building which is rooted in the feminist ethic of care is consistent with the moral imagination model which values inter-relationships and the connectedness of human existence (referred to as *ubuntu*, in the African context). It also ties into the central thesis of the human factor paradigm; that the quality of people who can make development and peace possible

also matters in human agency framework of development analysis. Accordingly, we conclude that women are richly endowed with positive human factor and moral imagination capacities based on their natural make-up and ethic of care as mothers, which positively predisposes them to bringing in a less confrontational, more collaborative, empathetic and relational approach to politics and *ipso facto* peace building. This is imperative as war is defined as psychosis caused by an inability to see relationships. For example, according to Soest (1995), “the neglect of relations cause separation and is instrumental in creating rivals and making enemies...this can be traced in part to the pervasive ideology of individualism that supports a competitive, adversarial way of life” (Soest, 1995: 168). More pointedly, Gagnon (2003) posits that apart from the theories of men and war that present masculine social construction as a cause for war, masculine social construction also obstructs peace and peace building. According to him, traditional masculine ideologies teach men to love through action and protection of others, especially women, therefore making men prone to war as means of resolving conflict (Gagnon, 2003:6). In this way, masculinities teach men to be detached as they are socialised into thinking they “can be successful by distancing themselves from feminine social constructions, which have been identified as typically relational concepts” (Gagnon, 2003: 6 – 7). Therefore, to prove their male identities, men look to aggression, independence and power over others (men and women); hence, they learn to reject the essential features of peaceful relationships that are necessary for negotiating mutually amicable resolutions to conflicts. This is in contrast to women’s perspective and worldview which, according to Soest (1995), values inter-relationships, connectedness and empowerment from which springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love which are necessary requirements for amicable resolution of conflict and for sustaining peace.

These values can be developed into an African feminist model of peace which can be appropriated as both a conflict prevention measure and post-conflict reconstruction aimed at sustaining peace in conflict-prone areas of the continent. An African feminist model of peace is based not just on theoretical persuasion, but also on a rich pre-colonial history of peace making and peace building experience which dates back to the pre-colonial era. For example, Amadiume (1997) posits that gender in pre-colonial African societies was a means of dividing, but also a means of integrating and co-

opting in dynamic ways that enabled stability and order based on justice, equity and fairness. This enabled a system where women's power became based on the centrality of their economic role in relation to men, and their (men's) general belief in the sacredness of women as mothers as was given expression in widespread goddess worship across different matriarchal and patriarchal communities. Indeed, African women were and continue to be an embodiment of the ethic of care and the moral imagination which are very critical to changing the face and essence of politics to be more human-centred. This is expected to have some positive significance for conflict prevention, resolution and peace building in the continent.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS – WOMEN, POLITICS, CONFLICT AND PEACE-BUILDING IN THE NIGER-DELTA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This Chapter undertakes an overview of armed and social conflict in the Niger-Delta of Nigeria which manifests itself in armed confrontations between ethnic/youth militias in the Niger- Delta and the federal government, community versus oil companies' tensions, community versus community violence and intra community struggles. Underlying these conflicts is a general crisis of underdevelopment, abject poverty, environmental despoliation and other human security vulnerabilities which combine to threaten the existence of the regions' peoples. While looking at the disproportionate impact of the regions' crisis on women, the chapter presents the study's findings on women, conflict, politics and peace building from a survey of 140 women in the three case studies of Igbokoda, Odi and Uzere. Specifically, the chapter seeks to address research questions one, two and three:

- What is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas, and how does it define the women reality with regards to the conflict cycle?
- How have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas?
- Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process?

The findings of the study on these questions as they relate to the individual case of the Niger-Delta are then discussed bearing our literature review and theoretical framework in mind.

#### **4.2 Overview of crisis in the Niger-Delta**

The problem of the Niger-Delta region starts from defining it. There is controversy as to what really is the Niger-Delta. The region has been variously defined, based on

history, geography and different classifications of states (geo-politics) in present day Nigeria, such that the only point of convergence between the plethora of scholars who have done studies on the region's crisis is that it is both a geographical and political entity (Koripamo-Agary & Agary, 2005). As a geographical entity, it is a triangle, with its apex between Ndoni and Aboh, descending eastwards to the Qua Iboe River at Eket and westwards to the Benin River, with its base along the Atlantic coast between the Bights of Benin and Biafra (Osadolor, 2004:10). In the same vein, Okonta *et al* (2003) see the region as a huge floodplain, stretching into the Gulf of Guinea and forming the Bight of Biafra in the east and the Bight of Benin in the west. These coincide with the definition by Curtin *et al*, (1981:244) that "east of the Benin River lays the delta of the Niger, a land of myriad channels, creeks and mangrove swamps". They contend that at the seaward fringe, the delta forms a sand ridge that is high enough for villages of fishermen and salt gatherers and that in the upper delta, beyond the salt water and mangrove swamps, is a region of fresh water swamp with a good measure of higher land that was suitable for agricultural activities (Curtin *et al*, 1981: 244-245). They also contend that similar conditions, which encouraged trade between the seaward settlements and the agricultural areas of the upper delta and its hinterland, also existed further east, where the estuary of the Cross River again provided an opportunity for the people to exploit maritime resources and trade these products with the hinterland (Curtin *et al*, 1981). The geographical definition of the Niger-Delta is also rooted in a historical grouping of the pre-colonial societies<sup>53</sup> that are located within the delta of the River Niger by Alagoa (1976), who distinguished between the core, the western and the eastern Niger-Delta. In this sense, the geographically defined or core Niger-Delta states in present day Nigeria include Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers and parts of Akwa-Ibom and Imo states.

As a political entity, the Niger-Delta is defined as the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria, comprising six states: Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers. Still within the political entity school, some scholars use Alagoa (1976)'s historical categorisation of the region into core, eastern and western Niger Delta, to make a distinction between the "core" and "peripheral" Niger-Delta. The core includes Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers and parts of Akwa-Ibom, while the peripheral

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<sup>53</sup> Some of these societies include Ijaw, Isoko, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ukwani, Aboh, Ibibio, Anang, Efik, Epkeye, Ikwere, Ogoni, Andoni, Ndoni, Ogba, Engbeni, Edo, Ilaje.

comprise Anambra, Edo, Cross River, Imo and Ondo. On the other hand, there is the elastic school that argues that all the states in categories, the core and peripheral, belong to the Niger Delta region (IDEA, 2000:142). However, this chapter shall adopt the geo-political definition of the region as contained in Part I, Schedule 3 and 4 of the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC Act of 2000), which combines states from all the categorisations discussed above based on oil production status. In this light, the Niger-Delta comprises nine oil-producing states in Nigeria namely, Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers ([www.nddc.gov.ng](http://www.nddc.gov.ng) accessed 12/12/08).

Based on the foregoing, the Niger-Delta region covers an area of about 75,000 square kilometres in landmass and is Africa's largest and the world's third largest mangrove forest, and one of the world's most expansive fresh water swamps (Sampson, 2008: 62). The Niger-Delta is of strategic importance to Nigeria given that it holds an estimated 40 billion barrels of oil reserves in addition to its vast forest and water resource endowment from which Nigeria generates 95% of her foreign exchange earnings, about 50% of its GDP and 80% of all budgetary revenues (see Ikome, 2005: 4). However, despite the enormous resource endowment of the Niger-Delta and its strategic significance to Nigeria's national survival and global energy security, the region remains mired in abject poverty occasioned by environmental despoliation from oil exploration activities. According to Ikome (2005: 5), the region is one of the poorest and least developed parts of Nigeria as over 70% of its inhabitants still eke out a rural and subsistence existence, lacking basic amenities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, hospitals, good roads and decent housing. This is the paradox that the region has become.

### **4.3 The human security nature of the crisis**

A plethora of threats exists against the community, economic, environmental, food, health, personal and political security of the Niger-Delta peoples and these have been variously documented (Apkofure *et al*, 2003; Onduku, 2003; Isike, 2005; UNDP, 2006). According to Simpson, the integrated effects of oil production activities on human security in the region permeate the entire gamut of the human security indicators outlined above (Simpson, 2008). However, as Simpson rightly observes, all the threats to human security in the Niger-Delta are largely generated from

environmental hazards occasioned by the oil exploitation activities of oil companies in the region (Simpson, 2008). For example, the people's health security is threatened by oil exploration-related environmental despoliation; their economic security is threatened by the resulting health insecurity and dislocation from their traditional economies of farming and fishing; their communal security is threatened by the resultant poverty, social unrest and erosion of cultural values with adverse implications for their existence.

Environmentally, oil exploration in the region creates ecological hazards: gas flaring, product spills, discharge of refinery effluents into fresh water sources, drill wastes and atrophy of forests (Obi, 1999; Akpofure *et al*, 2003). The resulting extensive and systematic degradation of environmental resources has served to impose huge burdens on human lives through much of the Niger-Delta causing problems such as land degradation, food and water poisoning that lead to extreme poverty, disease and little or no access to social amenities such as electricity, health care services and schools (See *Tell*, 2003: 58; Human Rights Watch, 2005). The green house effect due to gas flaring affects not only people in the Niger-Delta and beyond, but also the wild life in the area, thus causing rural-urban migration and occupational displacement, which escalates the unemployment problem (economic insecurity) as inhabitants of the region are mostly farmers and fishermen<sup>54</sup>. An environmental development strategy for the region in 1995 estimated that as much as 76% of all associated natural gas from oil production in Nigeria is flared compared to 0.6% in the United States, 4.3% in the United Kingdom and 21% in Libya (World Bank Report, 1995). This confirms later reports that Nigeria (Niger-Delta) flares more gas than any other country in the world (Ibeanu, 2000; World Bank Report, 2005).

According to Agbo (2003: 56), Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states alone suffer over 300 reported major product spills annually with each discharging about 2,300 cubic meters of oil. Oil spills are known to degrade farmlands, forests, aquatic fauna with attendant harmful effects on not only the primary farming and fishing occupations (economic insecurity) of the people, but also on their health (Obi, 1999; Akpofure *et al* 2000;

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<sup>54</sup> Studies have shown that gas flaring negatively affects agricultural production (see UNDP Report 2006; Simpson, 2008)

IDEA, 2000; Agbo, 2003). Also, in several oil-producing communities across the Niger-Delta, high pressure pipelines carrying crude oil, diesel and gas criss-cross roads that children step across on their way to school. Often, corrosion and other factors lead to leakages as some of the pipelines are over 30 years old (Agbo, 2003:58). These pipelines and other oil installations are rarely maintained by the oil companies and government, thus resulting in leakages and spills which destroy wildlife, farmlands, forests, aquatic and human lives as evidenced in the inferno that gutted Egborode in 1998 and Jesse in 2003 (Delta state) and Onicha-Amiyi in 2003 (Abia state)<sup>55</sup>

Also, the discharge and dumping of refinery effluents (harmful liquid waste that flows out of the refineries during the process of refining crude oil) into fresh water sources and farmlands is a major concern. This, no doubt, destroys the environment and the consequent food shortage and insecurity problem is not in doubt. According to IDEA studies, “these effluents contain excessive amounts of very toxic materials like chromium and mercury which can be stored in the brains of fishes for a long time thus causing food poisoning”(IDEA, 2000:147).

Economically, because environmental degradation dislocates people from their traditional occupations, poverty remains rife in sharp contrast to the staggering wealth derived from oil exploration in the region. According to a 1995 World Bank report:

GNP per capita is below the national average of US\$280. The rural population commonly fish or practise subsistence agriculture, and supplement their diet and income with a wide variety of forest products. Educational levels are below the national average and are particularly low for women. While 76 percent of Nigerian children attend primary school, this level drops to 30 – 40 percent in some parts of the Niger-Delta. The poverty level in the Niger-Delta is exacerbated by the high cost of living. In the urban areas of Rivers state, the cost of living index is the highest in Nigeria (World Bank Report, 1995).

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<sup>55</sup> V. Ojakorotu & U. Okeke-Uzodike, “Oil, Arms Proliferation and Conflict in Niger-Delta of Nigeria” African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 6(2), 2006: 85-106

More than 10 years since this report, the poverty situation in the region has not changed for the better. If anything, it has worsened, in spite of the advent of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, which gave rise to expectations that the region would now experience a new era of peace and development. For example, according to a 2006 UNDP Report “the Niger-Delta is a region suffering from administrative neglect, crumbling social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth, squalor and endemic conflict” (UNDP Report, 2006: 78). As Table 1 below shows, the majority of the population in the Niger-Delta region is young and unemployed. Life expectancy is low, given not only the near absence of health care facilities, but also the environmental effects of oil exploration. This has negatively impacted on rural poverty as the rural population below poverty line stands at 88%. There is a near absence of infrastructure due to the perennial state neglect of this oil-rich region, which has worsened the enormous poverty and deprivation the area and its peoples face<sup>56</sup>.

Table 1: Niger-Delta region profile

Population below 30yrs	62%	
Current population growth rate/yr	3.1%	
Population projection	39million (2015)	
Average household size	6 people (8 in rural areas)	
Population density	256/km (Imo, 700 C. River 120)	
Life expectancy	46.8yrs (N)*, lower in outer Delta	
Rural population below poverty line	88%	
Number unemployed per households (as share of households)	5 persons +	73%
	3 – 4 persons	15%
	1 – 2 persons	6%
Income of unemployed persons Naira per month, estimate (1,000 Naira equals 8.16 US\$)	<5,000	46%
	5,001 – 10,000	20%
	10,001- 15,000	11%
	15,001- 20,000	9%

<sup>56</sup> *Tell* interview Onyeama Ogochukwu, former NDDC chairman, 2003.

	>20,000	14%
Employed persons per sector	Agriculture, Fish and Forestry	
	44.2%	
	Trading/selling	
	17.4%	
	Services	
	9.8%	
	Education & health	7.1%
	Administration	
	5.4%	
	Construction	
2.8%		
Transport		
2.2%		
Other		
	11.1%	

Source: NDDC, 2004

\* (N) means Nigerian average

Also, Niger-Delta states have a significant weigh down effect on the country data profile of Nigeria compared to other states, as human conditions are better in the latter. The percentage of income available to unemployed persons, lower in the national figures, as shown in table 2, is dwarfed by the high cost of living in the Niger-Delta. For example, 5,000 naira (Nigerian currency) has a higher purchasing power in other cities in Nigeria than in Port Harcourt, Warri, Asaba, Yenogoa and Eket, which are amongst the most urbanised cities in the Niger-Delta. Therefore, even though more people get less than 5, 000 naira monthly in the unemployment bracket in other states (57%) than in the Niger-Delta (46%), in reality, those in other states can purchase more and improve their living standards better as the cost of living is lower in these states compared to the region. Environmentally, all the major problems plaguing the country as highlighted in Table 2 below are prevalent in the Niger-Delta<sup>57</sup>, thus making it the most environmentally challenged region of Nigeria.

<sup>57</sup>There are more life-threatening environmental degradation problems facing oil-hosting communities in the

Table 2: Country profile of Nigeria excluding Niger-Delta states

Population below 30	58%										
Current population growth rate	2.5%										
Average household size	6 (8 in rural areas)										
Life expectancy (male/female average)	51										
Rural population below poverty	70.2%										
No of unemployed persons per households (as share of households)	<table> <tr> <td>5 persons +</td> <td>62%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 – 4 persons</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 – 2 persons</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </table>	5 persons +	62%	3 – 4 persons	10%	1 – 2 persons	3%				
5 persons +	62%										
3 – 4 persons	10%										
1 – 2 persons	3%										
Income of unemployed persons per month Naira estimate (1,000 Naira equals 8.16 US\$)	<table> <tr> <td>&lt;5,000</td> <td>57%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5,001 – 10,000</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10,001- 15,000</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15,001- 20,000</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>&gt;20,000</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> </table>	<5,000	57%	5,001 – 10,000	13%	10,001- 15,000	9%	15,001- 20,000	11%	>20,000	10%
<5,000	57%										
5,001 – 10,000	13%										
10,001- 15,000	9%										
15,001- 20,000	11%										
>20,000	10%										
Labour force participation rate 15-64 (males and females)	67.8%										
General unemployment rate (2006)	5.8%										
Environmental issues	soil degradation; rapid deforestation; urban air and water pollution; desertification; oil pollution - water, air, and soil have suffered serious damage from oil spills; loss of arable land; rapid urbanisation										

Source: adapted from <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Nigeria/Profile.html>, accessed 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2006

A further desegregation of the HDI score at the local government level in the Niger Delta clearly shows that regional and state scores mask inequalities in human development among oil-producing communities. In spite of some of the efforts of oil

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region that are not facing the rest of the country. These include oil spills, gas flares, oil waste and seismic surveys, all with very damaging effects on human life (Frynas, 2001).

companies to enhance the well being of the communities where they operate through development projects, particularly in social infrastructure<sup>58</sup>, wide disparity still exists in the performances of local government areas in the Niger-Delta compared to other regions in the country<sup>59</sup>. According to the UNDP (2006) Report on the Niger-Delta, the local government areas without oil facilities appear to fare better on the poverty index than those with oil facilities, an indication of the paradox of poverty in the midst of wealth. According to the report, the Niger-Delta's appalling human development situation cannot be completely captured by the HDI, as some essential issues in the region are not reflected in the computation of the index, such as the dire state of infrastructure. The lack of data also distorts the calculation of the index to some extent. Nevertheless, available data point to the fact that the region is not faring well. The poor marks suggest the Niger-Delta will probably struggle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is only close in one area - school enrolments - and is not likely to meet the other goals by the target date of 2015 or anytime soon after (UNDP Report, 2006).

#### **4.3.1 Human insecurity and armed conflict in the Niger-Delta**

There are four broad typologies of conflict in the Niger-Delta based on the major actors involved. These include Government versus Community conflicts; Community versus Oil company conflicts; Community versus Community conflicts and Intra-Community conflicts. However, we note that these conflicts are not mutually exclusive categorisations as they often overlap. The essence of this broad categorisation is to capture the different dimensions of conflict in the region and yet sharpen the focus of our discussions of these conflicts as they occurred in our three study areas. In this section, however, we shall focus on the Government versus Community conflicts which have become more predominant between 2000 and 2008 and in a sense are related to this study's hypothesis in terms of the failure of existing governance and leadership structures.

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<sup>58</sup> These interventions are usually a drop in the ocean compared against the development needs of these communities

<sup>59</sup> The poor outcomes of development interventions of oil companies are, to some extent, due to the lack of a systematic link of such plans to government development plans and strategies. Until the recent development of the Niger-Delta Development Master Plan by the NDDC which involved the private sector including oil companies and government, oil companies have been known to work at cross purposes in terms of citing development projects in the region (*Tell*, April 2003 Special Edition, *Tell*, March 2007, Special Publication on "NDDC's Silent Revolution in the Niger-Delta").

Government's failure to guarantee the human security needs of the people of the Niger-Delta has tended to compromise the essential legitimacy of the state, and the people, convinced that their security interests are different from those of the government and will be better served by alternative authorities<sup>60</sup>, have resorted to mobilising themselves in protest against the state, its agents (state security forces) and allies (oil companies), thus setting a climate of antagonistic relations between the people and the state. In essence, then, human security threats like environmental despoliation and its attendant negative effects on the livelihoods and health of the Niger-Delta people have contributed to the indignation, social discontent and frustration the people feel against the state<sup>61</sup> leading to what Nafziger describes as the mobilization of deprivation into collective violence by militias against the state (Nafziger, 2008: 149). The state, in turn, has often responded with military force (domination) to contain these militias and thus further militarising the region and perpetuating a cycle of violence with attendant negative consequences for social stability, peace and development in the Niger-Delta (Ojatorotu and Uzodike, 2006).

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<sup>60</sup> Rosenau calls this a pervasive authority crisis, arising when a people lose faith in the existing social, political and economic order. According to him, they are then forced by their unfortunate circumstances to transfer authority to ethnic minorities, local governments, religious and linguistic groups, environmental and political organisations.

<sup>61</sup> UNDP Report, 2006: 37

Table 3: militarisation of the Niger-Delta, 1990 - 2006

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Operating force</b>	<b>Action</b>
Oct 1990	Umuechem	Security Protection Unit	Killed 80 unarmed demonstrators 495 houses destroyed
1993	Umuechem		Razing of houses and properties
1999	Odi	Army and Mobile Police	Razing of the entire community as every house and properties worth millions of naira were burnt
Jan 2004	Uwheru	Operation Restore Hope	Killed 20 persons Burnt down 11 houses
July 2004	Egbema	Operation Restore Hope Joint-Security task Force	Used gun-boats, military helicopters and bombs to destroy 13 communities. A total of 500 buildings were razed. 200 persons, mostly women and children feared dead and missing till date
Aug 2004	Olugbobiri & Ikebiri	State security operatives	16 youths killed for agitating for a better deal from MNOCs
Oct 2005	Odioma	Joint-Security Task Force	Killed 77 persons including youths

Source: Compiled by author, August 2006

As the table shows, government's militarisation policy has worsened the human rights situation in the region as it has left scores of people displaced, women raped and many people killed with the net effect of exacerbating the conflict in the region. How do the Niger-Delta women fare in this crisis?

#### 4.3.2 Women's vulnerability to the crisis and the violations of their human rights

As aforementioned, women and men both suffer from the prevalent human insecurities and human rights abuses in the Niger-Delta as well as from the effects of armed conflict. However, women tend to be more vulnerable than men. Although women's vulnerability to the crisis of insecurity, human rights violations and violence in the Niger-Delta occurs in many fronts, we shall concern ourselves with the economic and health effects of environmental despoliation occasioned by oil exploration activities. We shall also present evidence of their disproportionate vulnerability to the after effects of armed conflict in the region.

Economically, like their women counterparts elsewhere in the country, women in the Niger-Delta are victims of a post-colonial patriarchal culture that discriminates against them and marginalises them in all spheres of public decision-making. However, as Koripamo-Agary and Agary (2005: 193) assert, "certain peculiarities of the Niger-Delta, particularly the massive and rapid degradation of the environment, on which she depends for her livelihood, marks out the Niger-Delta woman, making her more vulnerable to discrimination and disempowerment". Women in the region dominate the Niger-Delta's core agricultural-based occupations of farming, fishing and the gathering of seafood, and so they depend directly on the environment, not only for their livelihoods, but also for their familial and community sustenance. Consequently, the decimation of the environment from oil exploration activities<sup>62</sup> directly impacts on women and their economic capacities and value as producers and reproducers of their communities. In the tropical rain forest, apart from farming and fishing, women's other economic activities include collection of snails and other non-timber products, weaving, fuel wood gathering, and tapping of rubber trees. Pottery making is prevalent across the entire region and so is trading. In fact, women dominate in the retail trade, at both local and long distance levels in the Niger-Delta. All these economic activities are dependent on the environment and have been negatively affected by environmental changes emanating from oil exploration activities. These words of two women activists in the region aptly sum up the environmentally induced economic deprivation of women and how it has reduced the quality of their lives:

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<sup>62</sup> Some hazards of oil exploration activities to the region's environment include deforestation, oil spills, and soil erosion which destroy soil fertility, whole farmlands and pollute streams, creeks and rivers – robbing them of all aquatic life (See Ikome 2005:3)

They have destroyed our means of livelihoods. We cannot farm again. We cannot fish again...the pipelines pass through our farms. They are laid in front of our school compounds. You can see the rusted pipes...they know our stream is not good for drinking water anymore<sup>63</sup>

In the past, fishing was the major occupation of the women. Husbands gave every wife a dug out boat. It was her prized possession and she made her living and sustained herself, her children and her husband through it. And although this activity was seasonal, women made enough money to send their children to school. In fact, fishing was such a major income earner that traders travelled from Onitsha market to buy our fish and Cray fish. Oil exploration and exploitation have killed the fish or driven them so far out to the sea that the women have to depend on other means, such as trading to make money, and even this is difficult because of the problem of the lack of funds. It has thus become increasingly difficult to care for their families and send their children to school<sup>64</sup>

Thus, oil exploitation and its attendant environmental hazards directly infringes on women's right to work<sup>65</sup> with resulting negative implications for their human dignity and on their roles as wives and mothers.

Also, in spite of the centrality of women to the primary economies of the region, they ironically do not have ready access to water and land resources, two vital resources to the region's local economies. Women, especially those in the rural areas, continue to experience acute shortages of safe drinking water with attendant negative impacts on not only their livelihoods, but also their personal and family hygiene. In terms of ownership of land, post-colonial patriarchal inheritance practices prevent women from controlling this important factor of production. In various parts of the region, women are only allowed access to land through their spouses, sons, brothers and/or male relations (Okonji, 1990; Idisi, 1996). To mitigate this cultural impediment to their economic activities, women in areas such as Delta, Akwa Ibom, Imo and Rivers

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<sup>63</sup> Cited in Korimapo-Agary & Agary (2005:194)

<sup>64</sup> Korimapo-Agary & Agary (2005:195 - 196)

<sup>65</sup> The right to work is enshrined in article 6 of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

states, are able to rent farmlands for economic use. However, this practice is largely determined by their financial base and the extent to which the men-folk are ready/willing to lease or rent farmlands; effectively still placing control in the hands of men (Gabriel, 1998). These deprivations amount to a violation of the provisions of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which applies to women and men and which Nigeria has signed to. They also violate CEDAW which has express provisions on the economic rights of women.

The resulting occupational displacement from economic deprivations suffered by women, the poverty it spews and their effects on HIV and AIDS prevalence, and impact on women's health in the region, are well documented (Udonwa *et al*, 2001; 2004; Macilwain, 2006). According to Udonwa *et al* (2004: 3), of the 10 Nigerian states with the highest sero-prevalence rate, 5 are Niger-Delta states. 7 of the 9 Niger-Delta states are amongst the first 18 states in Nigeria with a most unhealthy sero-prevalence rate of above 5% Global studies on HIV and AIDS have shown women and men in Africa and elsewhere experience HIV and its effects differently, with women being disproportionately affected and dying from AIDS more than men (UNAIDS 2001). According to a later study, "worldwide, 62% of the 15 – 24 year olds living with HIV and AIDS are girls, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, a staggering 75% of HIV-positive young people are women (IWHC, 2006 available in [http://dawn.thot.net/women\\_hiv\\_aids1.html](http://dawn.thot.net/women_hiv_aids1.html)). For example, among young adults (20-24 years) in South Africa, 24.5% of women are infected compared to 7.6% infection rate for men (Pettifor *et al*, 2004). The situation is no different in Nigeria where over 40% of the populace is under 15 years old and young people account for over 30% of HIV cases, with prevalence nearly three times higher among 15-24 year old females than males (UNAIDS 2005).

To worsen their health situation, women in the Niger-Delta have low access to and low utilisation of the limited health care facilities in the region. Rural communities are worse off in this regard as they lack functional health facilities to combat the health consequences of environmental degradation<sup>66</sup>, some of which are producing strange diseases in the form of congenital malformations and deformities of children

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<sup>66</sup> More than 6,000 oil spills have been recorded in the Niger-Delta since 1976

(Korimapo-Agary & Agary, 2005; *Tell*, April 7, 2003)<sup>67</sup>. Added to the burden of having to bear and rear environmentally deformed children is the drudgery of fetching water which has health-related repercussions such as back ache, joint pains, spine and pelvic deformations that further create complications in pregnancy and childbirth (Koripamo-Agary and Agary, 2005: 198). Undoubtedly, these are in contradiction of women's right to healthcare, which according to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2000:4), "embraces a wide range of socio-economic factors that promote conditions in which people can lead a healthy life and extends to the underlying determinants of health, such as food and nutrition, housing, access to safe and portable water and adequate sanitation, safe and healthy working conditions and a healthy environment".

In terms of armed conflict, this study confirms the reality of women's disproportionate vulnerability, compared to men. Indeed, an analysis of the gendered dimensions of conflicts in Odi, Uzere and Igbokoda show that women and men in the Niger-Delta are affected differently by conflict and they respond differently as well. While both women and men use and manage natural resources, their different gender-defined roles, responsibilities, opportunities and constraints within and outside households, ensure that women are more vulnerable than men, to conflict in the Niger-Delta. These also determine how women affect and are affected by conflict. Concisely, conflict in the Niger-Delta tends to impact on women more than men in that women continue to bear the after-effects of conflict. And irrespective of whether they were involved or not in the processes that led to conflict in the first place, they become victims of the conflict as they are left to bear the after-effects. Some of these, as are presented in subsequent sections, include domestic abuse, rape and its health as well as lingering psychological effects, prostitution and the burdens of the new roles they assume as breadwinners of their families due to the loss of their husbands and sons.

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<sup>67</sup> More gas is flared in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world and breathing particulate from flaring is linked to disease and premature deaths. For example, "congenital abnormalities are discovered at the oil-producing communities of Eleme, Okirika, Umuechem and the Orashi region...some are born with one nostril, some with one and a half and others with no nostril. Yet some are born with half, others with mutilated lips" (*Tell*, April 7, 2003: 59 – 60). This is hardly surprising given that over 250 toxins have been identified in gas flare emissions <http://www.sweetcrudemovie.com/nigerStatistics.php>.

#### **4.4 Nature of conflict in study areas**

While armed conflict and human insecurities in the Niger-Delta have a generic character, they also have particularities in different areas where they occur. The particularities of conflict in the region help to give a nuanced understanding of conflict and how women fare in it. It is to the specific character of armed and social conflicts in our selected case studies that we now turn to.

##### **4.4.1 Igbokoda Ilaje/Arogbo-Ijaw violence**

Igbokoda is an island town, a semi-urban settlement that is the headquarters of Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo state. The majority of the inhabitants of Igbokoda are Ilaje, but it is relative heterogeneous with the Apoi constituting 20% of the population and the Arogbo-Ijaw 10%). Igbokoda is an oil-rich area which is said to contribute about 7% of Nigeria's annual oil-production output, but, like most other oil-producing communities in the Niger-Delta, is steeped in abject poverty and a massive crisis human insecurity and under-development<sup>68</sup>. Water and sanitation delivery are non-existent as it is said that the only piped water available in the area came from bore holes in Okitikpukpa, which was some 40 kilometers from Igbokoda.

The particular conflict of interest to this study is the community versus community conflict type between two neighbouring communities, the Ugbo-Ilaje and the Arogbo-Ijaw. Violent conflict between the Ugbo-Ilaje and the Arogbo-Ijaw peoples who had been living side by side in peace first started in 1998 and continued until 1999. Igbokoda being the only main land connecting adjoining riverine communities<sup>69</sup> in Ilaje local government area became a battle ground in the armed conflict between these peoples. According to CLO Report (2002), the immediate cause of the Ijaw/Ilaje conflicts in Ondo state was the construction of a Community Health Centre at Apata

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<sup>68</sup> In one of the canoe rides from Igbokoda across the brackish river to the riverine Arogbo-Ijaw areas, I was appalled to see a middle-aged woman scoop water to drink just minutes after she had washed the excrete of her 12 months old baby in the same water. Interestingly, no one raised an eyebrow. My escort later told me it was common practice as the river was the only source of water to the entire Ilaje/Ijaw communities. This very river has apparently been polluted by oil-exploration activities as it looked an oily brown.

<sup>69</sup> Most of these communities are on water. They have no schools; no health clinics no pipe borne water, not to talk of electricity. People live in houses, if you call them that, constructed with plank and raffia on water. While most communities in the western part of Nigeria boast of several primary and secondary schools, no community in the Ilaje area has more than one of these basic educational institutions, so youths are more engaged in fishing than schooling (This Day Online, <http://www.thisdayonline.com/archive/2002/07/16/20020716fea01.html> accessed 16/10/07)

by the Ijaw peoples of Apata, Ojudoama, Tamarabote and Ugogbo to serve their health needs having been previously neglected by government. Apparently, the building of the health centre did not go down well with the Ilajes of the area who felt it was an affront to their claims to the disputed area and they thus destroyed the health centre (CLO Report, 2002:91). The burning of the health centre resulted in an immediate reprisal attack from the Ijaws, and further counter attacks by the Ilajes, who historically see themselves as landlords over the entire area occupied by the Arogbo-Ijaws<sup>70</sup>. So began a series of violent attacks and counter attacks from both sides on each other which left scores of people dead and properties worth millions of naira destroyed as hundreds of homes were torched.

Apart from the age-long land and boundary disputes between the Ugbo-Ilajes and Arogbo-Ijaws, a remote cause of the 1998 violence is the lumping together of the Ugbo-Ilaje and Arogbo-Ijaws in a new local government area (Ese-Odo) in 1997, which neither side wanted. Instead of separate local government areas head quartered in their own domains as they expected the Federal government to create for them, they were lumped together under Ese-Odo an Ijaw domain in what Chief Fola Lepe<sup>71</sup> referred to as “a forced marriage of strange bed fellows” (Interview with Chief Lepe, 4 April, 2007). According to him, this is symptomatic of the larger Nigerian national question which is rooted in the forced amalgamation of the Southern and Northern parts of what later became Nigeria in 1914 by the colonialist, without the consent of the people. The forced union of the Ilajes and Ijaws quickly degenerated into violence with a reported attack on some Ijaw communities by the Ilaje (CLO, 2002: 93). This in turn sowed the seeds of the eventual violent responses from the Ijaws, who by the time the Ilajes destroyed their health centre in 1998, felt they had to do something to protect their existence. The Ilaje town of Igbokoda, a mainland that connects the riverine Arogbo-Ijaw communities and its inhabitants were greatly affected by hostilities. According to a witness account:

we neva see this kin tin before o! Na so so gun we

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<sup>70</sup> There had always been conflicts between the Ilajes and Ijaws over land. An important dynamic in this age long conflict is that the majority the Ilajes are the majority and being Yoruba-speaking in a Yoruba-speaking state of Nigeria, they have always insisted that the Ijaws are their tenants (CLO, 2002).

<sup>71</sup> Chief Lepe, an Ilaje prince, is a renowned hotelier in Igbokoda and business man

just dey hear every day and night so tey some of us get to run comot from our land go Lagos go stay until government come settle the matter. Even till today sef, the matter neva finish o because we men still dey vex. Dem wan finish the Ijaw kpakpata!

We have never seen this kind of violence before! There was constant shooting day and night all over the area and it became unbearable such that some of us had to run away from our home land to live in Lagos until when government eventually mediated. However, the crisis still lingers till date because our men are still very angry and talk of war to completely annihilate the Ijaw people<sup>72</sup>

At the time of our visit to Igbokoda in 2007, it still carried the look of a ghost town with ashes of the violence adorning every nook and cranny. Women are the worst hit with the after-effects of the violence because of the traditional responsibility of feeding the family while men undertake other major capital projects within the family such as building a family house and children's education. The women are then left to eke out vital family living incomes through subsistence farming, fishing, petty trading and activities in the informal sector. These were seriously compromised by the violence and mutual suspicion that followed the years after. According to Mrs Ogburu:

the fight affect our trade bad bad because right now we no dey fit enter Ijaw area to buy and sell and them too no fit enter we side. Even our sisters wey marry them no fit cross because our oga no go gree. How we go come take make enough money feed our pickin dem now?

the conflict affected our trade negatively because as we speak we are not able to trade with our Ijaw women across the river because of fear and restrictions posed by the conflict. Even our fellow women who married on either side can not break the barriers because our husbands will not permit. How then do we now make enough money as we used to and be able to feed our children?  
(Interview with Mrs Ogburu, 7 April, 2007)

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<sup>72</sup> Views expressed by Mrs Ariola Ogburu, Igbokoda market women leader during a focus group discussion with 10 Igbokoda women in Larada, Igbokoda (7 April, 2007).

In the violence between the Arogbo-Ijaws and Ugbo-Ilajes, the federal government and police force have been implicated as complicit actors that started the crisis in the first place by not consulting properly before establishing local government councils in the areas. Both sides have often times accused the government and the Nigerian Police Force of inaction during violence which in their respective views helps to perpetuate the violence. This point is well underscored in (CLO, 2002) where, according to Chief Williams, an Ijaw chieftain:

Arogbo-Ijaw communities were attacked, with many sustaining severe injuries and loss of property the value of which was not estimated. To add to the bitterness of the Arogbo-Ijaw people, the then military Administrator, Navy Commander Anthony Onyearugbulem, gave the Arogbo-Ijaws only the sum of #100,000 as immediate relief pending the outcome of the investigative panel set up in connection with the crisis. (CLO, 2002: 93).

Similarly, John Mafo, an Ilaje chieftain also blames the federal government: “I hold the federal government responsible for creating a problem where there was none. Just as the government deliberately created problems at Ife-Modakeke and Ogbe-Ijoh, so they did between the Ugbo-Ilaje and Arogbo-Ijaw” (CLO, 2002: 92 – 93). In all, as has been argued by CASS (2005), conflict in Igbokoda as is the case elsewhere in the Niger-Delta, can be explained as “the failure of existing structures and processes to resolve fundamental issues of allocative and distributive inequities (cultural, economic, political and social) and therefore, of justice and good governance in the area” (CASS, 2005:8).

#### **4.4.2 Odi genocide**

Odi is a town located a few kilometres from Yenagoa (capital of Bayelsa state) on the road past Kaiama. It was the former headquarters of Kolokuma/opokumama Local Government Area in the state. It used to be the second largest town in the state after Amassoma until 20 November, 1999 when soldiers deployed on the orders of President Olusegun Obasanjo invaded and razed all but three buildings and killed hundreds of people because some youths from the community had allegedly abducted

and killed a total of 12 policemen. According to CLO Report (2002), scratched out on the remaining burnt-out walls after the genocide were the considered thoughts of the invading soldiers: “*Shame on your Juju, Egbesu,*” “*bayelsa will be silent forever,*” “*We will kill all Ijaws*”; “*Egbesu, why you run?*”; “*Our power pass Egbesu*”; “*Next time even the trees will not be spared*”; “*This land is for Soja not Ijaws*” (CLO Report, 2002: 67).

The most serious conflict that Odi has yet experienced in its history was the 1999 conflict it had with the Federal Government of Nigeria. Before 1999, Odi was a relatively quiet and unknown settlement whose main occupations were fishing and farming. This changed on 20 November 1999, days before a 14 days ultimatum given by President Obasanjo to the state governor to fish out the criminal youths or face declaration of a state of emergency in the state. The youths who had abducted seven policemen were said to be avenging the killing of their colleagues by state security personnel during an earlier attempt to arrest them. According to CASS (2005: 21), most of the youths who caused the crisis were not from Odi community but had taken refuge there after being driven from Yenogoa where they conducted their criminal activities as pay back against the state for their unemployed and unemployable status. This much was confirmed by Madam Amafadieie’s<sup>73</sup> account of what caused the crisis:

What most people do not know is that these boys were not from Odi. They came from Yenogoa, where they were running away from the law, to hide in Odi as they often do after operating (kidnapping) in Yenogoa and Port Harcourt. When they saw the policemen parading Odi, they thought their game was up and decided to take the law into their hands with the policemen. We have a way of knowing these things and if the government had given us enough time, we would have fished the boys out and handed them over because Odi boys are not criminals who would jeopardise the whole community for their own greed for money  
(Interview with Amafadieie, 6 June 2007)

According to the CLO Report (2002), the excuse for the federal government’s levelling of Odi was the killing of 12 policemen by a group of youths led by Ken Ebu-

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<sup>73</sup> Madam Amafadieie is the women’s leader of Odi Community.

Neweigha. The report shows that the youths had demanded a #2 million naira ransom for the release of the seven policemen earlier abducted. While the matter was still being negotiated with the state government, one of the policemen who was hypertensive, died. In panic, the youths killed the other six policemen and another five sent in to investigate the matter. The federal government then gave the state governor a 14 days ultimatum “within which to restore law and order in your state and effect the arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the killings, failing which I shall set in motion a process to declare a state of emergency in Bayelsa state”<sup>74</sup> (CLO Report, 2002: 71). While the legality of the president’s threat is debatable, the same federal government did not wait for its own ultimatum to end as on 20 November 1999, 4 days before the end of the ultimatum, over a thousand soldiers invaded Odi to perpetuate the worst human rights violation of the Obasanjo government. According to Onyegbula (2001), the invading soldiers unleashed a heavy bombardment of artillery, aircraft, grenade launchers, mortar bombs and other sophisticated weapons in replication of a typical invasion of an enemy territory in real warfare (Onyegbula, 2001: 2). At the end, thousands of people, animals and aquatic creatures lost their lives. Properties worth millions of naira were looted and virtually all the infrastructure in the community was either destroyed or torched. Many citizens of Odi who were lucky to be alive were bundled aboard trucks and taken to military barracks in Elele in Port Harcourt and Warri as prisoners of war. Odi community was occupied like a conquered territory. By the time the soldiers were eventually evacuated and replaced with men of the Nigerian police, Odi was in ruins.

It is reported that before the soldiers left, they hung about the charred-out remains of the town for two weeks to ensure that it had been truly pacified, whereupon the surviving villagers straggled back from their hideouts in the forest swamps and surrounding communities. They clustered around the Odi Health Centre where the aged, the sick and the dying had gone to get a little relief from the nightmare they had been subjected to by what many within the country and outside perceived to be “unacceptable executive lawlessness (CLO Report, 2002: 67 – 68). At a press conference in Lagos on December 14, 1999, one month after the onslaught, the executive director of CLO summed up his visit to Odis thus:

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<sup>74</sup> Extracts from the president’s letter to the governor dated 10 November, 1999 which was partly reproduced in (CLO Report, 2002: 71).

We saw no single livestock, poultry or other domestic animals except a stray cat. The community's 60,000 inhabitants had fled into the forest or been arrested or killed. Only a few thoroughly traumatized old women, and children could be seen around, some of them suffering from fractures and other injuries sustained while trying to escape from advancing soldiers. We also received information that the soldiers were particularly contemptuous of books. Several libraries and educational material were targeted and destroyed (CLO Report, 2002: 68)

Other human rights groups that visited Odi before 14 December either witnessed or heard the tales of mass burial, mass cremation, the disembowelment and mass dumping of corpses in River Nun which borders Odi on the east. The list of visitors included the then Senate President, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo<sup>75</sup> who led a delegation of the Nigerian senate to the area. In utter disbelief he had said: "I am shocked, there is nothing to say, as there is nobody to speak with" (Vanguard 4 December, 1999: 2; Onyegbula, 2001).

The researcher encountered a number of women in Odi who lost their livelihoods and entire properties; one of them was raped by the soldiers and another apparently lost her mind because she could not comprehend the loss of all her children to the genocide. And as at 2007, the federal government characteristically had not paid out any compensation to any of the victims in spite of entreaties to do so. Although they had started rebuilding their community themselves, the scars of the genocide remain palpable as the people carry on with their lives in bitterness of the injustice meted out on them for which no one has yet claimed responsibility or offered any apologies. According to the wife of the Amayenabo of Odi, "some of our people still don't have homes to live in, no livelihoods to carry on with. If only government can give us loans to restart our lives, we will be doing better than you see. But as usual they have neglected us" (Interview with Amayenabo's wife, 8 June 2007). At that point another woman interjected: "what do you expect when they have not even told us sorry for what they did? You must first acknowledge wrong doing before you make efforts to

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<sup>75</sup> Dr Okadigbo was a staunch member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP)

rectify it. So long as the Obasanjo refuses to apologise, we should not expect anything from him. I have told my people so” (Madam Kumasiere, community leader).

#### 4.4.3 Uzere/Shell crisis

Uzere is an Isoko clan located in Isoko South Local Government Area (LGA) of Delta State. It is one of the largest oil-producing communities in Nigeria, resulting in a huge shift from its primary agrarian status, since the early 1960s after Shell started drilling oil there in 1958. Before the discovery of oil in Uzere, the people engaged mostly in fishing and farming. They cultivated yam, cocoyam, cassava, plantain, green vegetables and other farm produce such as palm oil. The women were mostly traders and potters but they also engaged in the production and sale of local gin popularly known as *kai kai*. However, their local economy has been disarticulated by oil-exploration activities which have taken much out of the environment.

Conflict in Uzere, apart from occasional skirmishes with its neighbours, is mainly between interest groups within the community and Shell who the people perceive as the enemy because it has taken so much out of the community and has continually failed to give back to it in terms of tangible development projects. Like other oil-producing communities in the Niger-Delta, Uzere is steeped in abject poverty made worse by environmental despoliation occasioned by oil exploration activities in the community. With traditional livelihoods eroded by oil exploration hazards such as constant oil leakages and spillage which pollute the farmlands, creeks, fishponds, lakes and rivers, unemployment remains at very high levels. The people lack basic amenities such as electricity, hospitals and schools. When the researcher visited Uzere in 2007, the town had nothing significant to show for its almost 50 years of oil-production. The only secondary school in Uzere was derelict and the two primary schools were not any better. Inhabitants had to travel over 55 kilometres to Oleh in order to access a functional general hospital. Indeed, Uzere is a classic case of federal government and oil company neglect which breeds conflict.

In the face of grave human insecurity and vulnerabilities which threaten their existence, the people of Uzere have tried to engage constructively with Shell<sup>76</sup>, the

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<sup>76</sup> Confronted by the reality of a distant and faceless federal government, Uzere people, like most other

operational oil company in the area, which has 39 oil wells from which it produces about 56,000 barrels of oil daily

(<http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/samuel-uwhejevwe-togbolo/youths-in-the-niger-delta-region-and-oil-gas-co.html> accessed 14/08/07). In return, Shell has not been very forthcoming with engaging constructively with the people or even honouring agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) signed by both parties, whenever they have been able to get Shell to negotiate. For example, in a statement aimed at explaining the youth's threat of assuming a militant posture against Shell if it does not deliver on its promises, the spokesman of the Uzere community, Mr Egoro said:

things got to this level because after several meetings, SPDC failed to come up with a realistic programme on the demands of the Uzere community, which include the speedy completion of the cottage hospital which was started in 2002, energizing the community water scheme, completion of the tapioca drying facility, drawing up an MOU and other promises made but not being fulfilled.

According to him, other grievances raised by the community include alleged unemployment of the indigenes in SPDC, building of a civic centre and relocation of the flow station from its present site due to its high hazard to the community as well as general remediation of the Uzere environment<sup>77</sup>

(<http://www.nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/samuel-uwhejevwe-togbolo/youths-in-the-niger-delta-region-and-oil-gas-co.html> accessed 14/08/07). In the midst of Shell's failure to address the community's grievances, some of which had been lingering for years, the company (in 2005) was spending #100,000 million naira on the fencing of its facility in Uzere flow stations. This was something the community could not comprehend knowing that such an amount could address a good number of their grievances and enable cordial relations between the parties. They could not

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oil-producing communities in the Niger-Delta tend to engage with the oil companies for development benefits.

<sup>77</sup> Shell, for example digs burrow pits indiscriminately which are used to dispose untreated chemicals from crude oil exploration. The company also constructed canals to provide access slots to oil wells, flow stations and oil fields without regard to the attendant ecological effect and the depletion of the area's biodiversity.

understand why Shell was spending so much building a fence around its facilities while it could not plough back half that sum into the host community from where it has been drilling oil for over 47 years. Such neglect of the community was a major factor in the youths eventually giving Shell a three weeks ultimatum to either address all their demands from 2001 – 2005 or face invasion of their facilities in the communities and disruption of production. In response, Shell shut down its flow station controlling Uzere East and West oil fields (Vanguard 5 April, 2005).

Earlier in 2003, the women group led by the *Osu Eya* (Women leader), Mrs Racheal Umukoro staged a peaceful protest against Shell because of its non-completion of the tapioca<sup>78</sup> drying facility which it promised to the community in 2001. Because women are in charge of the tapioca industry which is central to family nutrition and livelihoods, women took Shell's non-completion of the facility as neglect of their plight and as such protested against the company to register their dissatisfaction. As usual, the company invited the police to keep the women at bay, and at the end of the protest apart from a few brushes with the policemen, no one was badly hurt. However, this particular protest caused a lot of tension in the community because the men had disagreed with the women on their embarking on the protest in the first place. The men's opposition to the protest was based on their fears that Shell could resort to the use of force against their women, as was the case in the combined Ijaw, Itsekiri and Ilaje women protests in Warri against Shell and Chevron in 2002. In that protest, which was peacefully intended, the over 3,000 women who participated were confronted by state security forces (mobile police and soldiers called in by Shell and Chevron) who tear gassed, horse whipped and chased them away. In the fiasco, two women died and hundreds were seriously injured (see Ogbodo, 2002; Project Underground, 2003). So, in the days preceding the Uzere protest such fears caused serious tensions within families and the entire community. However, the women were undeterred as they were also protesting against the effects of gas flaring on their fishing occupation which rendered many of them unemployed (Nwajah, 2003). At the end, the fears of violence were unfounded, not because Shell did not call in the police as the men feared, but mainly because the women were peaceful in their organisation and execution of the protest and as such refused to be distracted from their objective

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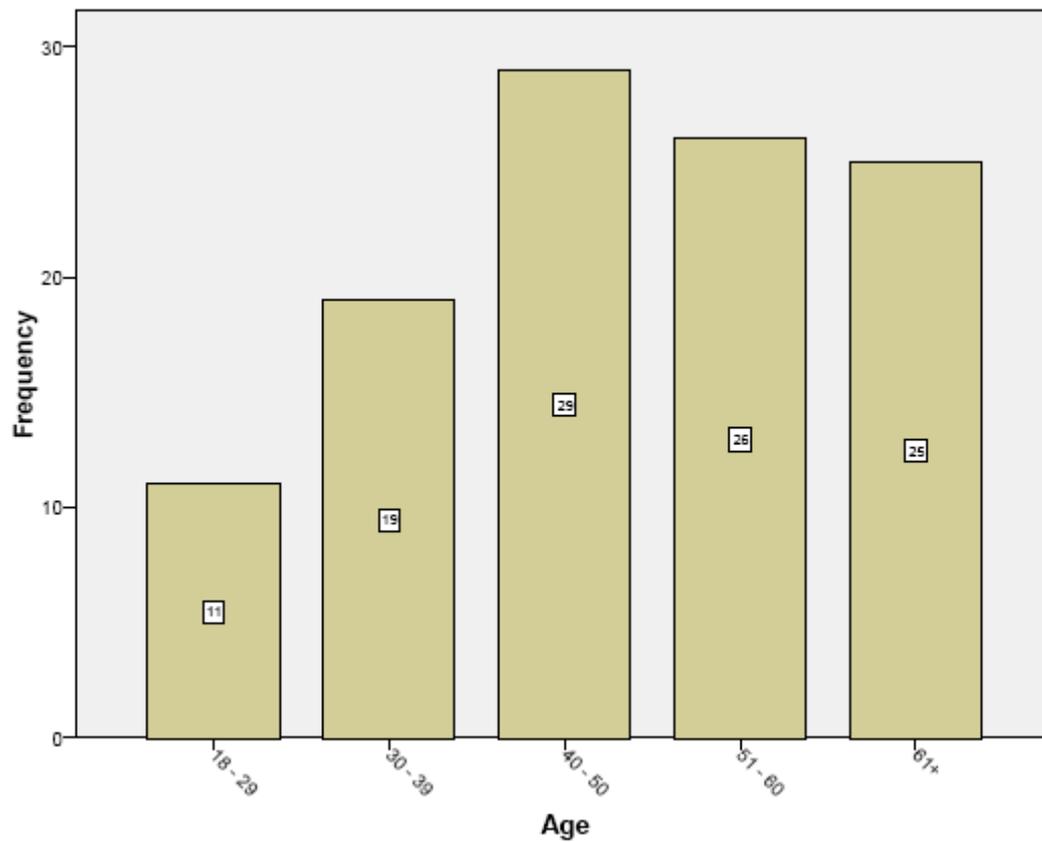
<sup>78</sup> Tapioca is a staple snack made from cassava which itself is the staple food of the Isoko people.

of grievance registration. In 2007, the women interviewed in the FGD led by the Osu eya who led the 2003 protest said that though the tapioca facility was later completed by Shell, they were still awaiting the company to complete the Cottage hospital it promised them in 2001. Such is the nature and character of community vs. oil company confrontations which is the hallmark of conflict in Uzere.

#### **4.5 Methodology and description of data obtained from study areas**

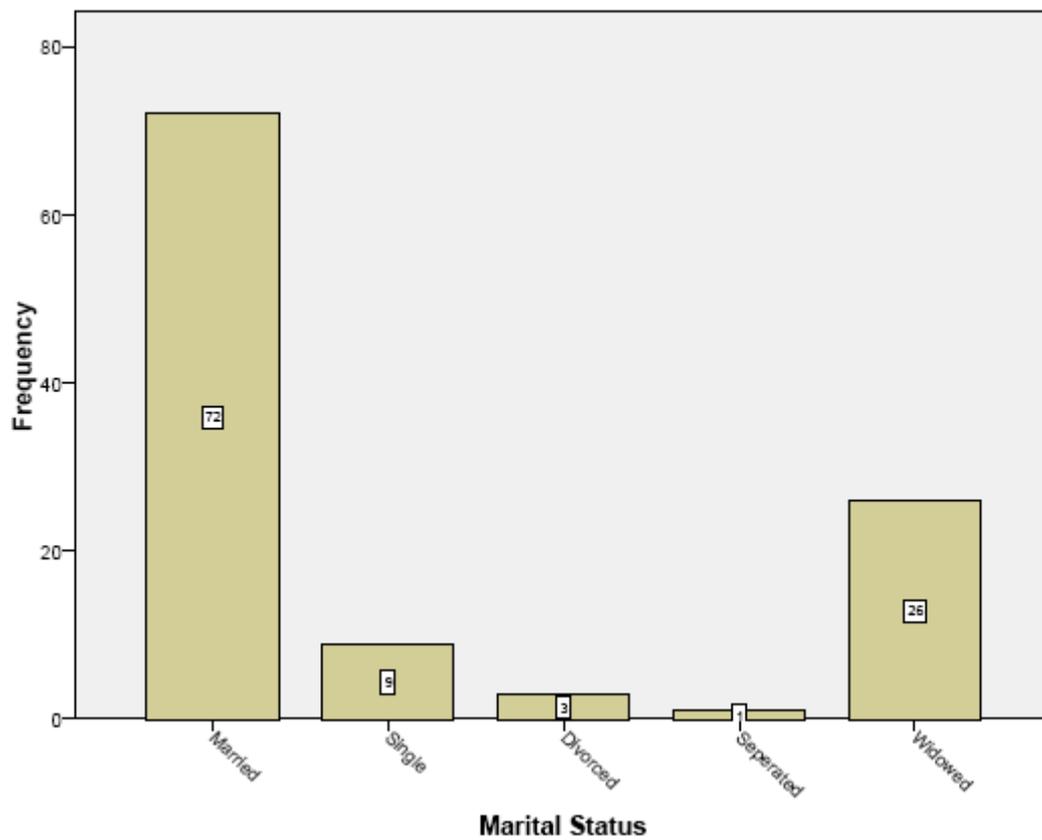
A total of 110 women (54 in Igbokoda, 20 in Odi and 36 in Uzere) were surveyed in the Niger-Delta through the use of the questionnaire instrument. Of these 110 women, 30 (10 in each area) were drawn to participate in three focus group discussion sessions. Fortunately for the researcher, being an indigene of the Niger-Delta region, there was no language barrier in all the three study areas. This was greatly enhanced by the fact that, apart from the local dialects, Pidgin English was a *lingua-franca* across the region and it was understood by all social categories of people. The data obtained from this survey were analysed with the SPSS tool for description purposes and cross tabulations. These are further analysed in chapter six using the Pearson Chi-Square technique and Logistic Regression model to test for the significance of variables that could explain women's perceptions on the main hypothesis: an increased political representation of women in decision-making positions would cause lasting peace in community. In the Niger-Delta, the variables that were selected to test for their significance or otherwise, in relation to the hypothesis include: age, marital status, and occupation and educational background. Accordingly, the age, marital, educational and occupational profiles of the 110 women, who responded in varying degrees to our questionnaires, are presented in figures 1 – 5 below:

Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents



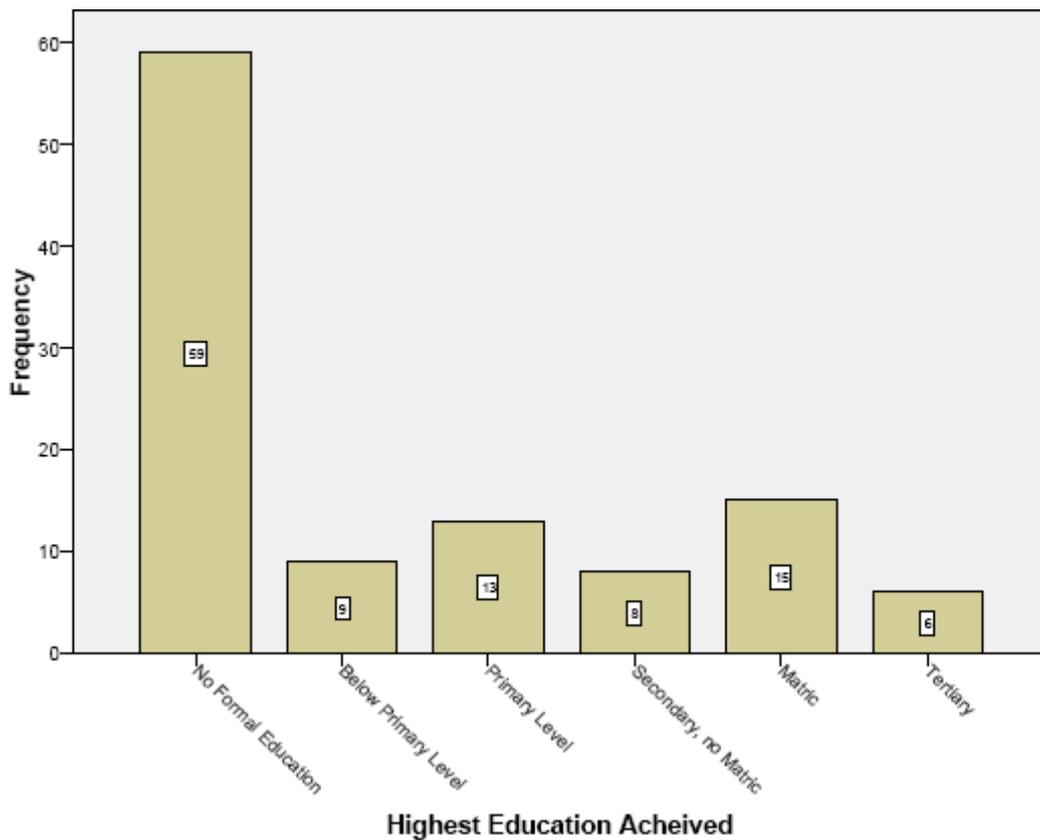
As Figure 1 above shows, a sizeable number of the respondents who were comfortable with disclosing their age were those between the 40 and 50 age bracket (26%). This was followed by those between 51 and 60 (23%), 61 and above (22%), between 30 and 39 (17%) and those between 18 and 29 (10%) in that order.

Figure 2: Marital background of respondents



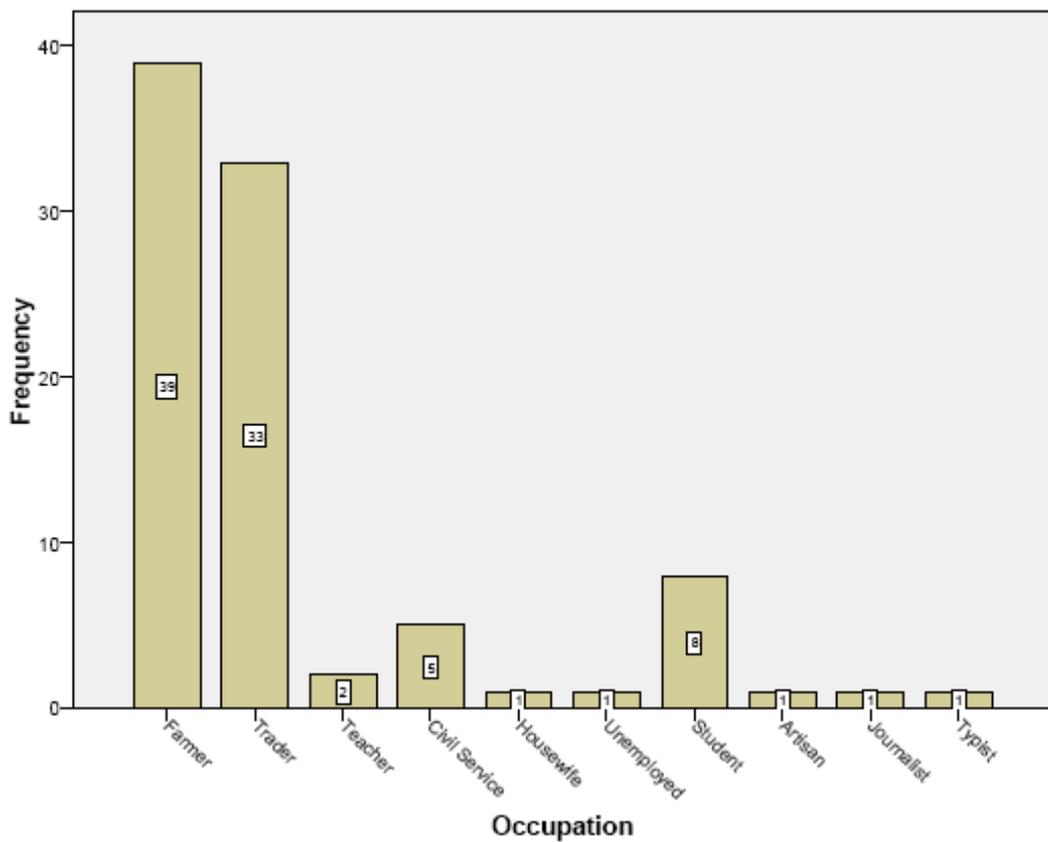
As figure 2 shows, the majority of our respondents (65%) in the Niger-Delta are married. 26 of the whole 110 respondents surveyed (representing 26%) are widowed. 9 (8%) are single. Of the remaining 4, 3 are divorced and 1 was separated at the time of the survey.

Figure 3: Educational background of respondents



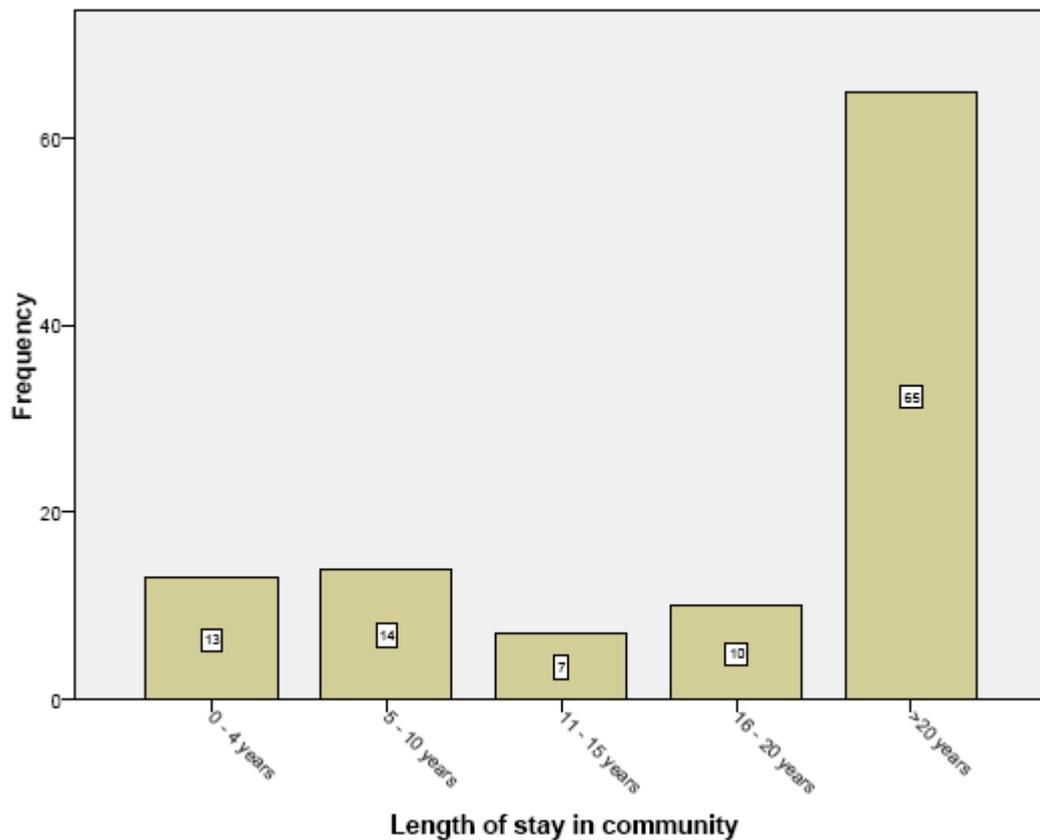
All 110 respondents in the Niger-Delta responded to the question on educational qualifications. Of this number, 59 (53%) had no formal education of any sort with only 15 (14%) having a secondary education with the required 5 credit passes for university matriculation. While 13 (11%) had only primary level education, 9 (8%) had some form of formal education which was below the primary school level. 8 (7%) were secondary school graduates but did not have the required credit passes for university matriculation and only 9 (5%) had any form of tertiary education. The combined numbers of those with primary education (which is not a basic education), below primary level and those with no formal education indicate that the majority (84, representing 73% of 110) of the respondents were illiterates. The common language of communication across the three study areas was the *Pidgin* English which is widely spoken across the Niger-Delta.

Figure 4: Occupation of respondents



From the Figure above, farming (42%) and trading (35%) appear to be the main occupations of people in the study areas, and this is in line with literature on the occupational demographics of the Niger-Delta region (see Akpofure *et al*, 2003; Koripamo-Agary & Agary, 2005; Ikome, 2005). Apart from 10 who were unemployed (1 housewife and 8 students including the 1 who ticked ‘unemployed’), the others were gainfully employed in occupations ranging from teaching, civil service and journalism.

Figure 5: Length of stay in place of interview



As Figure 5 above shows, majority (66, representing 75%) of the 110 respondents have lived in the conflict areas for more than 20 years. This was an important factor in getting the informed views of the women as those who have continually lived in the areas for so long are more likely to know more about happenings in the area (including the cause and nature of the conflict) than those who have not. This is more so as it implies that they were actually living in the areas when the conflict started. Of the others, 14 (13%) have lived in the study areas for between 5 and 10 years and 10 (9%) between 16 and 20 years. The remaining 13 persons, although had lived between 1 and 4 years in the different study areas, were considered to be part of the study because of their knowledge and social status in the different communities. For instance, the two who were school teachers and the five civil servants amongst them had very good knowledge of the conflict in each of their stations even though they were not around when the particular conflict under study erupted. The teachers, for example, continue to play important community-building roles and are well-respected members of the different communities.

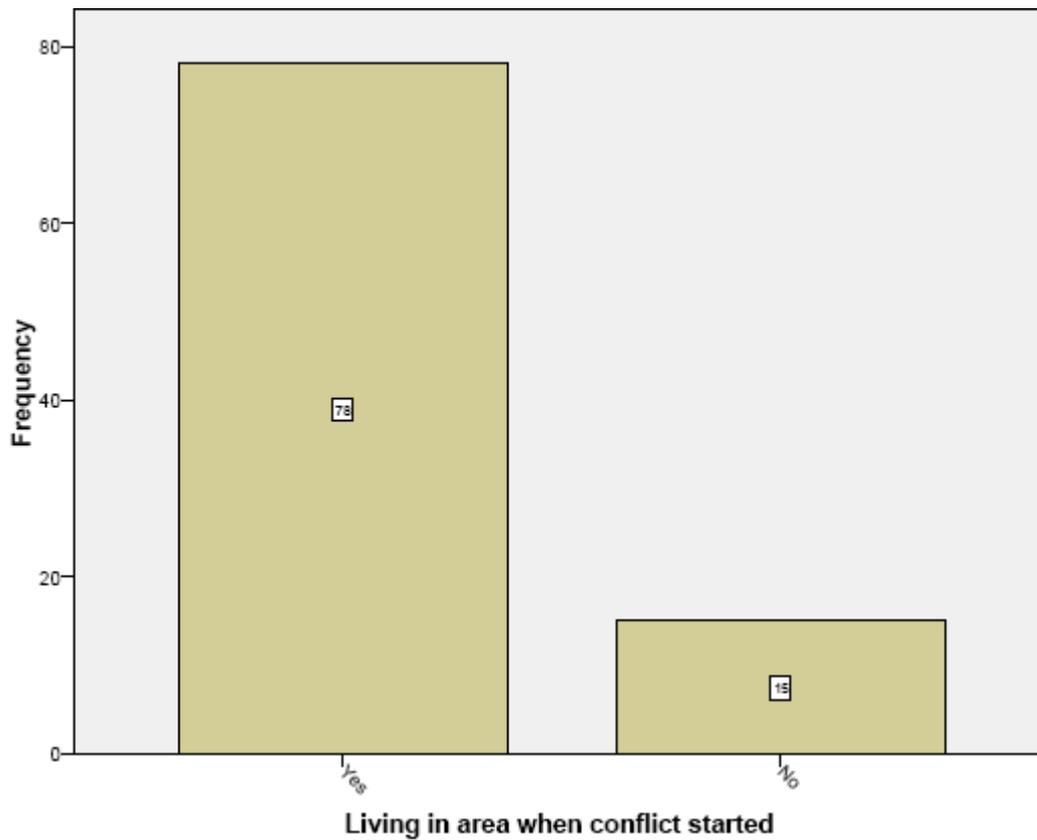
## **4.6 Data presentation and analysis of findings of women and conflict in study areas**

This section is specifically intended to answer research questions 1 and 2 namely: “what is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas, and how does it define the women reality with regards to the conflict cycle?” and “how have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas?”

### **4.6.1 Impact of Conflict on Women**

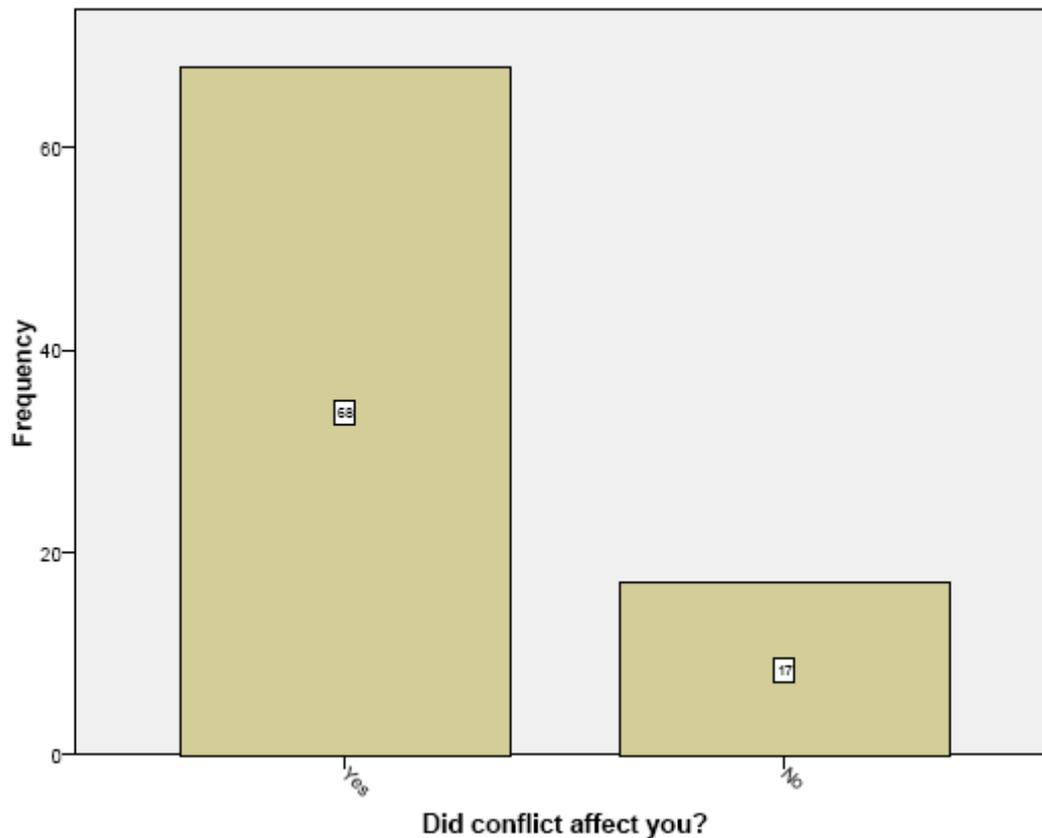
As shown in Figure 6 below, more than three quarters of the respondents (78 out 110 surveyed) were living in the selected study areas (Igbokoda, Odi and Uzere) when the conflict under consideration started. The remaining 15 of the 93 who responded to this question said they were living outside the conflict areas but know enough about the conflict to express their opinions on the subject. This is more so as the conflict affected them one way or another even though they were not physically present when it occurred.

Figure 6: Number of respondents living in study areas when conflict started



This was an important consideration in satisfying feminist methodological concerns of studying the lived experiences of women, and in their locales in order to produce valid knowledge about women. In other words, the majority of the women surveyed in this study were appropriate sources of information on women, conflict and peace-building because they lived in the study areas when conflict started, experienced the conflict directly or indirectly and suffered various losses as a result of the conflict in their communities. Interestingly, there are those who were not living in the areas when the particular conflict started but they suffered losses just as there were those who were around all through the duration of the conflict but did not suffer any loss as a result of conflict.

Figure 7: Conflict effect

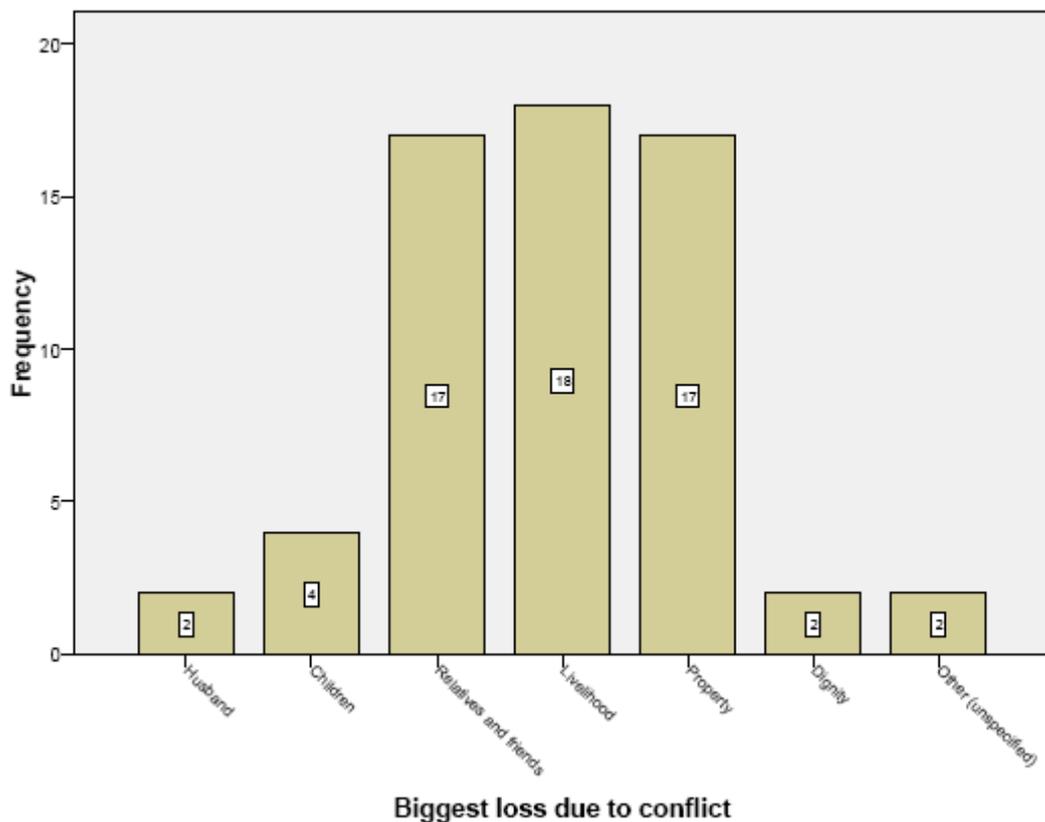


Clearly, the majority (68 out of 85) of the respondents to this question were affected by the conflict in their communities. Only 17 (20%) of the 137 said they were not affected by the conflict in their communities. The remaining 25 of the total study population (110) chose to abstain from answering the question on the impact of conflict on them due to personal reasons. What came out from further attempts to get their responses was that they experienced psychological injuries they were yet to recover from, and as such could still not speak openly about them, even years after the conflict. This implies, therefore, that these 25 women were affected by the conflicts in their communities. If we were to add them to the 68 women who were able to talk about the impact of conflict on them, we will be talking of an 84% impact level for women in areas Igbokoda, Odi and Uzere in the Niger-Delta. For some in this category, like in Uzere, they still live in fear because the conflict is far from over<sup>79</sup>. In other words, women are significantly affected by conflict as they suffer both its

<sup>79</sup> For example, on 4 June 2007, just a day before this survey commenced in Uzere, youths from neighboring Emede (longtime feuding rival of Uzere over land and oil resource) attacked Uzere putting the entire community in fear. This kind of inter-community fighting is one dimension of the Niger-Delta conflict.

short and long-term impact irrespective of whether they are directly involved in the cause(s) of the conflict or whether they ran away from the conflict spots at the time. According to Chief Isreal Akhorta<sup>80</sup>, “conflict affects women more than men even though the men generate and fuel conflicts in the first place” (Interview with Chief Akhorta, 5 June 2007). According to him, even though the whole family suffers losses incurred from conflict, women ultimately bear the burden more as men have a way of simply removing themselves from the problem by either abandoning their homes during the day, subsuming themselves in alcoholism or engaging in extra-marital activities that only serve to worsen the family situation (Akhorta Interview, 2007). The range of losses suffered by women as a result of conflict in the study areas is presented in Figure 8:

Figure 8: Losses in order of value to respondents



<sup>80</sup> Chief Isreal Akhorta is the Chairman of Uzere Development Union, a widely accepted and supported community governance apparatus that complements traditional and local government authorities in terms of town administration, development planning and implementation. This kind of community-based organisation is replicated across the 17 Isoko clans and they are all affiliated and subordinated to an umbrella body called the Isoko Development Union (IDU). IDU is an ethnic movement that aggregates and articulates the development concerns and needs of the Isoko nation within the Nigerian Federation.

As the Figure above shows, a total 62 (91%) of the 68 women who responded in positive to the question of whether conflict affected them or not indicated what they thought their biggest loss was in terms of its value to them. The frequency of losses they reported ranked from livelihoods (26%), relatives and friends (25%) to property worth thousands of naira (25%), children (6%), husbands (3%), and personal dignity arising from rape, physical abuse and torture including the associated health hazards (6%). Also, as has been well documented in literature, women in the Niger-Delta often suffer other consequences of the resource control/environment-based conflict in the region. For instance, apart from the burdens of new breadwinner roles thrust on them by the loss of their husbands and sons, they disproportionately bear the brunt of economic disempowerment spewed by environmental despoliation and become victims of the health hazards of a new wave of prostitution in which oil workers and foreign expatriates are the main clients (see Koripamo-Agary & Agary, 2005; CASS, 2005; George, 2008). Indeed, in the conflict situations that confront the Niger-Delta, women have emerged as the worse victims as they “suffer as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and even lovers, because they are debased due to the need for the survival of their families and spouses” (Koripamo-Agary & Agary, 2005:204). According to women in Odi, this was a common problem in the years following the violent sacking of the community by soldiers in November 1999. Women disproportionately bore the brunt of the economic dislocation that followed, as more women became household heads overnight. In instances where their husbands and fathers survived the violence, men increasingly took out their frustrations at not been able to provide for their families on the women in the form of domestic violence (FGD with Odi women, 3 May 2007).

Concisely, armed conflict in Odi, Uzere and Igbokoda, violates women’s human rights to dignity and personal security, health security and food security. Indeed, all across the region, women have been victims of violence perpetuated by the state, MNOCs and ethnic militias as well as armed gangs. According to Koripamo-Agary & Agary (2005), armed conflict in the Niger-Delta has recorded gross violations of women’s dignity and human rights as they have suffered sexual harassment, abuse and rape in the hands of military men, the police and other security agents who were meant to be protecting them and their communities. For example, it was reported that

over 238 Ijaw women were raped in four major military crackdowns on Ijaw resistance in Kaiama, Yenogoa, Warri and Odi (CASS, 2005:53)<sup>81</sup>.

The evidence of the impact of conflict on women in the Niger-Delta makes them stakeholders in any conflict. While they are usually not part of the decision-making processes that lead to the conflict in the first place, they are drawn into conflict through the effects they suffer. Sadly, in spite of what they suffer as a result, they are again excluded from the peace-making and post-conflict reconstruction processes where at best they are treated as victims. In this way, the cycle of exclusion from public decision-making which leads to conflict, their inclusion through its effects and their subsequent exclusion from post-conflict reconstruction processes is perpetuated. This is the reality women face with regards to conflict in the Niger-Delta. As we will show in the next section, women in the region are not just passive victims of conflict. They are active during the conflict working towards resolution, community rebuilding and engendering sustainable peace. As mentioned in chapters two and three, these are traditional pre-occupations of African women and the Niger-Delta women are no different in spite of long years of the patriarchal erosion of their peace activism. In fact, as Ikelegbe and Ikelegbe (2006) show in their study of women's peace activism in the Niger-Delta, the region's women feminised the struggle and have very positive and tangible results to show for their efforts. Unfortunately, they remain excluded from formal post-conflict reconstruction processes of peace making, peace building and rehabilitation.

#### **4.6.2 Women's Response to Conflict**

The attitude of the Niger-Delta women to conflict underscores their response and the roles they play in conflict resolution and this is not unconnected to the African woman's feminist ethic of care which values interrelationships, connectedness and empowerment rather than conflict and competition. For example, according to Mrs Iyoha<sup>82</sup>, while men view conflict as 'struggle or war which must be fought', women tend to see them as 'necessary evils in communities' and only give in to or endorse war after all avenues for peaceful resolution of conflict have been exhausted, and even

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<sup>81</sup> The Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) Report of 2002 documents vivid accounts of women raped by soldiers Odi, Choba and Ogoniland between 1996 and 2000.

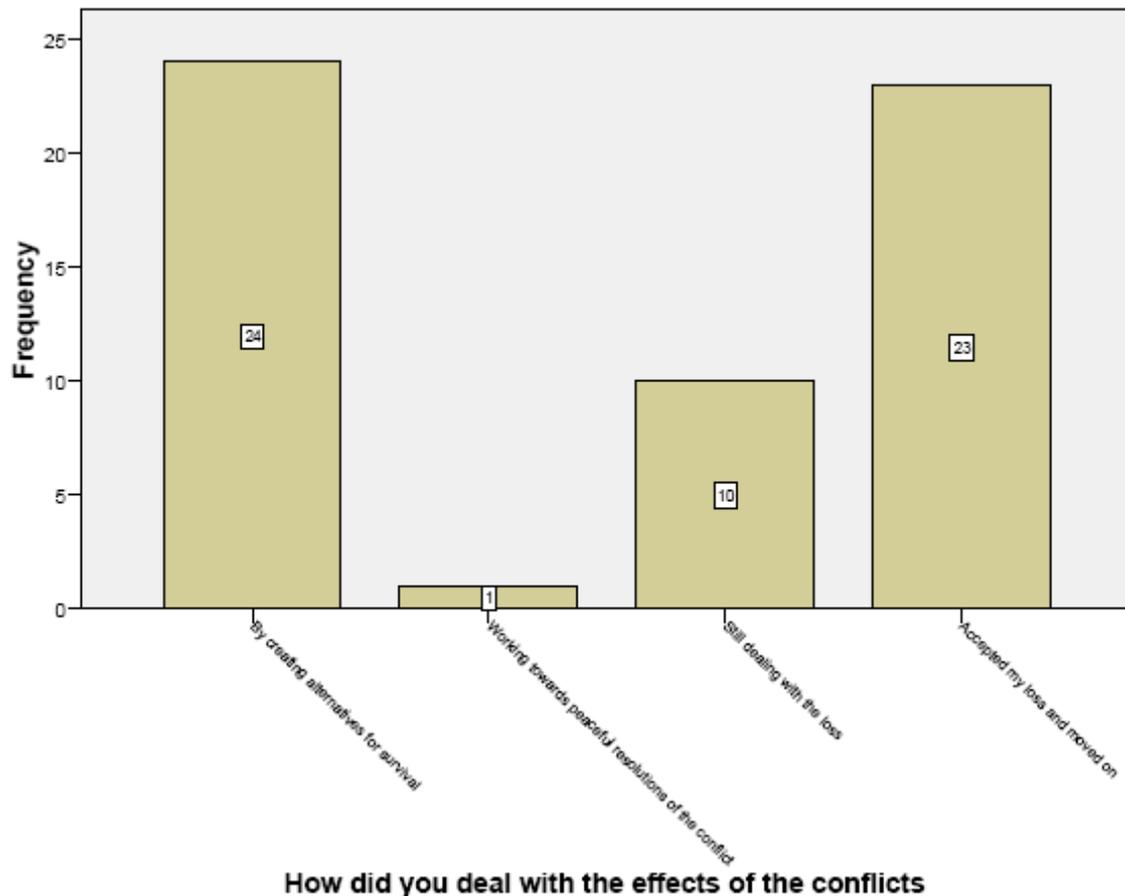
<sup>82</sup> Mrs F E Iyoha is the Clerk of the Legislative arm and Chief Administrative Officer of Oredo Local Government Area of Edo state and a former Head of Family Support Programme in the Local Government Area

then, they tend to hope for and pursue prospects for peace during war (Interview with Mrs Iyoha, 13 June 2007). Also, since the injured and dead in conflicts are quite often their sons, husbands and brothers, they tend to focus on the cessation of violence and the rebuilding of their homes, families and communities (FGD with Odi women, June 12 2007). Indeed, according to Dr (Mrs) Okolocha<sup>83</sup>, “because women feel the impact of conflict more than men, they naturally advocate for peace and pursue conflict resolution”. This is corroborated by 82% of the total number of women in the study areas who were affected by conflict and who said they responded to the conflict in their area by “creating alternatives for survival” (24), “working towards peaceful resolution of the conflict” (1) or “accepted their fate and moved on” (23). Also, according to Chief Lepe, “women usually work towards conflict resolution and peace. They displayed this recently in Aboto, where women mobilised, fasted and prayed for a speedy end to the conflict over the Obaship of Aboto” (Interview with Chief Lepe 4 April 2007). Concisely, women have a positive attitude and approach towards peace and, while men spoil for a fight, women toe the alternative route for peace and calm to reign.

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<sup>83</sup> Dr (Mrs) H.O Okolocha is a politician, writer and lecturer of English and Literature at the University of Benin, Nigeria

Figure 9: Women’s attitude to conflict



Indeed, according to Chief Akhorta, even though women are not usually the cause of conflict and in spite of the fact that they bear the effects of conflict disproportionately with men, they still impact on conflict positively. For instance, “they operate from the private family level, using moral suasion to convince their husbands and then community leaders not be hawkish in their approach to dealing with conflict and most often, their views are respected because of the myth of ‘the sanctity of womanhood’ which surround women” (Akhorta interview, 2007). This is not different from the position of Racheal Umukoro, the *Osu-eya* (Women’s leader) in Uzere that women always work towards conflict resolution using their special nature which appeals to calm, love and togetherness. To her, “women have special abilities that make them cope with difficulties; they are patient, hopeful and closer to nature than men” (Rachael Umukoro interview, June 2007). Mrs Iyoha echoes this view which is also very strongly held by over 80% of the women surveyed thus:

Women by their nature are more in tune with reality and are as such very resilient. By their biological make-up, women tend to be more patient and resilient in tough situations because of their special relation with nature as mothers. Women tend to be more hopeful and positive about life because they believe in the laws and order of nature, for example, “what goes up must surely come down”  
(Interview with Mrs Iyoha, June 16, 2007)

This study shows that Niger-Delta women are resolute in the face of conflict and able to cope with the effects drawing from the special attributes which characterise their womanhood. These include love, caring, a vision of relationship, and disposition towards peaceful coexistence because of their children.

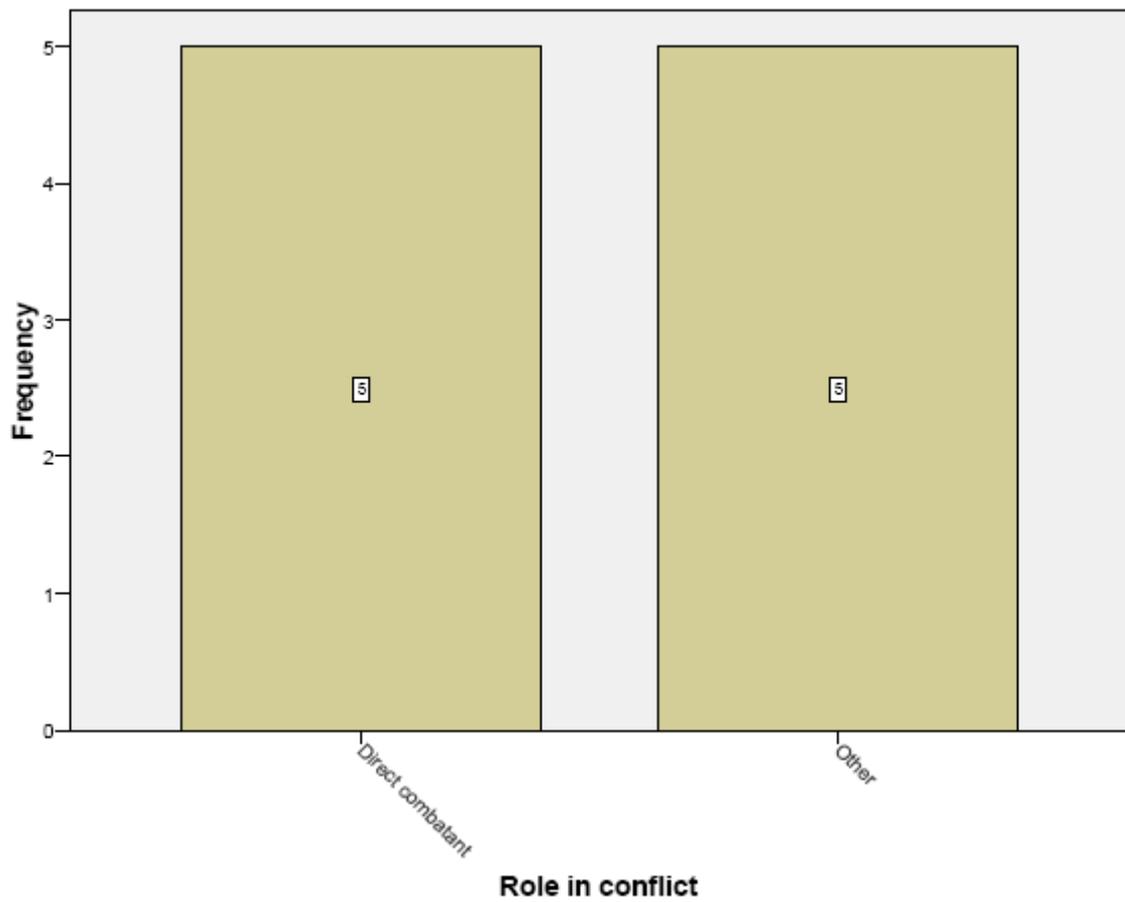
The majority of women in the Niger-Delta are not directly involved in armed conflict even though they are stakeholders in terms of the impact. Of the 78 women who were living in the study areas when the conflict started, 11(14%) said they were directly involved in armed conflict ranging from direct combat to other forms of active engagement like espionage activities.

Figure 10: Involvement in conflict



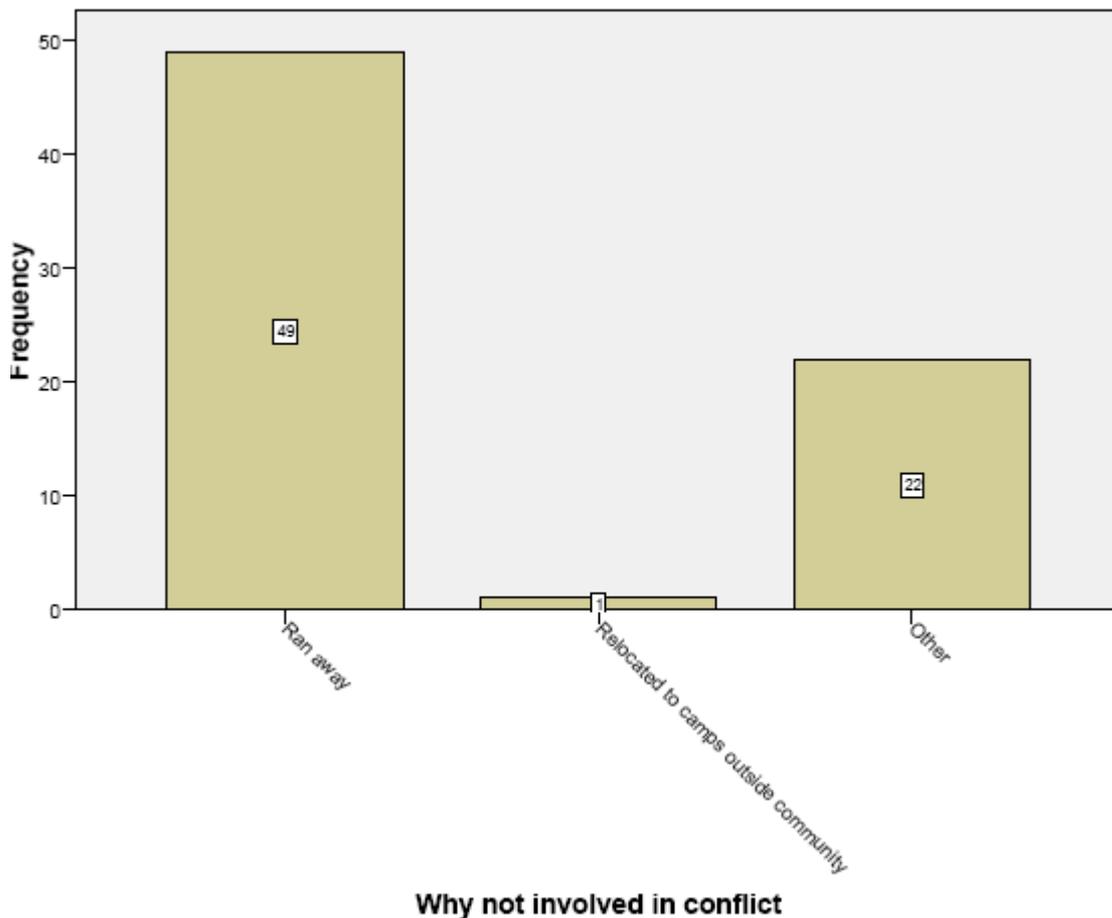
Of the 11 who were directly involved in conflict, six were direct combatants while the other five played other roles ranging from espionage activities to providing ‘special services’ to fighting groups. The women would not explicate further on what kind of services they provided but were firm in their convictions that such services were vital to the success of their groups.

Figure 11: Direct role in conflict



More than half (71%) of the 69 women who were not directly involved in conflict said they ran away from the conflict area, one was relocated to a makeshift camp put in place by her relatives while 22 stayed indoors away from the conflict all through the period.

Figure 12: Reasons for non-direct involvement in conflict



Concisely, women impact on women in the Niger-delta in different ways from men, and women respond to conflict in different ways as well. They respond in more positive ways towards reconciliation and reconstruction.

#### **4.7 Data presentation and analysis of findings on women, politics and peace-building in study areas**

This section is aimed at answering research question 3, namely: “Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process?” To determine women’s perception on the subject, a number of questions were asked around the nature of women’s political representation and their involvement in peace building at the community

levels. The findings are presented in the following sub-sections below.

#### **4.7.1 Nature of women's involvement in politics/governance<sup>84</sup>**

The study showed that women's direct involvement in formal governance is low at the community/grass roots and local government levels of government. This is indicative of the low level of women's political representation in the region at the state and national levels of governance. All 110 women surveyed in the study areas responded to this particular question. Of the 110, only 45 (40%) said they were directly involved in decision-making processes in their communities. This means that about 60% of the women are not involved in the running of their daily community affairs as shown in Figure 13 below.

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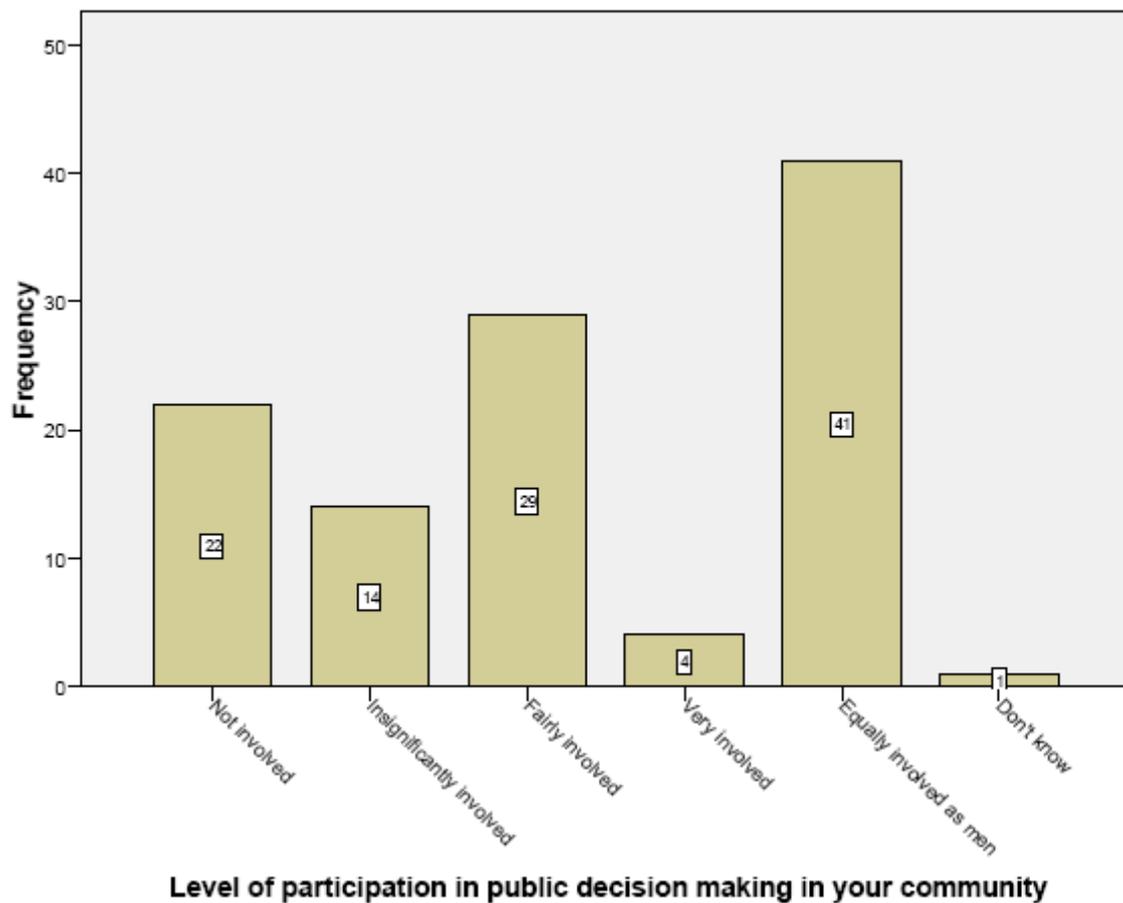
<sup>84</sup> There are three levels of governance in the Niger-Delta in Nigeria: the community, local government and state governance. This study focussed on involvement at the community and local government levels. Public participation in community governance is effected through community general meetings held in community town halls. Unfortunately, none of the political parties in the areas studied organise ward meetings through which grassroots members could participate in party decision-making. So we focussed on women's participation in community meetings as a form of involvement in governance/politics. This is even though a number of the respondents were card carrying members of the dominant political parties in the study areas. For example, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was the dominant party in Odi and Uzere while the Action Congress (AC) was dominant in Igbokoda. In essence then, women's membership of the parties was for electoral purposes as they were only used for voting.

Figure 13: involvement in community decision-making



In terms of perception of the level of women’s political participation, the 65 who were not directly involved in decision-making processes in their communities felt that generally, women’s participation in community decision-making was low. Their perceptions ranged from “not involved” (22), “insignificantly involved” (14) to “fairly involved” (28).

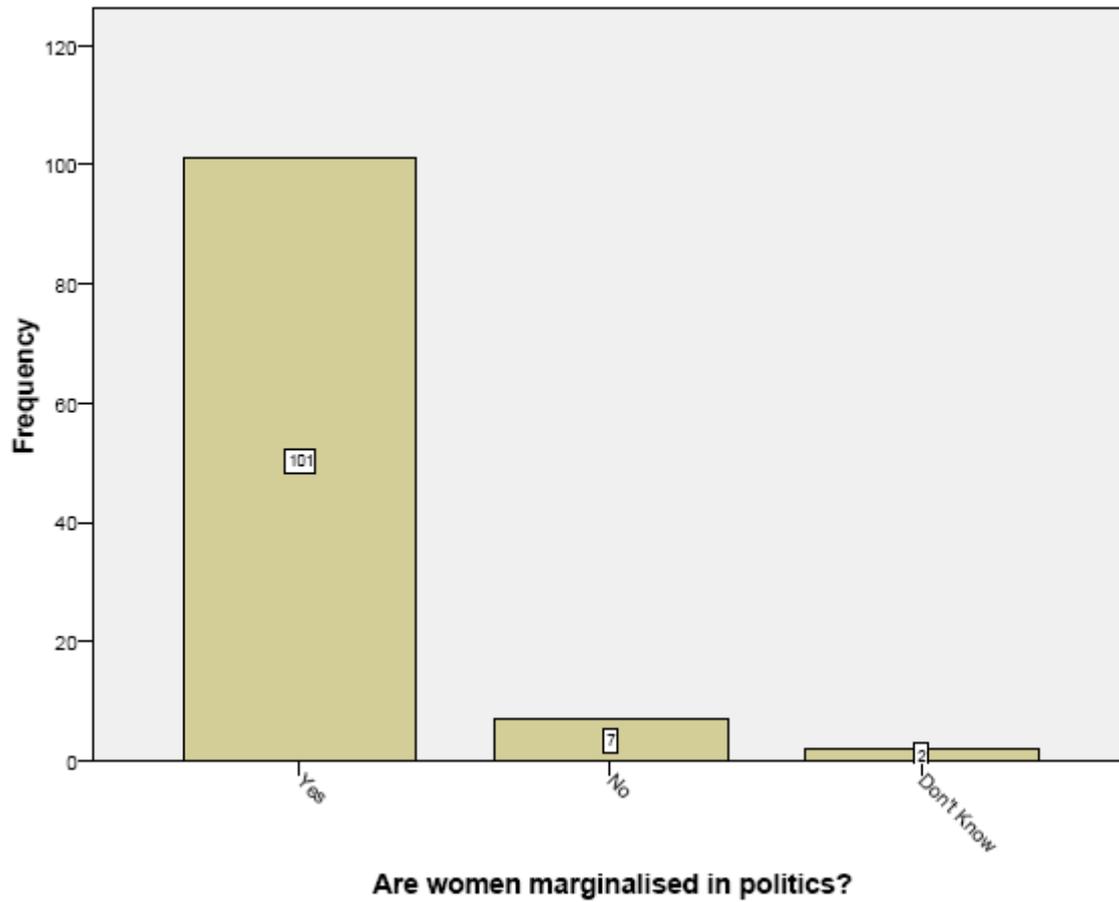
Figure 14: level of participation in community decision-making



When asked to comment on women’s political participation generally in the region, an overwhelming majority (101, representing 92% of the sample population) felt women were marginalised in the region’s politics. Only 7<sup>85</sup> (6.3%) thought women were not politically marginalised.

<sup>85</sup> This is hardly surprising considering that all 7 women were top-ranking women leaders of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) at the local government level.

Figure 15: perceptions on women’s political marginalisation in the Niger-Delta



#### 4.7.2 Nature of women’s involvement in peace building

Women in the Niger-Delta are marginalised in the peace processes of their various communities after conflict. 80 (91%) of the 88 women who responded to questions on the nature of women’s involvement in peace processes said they were excluded from the peace processes that followed the cessation of violence at different times in their communities.

Figure 16: Involvement in government-initiated peace process

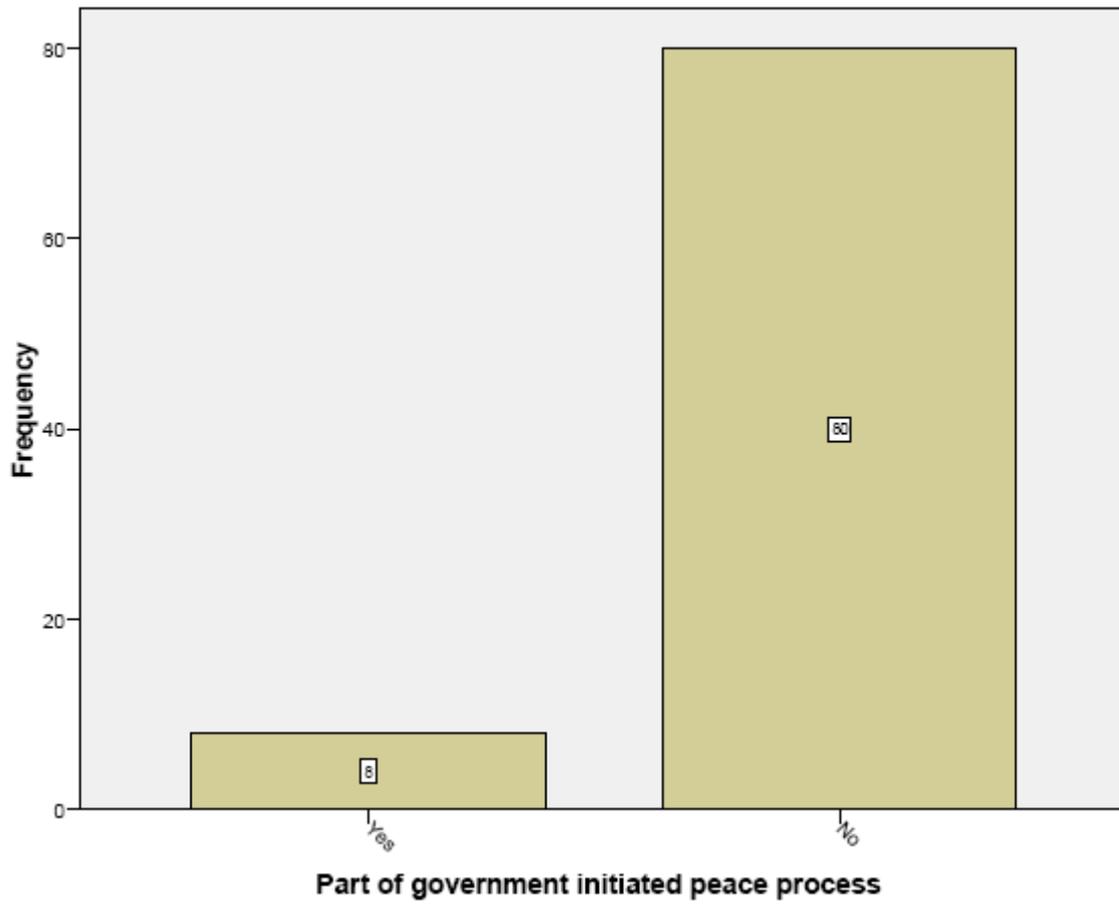
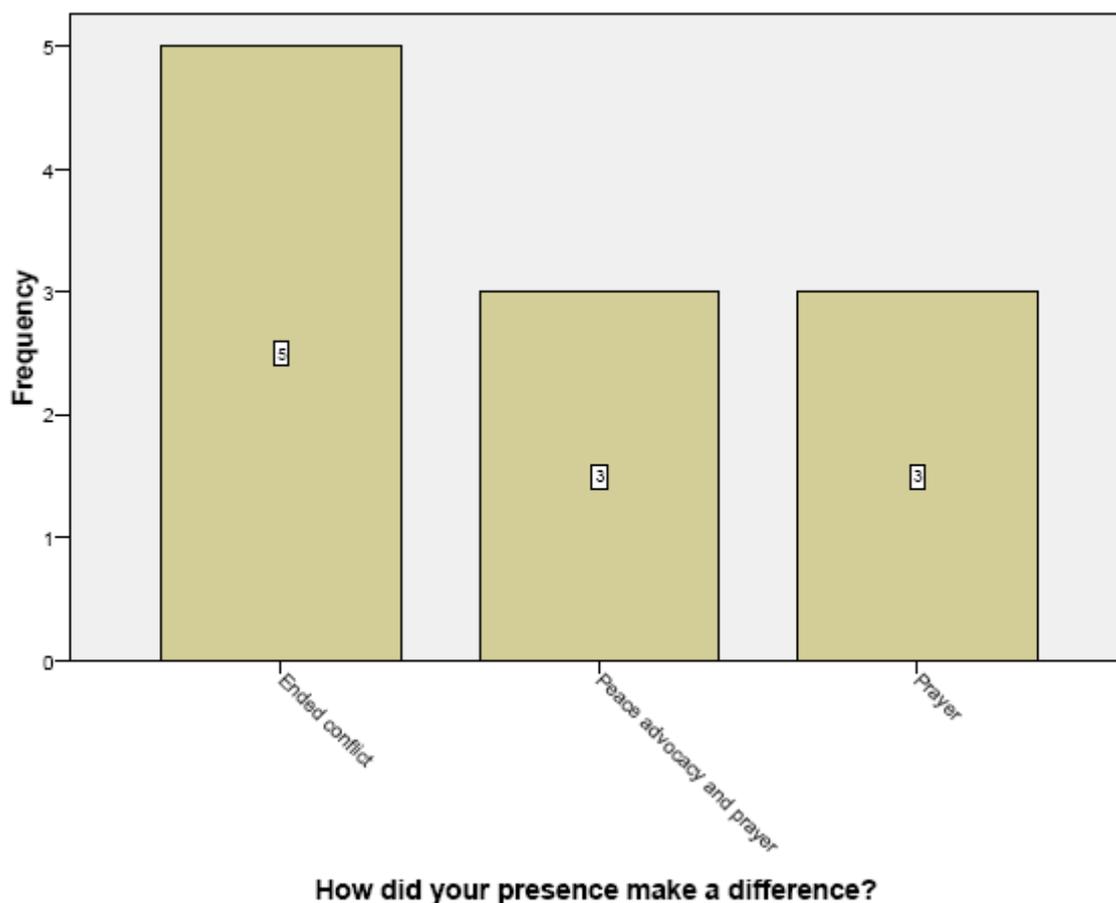


Figure 17: General impact on government-initiated peace process



Overall, 11 women were part of the peace processes initiated by both government (8 women) and faith based organisations (3 women) in the areas studied. These 11 women indicated that their presence in the peace processes made a difference in terms of conflict resolution. As shown in the figure below, these women engaged in direct mediation talks with warring factions, general peace advocacy and organised prayer sessions for peace. In one instance, one of them, Mrs Orietan Orimisan, who did not mind being mentioned said “I addressed the men and women of both warring communities on the imperative of having peace and I was so compelling they listened to me and changed their negotiating tones thereafter” (Mrs Orimisan, Igbokoda, 5 April, 2007). They were also involved in mobilising women groups within their communities such as *Ukoko eya* in Uzere to come together to articulate a common position of dialogue aimed at resolving their differences with Shell.

Figure 18: Specific impact on government-initiated peace process



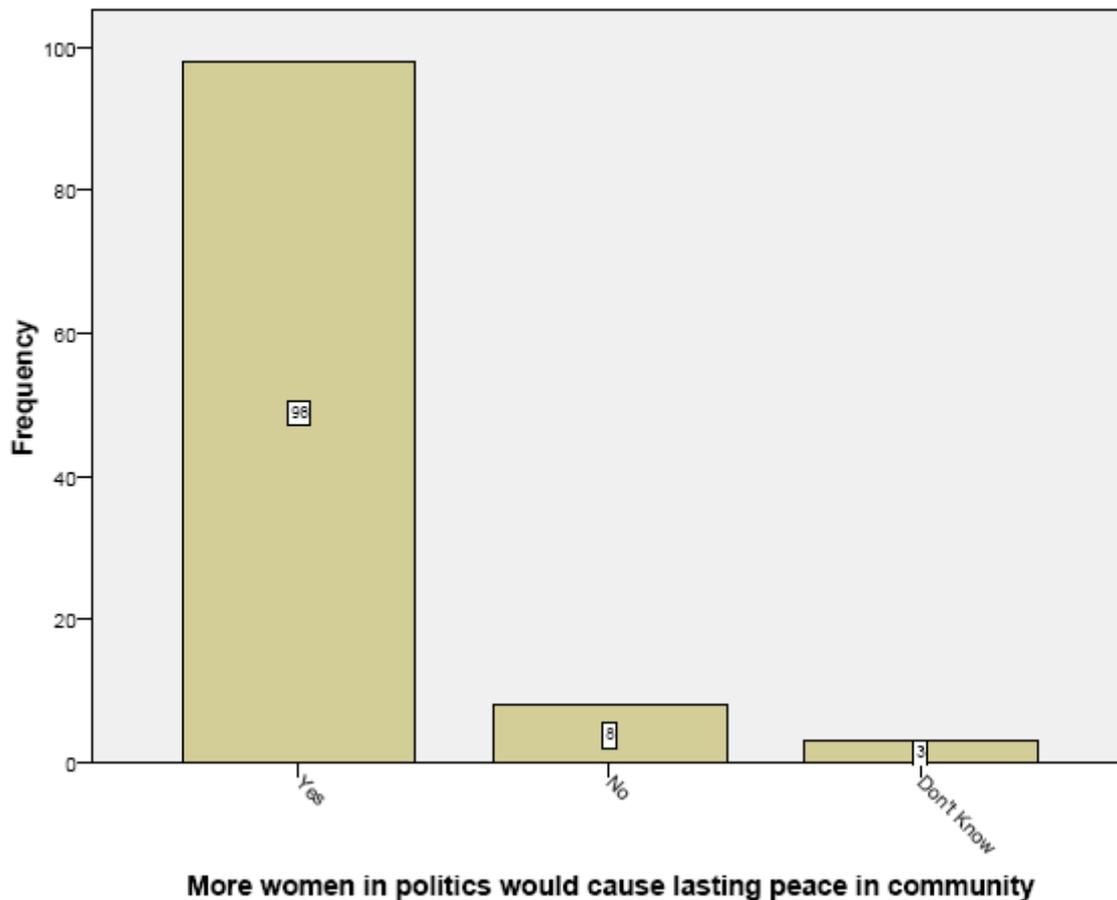
Concisely, even though marginalised in the political and peace processes of their communities, women in the study areas tend to be active and effective in peace building especially at informal levels.

#### 4.7.3 Perceptions on women’s political representation and peace-building nexus

There was a direct relationship between women’s political participation and peace, as a significant majority (98 women representing 89% of the sample population) believed that more women in politics would ensure lasting peace in the Niger-Delta. Generally, the women felt that the male-dominated politics and leadership structures such as traditional rulers, community elders and youths have failed their collective

community development aspirations, and as women, they were the ones at the losing end of the stick.

Figure 19: Perceptions on political participation and peace building



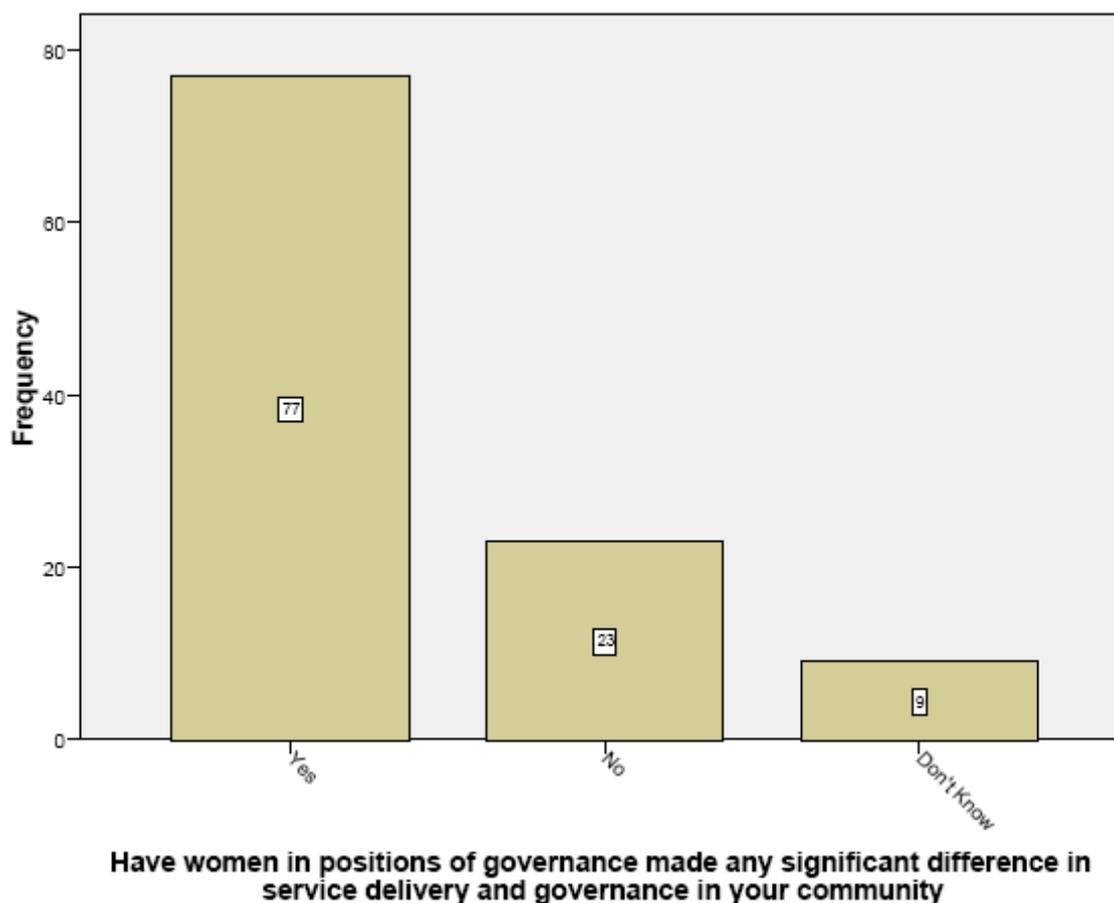
#### 4.7.4 Quality of women’s representation in politics

In terms of quality of women’s representation in politics, a point that was used to justify the need for more women in politics and the effect this would have on lasting peace in the Niger-Delta, 70.6% of the women agreed that, to their knowledge, the few women in politics in their communities and those representing them at state and national levels have made significant differences in terms of good governance and service delivery. Names that came out more frequently than others include senator Stella Omu, Mrs Alice Ukoko, Barrister Akhiri, Mrs Ojomo, Mrs Jacyntha Afe, Dr Veronica Ugbuagu and Mrs Evelyn Ojakovo. Others include Mrs Omoteishen whose notable achievements for example include the building of a health centre in

Molutehin, an 800 metres Foot Bridge in Igbkokoda, and the construction of several jetties to connect inland and riverine areas. In a focus group discussion in Igbokoda, one of the participants, Honourable (Mrs) Esejuwon, a former supervisory councillor (1999 – 2000) enumerated some of her achievements in the one year she was in office; “I met and consulted regularly with women over health matters, gave women loans to start petty trading, drilled a number of water wells in my ward, provided fishing materials for men in my ward and influenced the building of a health centre in Ori-oke”. These achievements were later confirmed by the women present some of who had no previous relationship with her before the focus group meeting.

However, 23 (21.2%) of the total respondents in the study areas felt that women in governance at various levels (local, state and national) have not made much difference in governance and service delivery. The remaining 8.2% did not know whether or not these women’s participation in governance has made any difference in service delivery. More than half of these women blamed their ignorance on this question on the fact that they had not been paying close attention to the issue.

Figure 20: Women's impact on service delivery and good governance



#### 4.8 Discussion and conclusion

Evidently, even though women in the study areas in the Niger-Delta are generally not combatants in the ongoing, armed conflict in the region, they are equally victims of the violence through rape, torture and physical abuse by all sides of the conflict. They also suffer a disproportionate burden of the crisis of under-development which plaques the region given their familial roles. In spite of this reality, women remain marginalised in post-conflict reconstruction processes even though they make positive contributions towards peace in times of conflict. This study shows that women's direct involvement in governance is low at all levels of governance including even in rural areas. More women (60%) as shown in figure 13 said they are not involved in decision-making processes in their communities. This is not consistent with the

commonly held belief that traditionally women are recognised and accepted as active participants in the political processes of their communities, an indication that westernisation of the region's political culture has taken firm roots. This was decried by 71 year old Olori Janet Ilara, the Olori Kabiyesi (First wife of the King) of Araromi in Igbokoda. According to her, women were politically active in pre-colonial Ilaje society as women used to constitute almost 50% of the Oba in Council and Chiefs in Igbokoda Kingdom. She contends, "with the coming of the white man, western education and modern government, women, especially the illiterate ones, are now marginalised politically". To underscore her point of women's political marginalisation in post-colonial Ilaje society, she reported that only 4 (10%) women are present in the 40 member council. A close look at these four women reveals that one of them, Chief V Ajomida, the *Yeye Oba* of Igbokoda land got her position by virtue of being a wife of the Oba. The others, by virtue of their positions in society include Chief Bamijoko Akinyemi *Iya Oloja* of Igbokoda Kingdom, Chief Christiana Obebe, *Aya-Ekin* of Igbokoda land and Chief Stella Odunnija, *Yeye Oge* of Igbokoda land.

This study also shows, from the testimonies of the 40% in figure 13 who say they are involved in community decision making, that women's participation and organisation at community levels of governance is more effective in addressing their concerns compared to their representation at the state level. This is because at the community level, the women know and choose those they feel can best represent their interests as women. According to Mrs Ester Ewarawon, the oldest woman (over 95 years) in Igbokoda community, this was the strength of pre-colonial Ilaje women who were able to organise themselves against tyranny during the early years of colonial rule<sup>86</sup>. As shown in figure 20, 77 (70%) of the 109 women who responded to the question were sure, and cited examples, of women in their communities who made a difference in governance and service delivery when they held office and of those who still hold public office. Therefore, even though, as our sample shows, women's participation at rural grassroots level is low in the Niger-Delta, the qualitative impact of the few who participate are thought to be very effective in addressing women's concern hence a

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<sup>86</sup> Talking through an interpreter, Mama Ewarawon, whose position as the oldest woman in the land is accorded a leadership status, cited the women's protest against colonial taxation in Ilaje land in which she participated (Interview with Mama Ewarawon, 7 April, 2007).

significant majority agreed there should be more women in politics and that their increased representation can actually yield peace in their communities and in the wider region. The women of Uzere and Igbokoda cited examples of women's peaceful protest actions against Shell in the former and against their men for the continuation of violence between the Ugbo-Ilajes and Arogbo-Ijaws resident in Igbokoda. In these protests, women first articulated their grievances, concerns, fears and interests amongst themselves, and then employed informal persuasive tactics to Shell (Uzere) and their men (Igbokoda) to change their positions. When the persuasive dialogue failed, the women resorted to peaceful protests which in Uzere, yielded positive results as they eventually got the tapioca processing facility promised them by Shell. In the case of Igbokoda, their efforts did not lead to the cessation of the conflict but women are resolved that never again would they condone such violence from their men (FGD with Igbokoda women, 7 April, 2007). According to one of them, "if need be, we will resort to our very last option of going naked to press home our point against violence in Igbokoda again" (Olori Janet Ilara, April 2007).

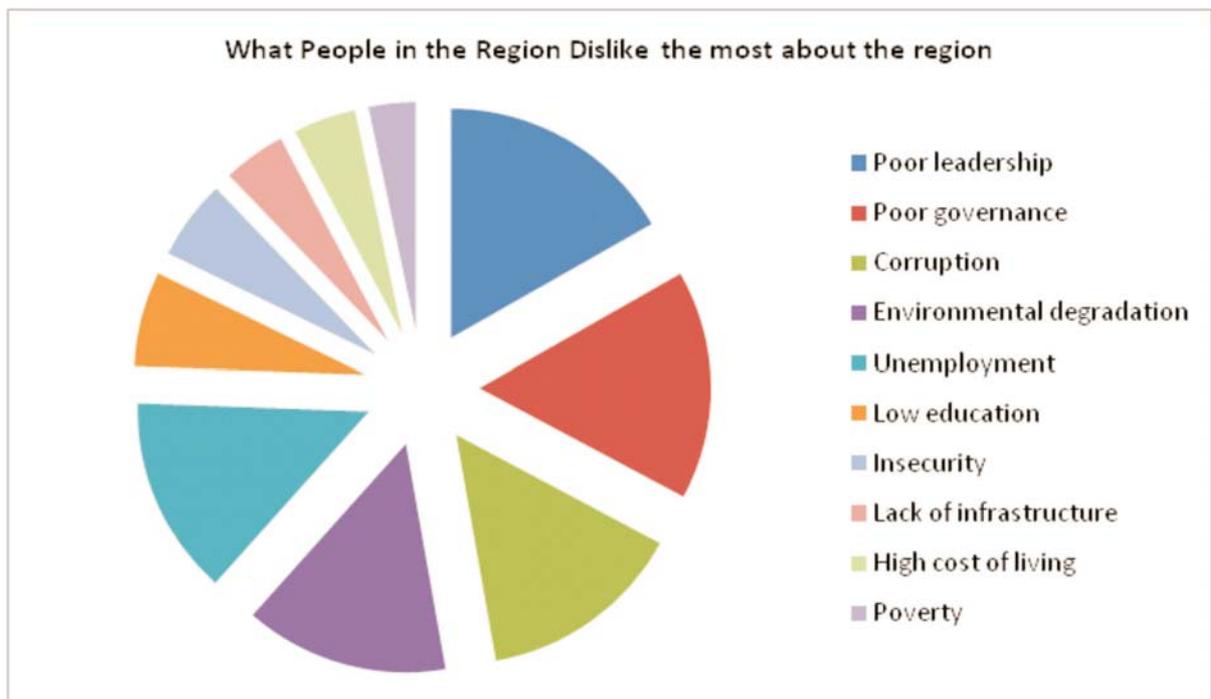
However, despite the low level of women's involvement in decision-making at community levels in the Niger-Delta, a significant 41 (representing 37% of the total 110 surveyed) were of the view that women were equally involved as men in the politics of their communities with 4 (3.6%) of them indicating that women were very involved. In our scale of measurement "not involved", "insignificantly involved" and "fairly involved" all fall on the low participation range while "very involved" and "equally involved as men" both fall on the high participation range. Thus, a total of 64 (58%) of the women surveyed believe that the level of women's participation in community decision-making is low while a total of 45 (41%) believe the level of women's participation in community decision-making is high. This, given that 41% is significant, contradicts our finding that women's participation is low.

A negligible 7% of the study population felt that more women in politics would not bring lasting peace in their communities. However, it is still a cause for concern because there could be more women out there who strongly believe this and could act as spoilers to gender balancing in politics. However, this study did not discountenance the fact that this kind of thinking could be the long-term result of the masculinisation of society and politics which has successfully brainwashed women into feeling

incapable of effective politicking.

Clearly then, one of the discourses emerging from this study is that of the failure of male dominated politics which is evident in the inability of governance structures to deliver development dividends, provide effective leadership and prevent pervasive corruption which impedes growth and development. As shown in figure 21, poor leadership, poor governance, corruption and environmental degradation occasioned by a combination of the preceding factors account for what the people in the Niger-Delta dislike the most about the region.

Figure 21: What the Niger-Delta people dislike the most about the region



Source: UNDP Niger-Delta Human Development Report (2006).

This is also clearly reflected in women's perception and attitudes to traditional, communal and youth leadership as well as political governance structures at the state and federal government levels. In its study of these variables, CASS (2005) shows that women's relationship with traditional leadership is the least cordial. According to the study, which used 73 women in three local government areas (Warri South, Ughelli South and Ndokwa west) in Delta state, the traditional rulers though active were seen as weak, corrupt and compromised. The elders and community leaders

were active in the political economy of oil but were weak and corrupt. The youth are the most active, but the women saw their actions as excessive. They also perceived the youth leaders as corrupt (CASS, 2005: 67-72).

Table 4: Women’s perception of group and leadership roles in Niger-Delta conflict

	Elder/community leaders	Traditional leaders	Youth	Women political leaders
Active	22%	20.41%	32.36%	18.37%
Purposeful	8%	8.16%	6.52%	8.16%
Excessive	2%	6.12%	21.74%	2.04%
Weak	18%	16.33%	6.52%	55.10%
Sold out	14%	20.41%	6.52%	4.08%
Corrupt	36%	28.57%	26.09%	12.24%

Adopted from CASS (2005: 72)

The findings of the CASS study as shown in table 4 above also tallies with some of our findings in the Niger-Delta. For instance, women appear to be the least active in the political economy of oil because they are marginalised from formal participation in the political leadership structures and processes. This explains their 8.16% purposefulness which compares relatively well with that of elders/community leaders and traditional rulers if we are to consider women’s low number in formal leadership structures. However, the point here is that women seem to perceive of male-dominated leadership as failing given its corrupt, excessive and ineffective nature which has led to betraying the community’s development cause. This in a way underscores the imperative for change of leadership approach and focus to one that is more collaborative and as such less conflict-prone, empathetic to community needs, less corrupt and development-oriented. Women seem to be the missing link in this paradigm shift.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS – WOMEN, POLITICS, CONFLICT AND PEACE-BUILDING IN KWAZULU-NATAL

#### 5.1 Introduction

Whilst KwaZulu-Natal is bedevilled with assorted forms of conflict, political violence, taxi-rank wars and poverty are the most prominent, and they are inter-related. Studies show that they are not isolated flash-points symptomatic of receding conflict in the province, as is popularly held by many commentators, the media and politicians following post-apartheid peace settlements (Taylor, 2002; Nebandla, 2005) According to Taylor (2002):

It is, in fact, necessary to move away from the mainstream perspective of viewing continuing violence (in KwaZulu-Natal) as constituting a series of separate events and cases - a flashpoint here, a flashpoint there - with multiple causes that have to be dealt with in turn, with a law and order response as each occurs (Taylor, 2002: 44)

He contended that “rather the violence has to be understood in terms of a matrix of integrated issues that are rooted in what is a common systemic problem: that post-apartheid political violence has been systematically over-determined by, and fuelled by, a failure to confront past wartime divisions and their legacy” (Taylor, 2002: 43 – 44). These have largely carried over into the post-1994 era manifesting in occasional political assassinations, political violence unleashed against whole communities, and taxi-rank wars which have left over 2,000 people dead, with many more, especially women and children, displaced and devastated by the loss of their livelihoods and properties worth millions of rand. This, apart from the back-log of poverty inherited from the apartheid era, has implications for further entrenching poverty in a province that is already mired in abject poverty, extreme income inequalities amongst different population sub-groups and unemployment (See Ndimande, 2001; PROVIDE Project,

2005). Poverty, which is more prevalent amongst the rural populace (54% of the provincial population,) is largely feminised especially amongst rural women who were the bulk of the previously disadvantaged people and whose economic lot has not changed significantly since 1994 (FGD with Shobashobane and Nongoma women, 2006).

This Chapter attempts to present an overview of armed and social conflict in KwaZulu-Natal which manifests in the form of political violence and abject poverty, both endemic in the province. It presents the study's findings on how specific conflict cases in Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma affected 185 women and how these women in turn impacted on these conflicts positively towards peace-building in the province generally. In other words, this chapter presents findings as they relate to research questions one, two and three:

- What is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas, and how does it define the women reality with regards to the conflict cycle?
- How have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas?
- Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process?

The findings of the study on these questions as they relate to the individual case of KwaZulu-Natal are then discussed bearing our literature review and theoretical framework in mind.

## **5.2 Overview of crisis in KwaZulu-Natal**

Political violence and armed conflict in post-apartheid KwaZulu-Natal can be largely explained in terms of the history of political rivalry between Inkatha, a Zulu cultural liberation movement which was founded in 1975, and the United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad anti-apartheid movement which was founded in 1983 and which acted as the internal voice of the African National Congress (ANC) before it was unbanned in 1990 (Batchelor, 1997: 106). According to Batchelor (1997), the foundation for

political violence in post-apartheid KwaZulu-Natal was laid in the early 1980s with an escalating cycle of violence in many townships and certain rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, which was sparked by increasing population pressures, scarce resources (as a result of apartheid policies), poverty and a lack of effective political representation (Batchelor, 1997: 106). What began as faction fighting between members of Inkatha and the UDF developed into a 'low-intensity civil war', which has continued to the present day. The political rivalry between Inkatha (re-launched as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in 1990) and the unbanned ANC intensified after 1990 as each party began to mobilise support in preparation for the country's first democratic elections.

The conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has three main dimensions: 1) a struggle to control territory; 2) a struggle for the possession of the 'Zulu tradition'; and 3) profound constitutional disagreement (Johnston, 1997). It can be characterised primarily as a conflict over political identity, in which a conflict based on political rivalry between the IFP and the ANC has become conflated with ethnic, tribal and other sub-national (regional) interests. The links between political conflict and violent death are varied and highly visible in this province as politics was characterised by intolerance and violence. According to Johnston (1997), armed groups from both Inkatha and the ANC prevent the holding of public meetings by the other party, and individuals and groups travelling to and from such meetings are attacked by residents (supporters of the opposing party) of areas they have to pass through. The establishment of party branches in 'new' areas is resisted with assault rifles. Prominent party officials and activists are assassinated by hit squads and private political armies are set up for defence of specific areas known as 'no go areas'. Forced evictions, sometimes accompanied by assault or murder, take place in order to 'purify' territory in terms of political allegiance and affiliation. Forced recruitment drives often end in executions, as do resistance to them (Johnston, 1997: 82)<sup>87</sup>.

Since April 1994, the nature of the conflict in KwaZulu-Natal has shifted from a

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<sup>87</sup> These are still commonplace in 2009, 15 years since the advent of the 'new' democratic South Africa as were variously exhibited in different parts of the province in the run up to the April 2009 National elections. In the heat of such political intolerance and violence, which played out in violent confrontations between IFP and ANC supporters in the University of Zululand in March 2009, King Zwelitini was compelled to come on state television to appeal to his citizens for tolerance.

contest for control of territory and denial of political space to opponents, to a war of propaganda and bureaucratic manoeuvre for control of security in the province (Johnston, 1997: 101), which manifest in violent clashes between several political actors. According to Taylor (2002), the core issue in understanding the matrix of political violence in the province after 1994 is that of the increasing militarisation from the mid-1980s onwards. For example, in the three conflict cases of Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma which he studied, Taylor contends that

Paramilitary forces from both sides have continued to drive violence; the police and the military are still directly and indirectly implicated in the violence; outside investigative units find it hard to make significant headway; and, successful prosecutions have been hard to come by. Moreover, the capacity of the legal system to deliver justice has been weak (Taylor, 2002:25)

The severity of this militarisation and the political violence it spewed through, for instance, the ANC's Self Defence Unit (SDU) and the IFP's paramilitary defence unit, has claimed as many as 20,000 lives in KwaZulu-Natal since 1984. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), between 1994 and 1995 alone the number of murders *per capita* in KwaZulu-Natal was more than double the average for the whole country, and nearly two and-a-half times higher than in any other province (SAPS, 1996: 6). More specifically, just over 3, 000 people were killed between the period 1993 to June 1995 (Batchelor, 1997), while over 2,000 people have been killed in the province between 1995 and 2000 (South African Institute of Race Relations, SAIRR, 2001). Indeed, as Taylor (2002: 33) concludes, beyond 2000, the 'unofficial' war between the IFP and ANC in KwaZulu-Natal over political supremacy has worked to drive political violence and to push it into new forms, with lethal effects on justice, human rights and human security, which are potential sources of armed conflict in themselves. Herein lays the link between political violence, poverty and under-development in KwaZulu-Natal. For instance, according to Sibusiso Ndebele (Premier of KZN from 1999 to 2009), political violence in the province has left it riddled with children-headed (mostly girls) households, which in turn entrenches poverty. In an address to the KZN legislature on the need for gender balancing in the transport sector of the province in 2000, Mr. Ndebele concluded that the social and

economic plight of rural KZN mothers was worse than the national condition. According to him, this is due to the growing incidence of poor women-headed households in rural areas<sup>88</sup>, which created social and economic crises caused by over-dependence on them. This crisis, he argued, has been deepened by decades of civil and political violence which has left thousands of women and children widowed and orphaned respectively (Ndebele, 2000).

### **5.3 The human security nature of the crisis**

Human insecurity in KwaZulu-Natal covers all seven areas of insecurity in human existence espoused by the UN HDR of 1994. For instance, on the economic front, while the province has good economic potentials<sup>89</sup>, it is bedevilled by extreme poverty, high unemployment rates, and uneven distribution of income and wealth. The extent and depth of poverty is far greater in KwaZulu-Natal than the other large provincial economies of the Western Cape and Gauteng (KZN Economic Review, 2005: 7). According to the Regional Economic Analysis Report (2004), KZN is mired in extreme poverty which was rated at 61% in 2004, and that in spite of substantial social grant spending by government, the poverty gap is estimated at R18.3 billion (Regional Economic Analysis, 2004: 9). According to the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), the poverty in KZN is mainly a rural phenomenon. The following give an indication of living conditions in the province:

- 9% of households live in informal dwellings, and 22% live in traditional dwellings.
- 61.2% of rural households are without electricity; and 57% use wood for cooking food.

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<sup>88</sup> See Julian May's presentation on poverty and inequality in South Africa, [www.gov.za/reports/1998/poverty/presentation](http://www.gov.za/reports/1998/poverty/presentation) accessed 3rd July, 2006

<sup>89</sup> The province is the second largest contributor to South Africa's national GDP (17.5%) with GDP growth of 3.11% between 2000 and 2005, which was roughly on par with the national average 3.24% during the same period. It has a comparative advantage in textiles, clothing, leather goods, agriculture, wood and paper products which is helped by an extensive transport infrastructure – in particular the Durban and Richards Bay ports which are the busiest in the Southern hemisphere. Also, responsible for more than 18% South African total exports, KZN is one of the most significant regional contributors to international trade with a favourable balance of trade helped by a relatively small contribution (an average of 11.6% since 1996) to national imports (KZN Economic Review, 2005: 1).

- Only 35.2% of households have a tap within their dwelling, and 52.3% have no flushing or chemical toilet

(<http://www.afra.co.za/default.asp?id=975> accessed 13/04/09)

To get a clearer picture of the poverty situation in KwaZulu-Natal, a most reliable data base is the KIDS panel data, the result of a longitudinal survey carried out in three phases – 1993, 1998 and 2004. Various studies, based on the KIDS panel data, have been carried out within this period on unemployment trends, income and expenditure and poverty and inequality patterns in KZN. Their findings are clear on several fronts: they all suggest that unemployment is on the increase (Klasen and Woolard, 2000; Borat, 2003) and more people have moved within the poor categories back and forth suggesting an increase in poverty levels (Carter and May, 2001). Also, very marginal growth has occurred in per capita income levels for both urban and non-urban households (Lam and Leibbrandt, 2003) which in themselves have deepened social inequalities within non-white racial groups with the *Gini* coefficient increasing from 0.515 to 0.543 in KZN between 1995 and 2001 (Fields *et al*, 2003). Find below a table depicting trends in the poverty profile of KwaZulu-Natal between 1995 and 2000.

Table 1: Changes in poverty in KwaZulu-Natal

Poverty line	\$2/day poverty line (R174)		Lower bound poverty line (R322)	
Head count index	0.32 (0.02)	0.46 (0.02)	0.63 (0.02)	0.67 (0.02)
Poverty gap* a	0.11 (0.01)	0.20 (0.01)	0.28 (0.01)	0.37 (0.01)
Poverty gap* a squared	0.05 (0.01)	0.11 (0.01)	0.16 (0.01)	0.24 (0.01)

Source: Culled from (Hoogeven and Ozler, 2005)

All figures were weighted using person weights (household weight\*household size)

- \* indicates that the difference in the poverty figures between 1995 and 2000 is statistically significant at the 90% level for  $z=174$
- a indicates that the difference in poverty figures between 1995 and 2000 is

statistically significant at the 90% level for  $z= 322$

From the table above, there was very little growth in per capita household expenditures,<sup>90</sup> which was at the bottom end of the expenditure distribution and this increased the depth and severity of poverty. For any poverty line below R322 per capita per month, the poverty gap and poverty severity (poverty gap squared) indices are significantly higher in 2000 than in 1995. This is the case also in 2005 for most women in rural KZN, a lot of who live on government grants of R280 per month<sup>91</sup>.

Also, in terms of income inequalities, which pose a major constraint to economic growth, Cameron (2005) contends that people of KZN, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces had the most unequal access to income compared to all South Africans in 2004. According to PROVIDE (2005), although the *per capita* income of the people of KwaZulu-Natal does not compare badly with that of the rest of South Africa, this income appears to be less equally distributed among the people. For example, the racial character of poverty and inequality is reflected in the fact that the African and Coloured agricultural households, who together constitute 86.4% of the provincial population, are worse off than their non-agricultural counterparts. Furthermore, the study showed that average household incomes of White, and to a lesser extent Asian households (5.1% and 8.5% respectively), are much higher than those of African and Coloured households (84.9% and 1.5% respectively), implying, therefore, that Africans in rural areas, often living in agricultural households are mostly affected (PROVIDE, 2005: 19 – 20). According to later studies, while income inequality between races is declining with increasing income levels for the black population, income inequality within the black population itself has increased thus creating new forms of social inequalities (May, 2006).

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<sup>90</sup> This was due to marginal improvements in educational attainments amongst Africans which yielded some improvements in income levels for this class. However, it was for a very small percentage of the African population and it was urban biased

<sup>91</sup> In a pilot study on women and the peace process in KZN conducted by Isike in September, 2005, all 30 women surveyed in Ndaleni, a rural area in Richmond, KZN, live on government grants of R280 per month. In a similar field study of Magoda in Richmond in 2006, 30 of the 35 women surveyed live on such a grant.

Table 2: Demographic profile of KwaZulu-Natal

Size	92100km <sup>2</sup>
Share of country	7.6%
Total farming land	6.5 mill ha
Livestock farming suitability	82%
Arable farming suitability	18%
Share of national population	20.7%
Population growth rate	12%
Population in rural areas	54%
Black people	84.9%
Coloured people	1.5%
Indian people	8.5%
White people	5.1%
Working age population economically active	51.3%
Unemployment rate	45%
Average annual household income	R64 359
Adults with no education	12%
Adults with degree or higher	3.7%
Pupil to teacher ratio	36:1
Matriculation pass rate	77%
Proportion population HIV+	18.4%
Women at ante-natal clinics HIV+	36.5%
Residents per public sector doctor	5 107:1
Residents per public sector nurse	1 050:1

Culled from the AFRA website: <http://www.afra.co.za/default.asp?id=975>

Defined in an expanded sense, the rate of unemployment<sup>92</sup> in KZN fluctuated between 36.8% and 45.3% between 1996 and 2004 with economic dependency increasing since 2000 (Regional Economic Analysis, 2004: 7). Underscoring inequalities in unemployment levels in the province; PROVIDE (2005) reports that unemployment is most prevalent among Africans living in former homeland areas or rural areas. The fact that the expanded rate for these population sub-groups is much higher than the strict unemployment rate is indicative of a long-term structural unemployment problem (PROVIDE, 2005: 20). The study concluded that unemployment among agricultural households is lower, possibly because family members would rather participate in the household farming activities than be unemployed. This of course

<sup>92</sup> According to statistics South Africa, unemployment is defined strictly and officially in terms of people in the economically active population who: (a) did not work during the seven days prior to the interview, (b) want to work and are available to start work within a week of the interview, and (c) have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview but have been unsuccessful.

reduces the *per capita* returns of farming, which explains in part why poverty is higher among agricultural household members.

Socially, illiteracy is rife in KZN as for instance a tenth of its residents (aged 15 – 65) cannot read and write while 15% of those 20 years and older are without formal education. Although, as the table above indicates, the matriculation pass rate in the province is 77%, which is a better record than the national average, a significant number of KwaZulu-Natal citizens remain illiterates given its population size in relation to South Africa's total population. For instance, 41% of the people have no secondary schooling and only 7% have some form of higher education (KZN Economic Review, 2005: 6). Social insecurity is further exacerbated by the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the province. While the HIV and AIDS pandemic is a major socio-economic challenge in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal is particularly worse off because it has the largest proportion of people living with HIV and AIDS (1.52 out of the estimated 5.2 million countrywide) and the highest HIV prevalence rate in the country (Lerclerc-Madlala, 2001; KZN Economic Review, 2005). Apart from the negative socio-economic effects of the HIV and AIDS scourge on the provinces' labour productivity and consequently on poverty entrenchment, its specific social consequences include the collapse of family and community structures which lead to conflict, increased crime (Loewenson and Whiteside, 2001), the loss of breadwinners and care-givers which undermines the economic and social security of households, and a substantial increase in the number of orphans and child-headed households which currently stands at 19.8% in the province and is the highest in the country (KZN Economic Review, 2005). Overall, the HIV and AIDS scourge has significantly reduced the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>93</sup> of the province given the dramatic decline in its life expectancy from 61.4 years in 1995 to 45 years in 2003 owing to AIDS-related deaths. How do women as a social category fare in relation to these human insecurities in KwaZulu-Natal?

### **5.3.1 Women's vulnerability to human insecurities in KwaZulu-Natal**

With such high levels of political violence, poverty, unemployment, inequality and

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<sup>93</sup> The human development index is a composite measure of human well being measured by life expectancy, educational attainment and GDP weighted equally.

the prevalence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the province, the political, personal, community and health securities of its citizens are greatly compromised. Indeed, one fall-out of the cumulative effects of these human insecurities is crime which serves to further deepen the crisis of poverty, violence and under-development in the province. In this equation, women are disproportionate victims not only because of their majority stake in the population, but also due to their positions as mothers, wives and as women which have been unduly exploited and appropriated by men. For example, by their physiological make-up, women tend to be more susceptible to contracting HIV than men making them particularly vulnerable and dependent on the good graces of men. Studies on the gendered nature of HIV and AIDS in KZN, for instance, show that women do not have power to negotiate safe sex (i.e. condom usage) with their husbands or partners as they are constantly being 'raped'. Their social powerlessness in this regard is further exacerbated by gender norms and economic conditions in society which make women to have sexual relations with older men<sup>94</sup> for financial security. According to the KZN Economic Review (2005: 85), "in addition to women facing a higher risk of contracting HIV, they also carry more of the burden of family members and friends affected by HIV and AIDS than men". This is because they are the ones who assume caring responsibilities for family members and relatives who are incapacitated by AIDS (Lerclerc-Madlala, 2001), leading Loewenson and Whiteside (2001) to recommend that women need to be empowered to reduce their vulnerability for any policy response to the HIV and AIDS be meaningful.

Economically, in terms of unemployment, women have less secure employment, earn lower incomes and have less access to formal education (KZN Economic Review, 2005:85). According to Loewenson and Whiteside (2001), women in KZN have an uncertain access to land, credit and education, have less access to formal social security, are less entitled to assets and savings, and have little power to negotiate sex. Furthermore, they contend that women's heavy workloads, which are heavily weighted towards the domestic sphere, undermine the uptake of technologies and services (Loewenson and Whiteside, 2001: 14). Confirming the feminisation of

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<sup>94</sup> Findings from the national HIV prevalence survey suggest that the risk of contracting the virus increases for both men and women who have partners that are five or more years older than them (HSRC *et al*, 2005).

poverty in the province, Ndimande (2001) posits that most of the women who make up the provincial population live in rural areas and they are African. According to Statistics South Africa (SSA 1995), 98% of the female non-urban population in KZN were African women. Of the total 75% of KZN's poor who live in rural areas, 54% are African women with less than 8% each of white, coloured and Indian women (SSA 1996). On the economic front, the general female unemployment rate was 49.9% in 2003 while that of males was 36.4%, using the expanded definition of unemployment which covers the economically active population available in the job market even though discouraged by their joblessness (SSA, 2003). According to previous studies, labour force participation in the province declined from 57.8% in 2000 to 51.9% in 2005 due largely to decline in the labour force participation rate of the female population (KZN Economic Review, 2005: 5). In the rural areas, of the approximately 53% of the economically active women who were unemployed in 1998, 99.7% were African women, and this has not improved much since then (SSA, 2004; SSA, 2005). The obvious "gender and racial biases in poverty indicators are also reflected in the basic need of housing and access to housing loans in KZN" (Ndinda, 2004: 61, See also Ndinda, 2006). The feminisation of economic inequality, reflected also in the social sector, especially in residential construction work, poses serious questions and problems in terms of the representation of their views in decision-making (Ndinda, 2002).

In the political sphere, the after-effects of political violence leave women scared psychologically due to rape and other forms of physical violence against them during armed conflict as well as emotional trauma associated with the loss of their sons and husbands. They are also disempowered economically due to the loss of their livelihoods and properties which further entrenches their poverty. This disempowerment also plays out in the public sphere of post-conflict reconstruction as they are excluded from formal peace-building processes after conflict. For instance, evidence from our field study carried out in Magoda, a rural settlement around Richmond in September 2005, indicates that women are still largely marginalised in politics despite the strides taken by the ruling ANC at both the national and the provincial levels to improve the number of women in politics.<sup>95</sup> Apart from issues

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<sup>95</sup> In the same study, 20 (66%) of the 30 women surveyed in Richmond town, a semi-urban settlement,

bordering mainly on inadequate service delivery, they were concerned that their marginal participation in politics was still at the good graces and prerogative of men who, it is claimed, decide which women get what positions. This becomes instructive given that the political party quota system is the instrument of gender mainstreaming in South Africa. In KZN, the process is simple: the Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize (ANC), working in consonance with the president, Mr. Jacob Zuma (ANC), is responsible for which women (mainly those who have the human and social capital) are appointed to fill the quotas allocated for women. No doubt, there are consultations with other male and female leaders; however, the mere fact that women remain dependent on specific men or male dominated organisations for their political advancement is a cause for serious concern. Certainly, it betrays the fragility of the political gains made by women so far in South Africa. This is pertinent if one considers the general disapprovals (expressed mostly by men) over the appointment of large numbers of women into positions of authority, especially the appointment of the current Deputy President, Mrs. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, which has provoked debate on the possibility and appropriateness of a woman succeeding the president. Mbeki himself has been accused of being authoritarian and unilateral on this issue. The point is, whether it is the Premier of KZN or the President of South Africa (in collaboration with a group of men and women) that decides for Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma women who should be their councillors, municipal managers, and legislative representatives, it is problematic. This is because such arrangements may serve not only to compromise the women's choices of quality or appropriate representation but also their right of self-determination given the incidence of political patronage and clientele politics. The trend of marginalisation in politics becomes more problematic when viewed against the strategic roles they often played during conflict, both as direct participants and as contributors to the foundation for peace, especially at the informal level<sup>96</sup>.

From the foregoing, although men and women suffer the effects of human insecurities such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and HIV and AIDS which are

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think that women are still largely marginalised in politics

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Jabulani Sithole, a Senior Lecturer, School of Gender and Historical Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal in May, 2005. Mr Sithole is a strong member of the African National Congress (ANC) and was part of a formal peace process set up by the ANC to end conflict in KZN.

prevalent in KZN, women are disproportionately affected because of physiological and socio-cultural factors which disadvantage them. Their majority population stake in the province makes it more disturbing, and in the same breath, makes it more imperative to include them in the decision-making structures and processes where these issues are debated and policy responses formulated. As a conflict-prevention approach, women's inclusion in formal decision-making will help lead to sustainable peace as women have a rich history of peace activism and a positive disposition towards pacifism rather than antagonism.

#### **5.4 Nature of conflict in study areas**

While armed conflict and human insecurities in KZN have a generic character, they also have particularities in different areas where they occur and are prevalent, which helps to give a nuanced understanding of these conflicts and how women fare in them. It is to the specific character of armed and social conflicts in our selected case studies that we now turn to.

##### **5.4.1 Richmond killings**

Richmond is a small country town in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, about 35 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg. Its main occupations are farming and forestry and it is home to approximately 70,000 people in semi-rural and rural (informal) settlements. Richmond and some of its adjoining communities such as Magoda, Ndahleni, Mkhobeni and Patheni have experienced hundreds of politically motivated killings and low-intensity wars since 1988, which, though, have been changing in character since then have remained rooted in pre-1994 apartheid politics<sup>97</sup>, and have left the area devastated till date. According to Taylor (2002: 12), “at the heart of conflict in Richmond has been the rise of the highly trained, armed and organised Richmond Self-Defence Unit (SDU) in the context of the war against Inkatha and its subsequent relationship to the ANC in the post apartheid era, as well as its changing – and corrupt – relationship with local security service personnel”. This has served to divide the people bitterly along two opposing party lines characterised by territorial battles between Inkatha and ANC supporters in the area. For instance, these battles

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<sup>97</sup> Taylor for instance contends that the root causes of the conflict can be clearly traced to the Inkatha/ANC war, and in particular, to the earlier activities of the Richmond (Taylor, 2002: 13).

were waged from 1988 onwards in the form of Inkatha chief authority versus ANC youth comrades in which units on both sides increasingly got paramilitary training such that in 1991 alone, over 140 people were killed (Taylor, 2002: 12). The conflict got to a head between 1991 and 1994 as both the ANC and Inkatha struggled for political control of certain 'no-go-areas' or 'strongholds' such as Magoda and Ndaleni which the ANC won from Inkatha, and Mkhobeni and Patheni which remained traditional strongholds for the Inkatha. According to Taylor (2002: 12):

At first, with the support of the apartheid state and elements of the far right, Inkatha had the upper hand in the Richmond war, but over time the pendulum swung towards the ANC. With the rise of well-trained SDUs and the support of MK units, Inkatha was ousted from Magoda and Ndaleni in the early 1990s – but not before both sides sustained heavy casualties in attacks and counter-attacks (that left scores of people including women and children dead).

Following the advent of the new democratic South Africa, a number of peace meetings and rallies were initiated and mediated by the police, which saw some reprieve from violence between 1994 and 1996. However, it was a graveside peace as armed conflict resumed in the area, although this time, “it could no longer be explained in terms of the earlier Inkatha versus ANC dynamic, but more in terms of an intra-ANC power struggle in which a new political party, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) became embroiled” (Taylor, 2002: 13). The main actors in this intense intra-ANC struggle were Sifiso Nkabinde, Zwandile Mbongwa, Bob Ndlovu, Percy Thompson, and Mbongeleni Mtolo. According to Taylor (2002), the forces of law and order are also complicit actors in the Richmond wars as they demonstrated a frustrating inability or unwillingness to deal with the situation. For example, he contends that “police bias, police corruption, and bad police management aggravated the entire situation in Richmond” (Taylor, 2002: 13) as they (the local police) were accused of sabotaging their own work by warning political leaders of police raids, exposing police informers to political leaders, passing on intelligence reports, deliberately misplacing dockets, generally breaching due processes of the law, and, in extreme cases, direct involvement in the killings as was the case in Ezingolweni where local police were supplying arms and giving or selling ammunition to the

paramilitary forces (Taylor, 2002: 16). These greatly compromised the ability of the province's prosecution service and the Investigative Task Unit (ITU) specifically set up in 1995 by the provincial government to inquire into the Richmond wars. The National Investigative Unit (NITU) set up by the national government in 1996 was also compromised, for instance, by the inability of the local police to facilitate protection for state witnesses some of whom were killed including the case involving Bob Ndlovu in which "the entire family of a state witness were killed, even though they had left Richmond" (Taylor, 2002: 17). In the same vein, Taylor indicts the three political parties, ANC, IFP UDM, who benefited from the Richmond wars which was tolerated by the political elites in these parties as they all saw it as an opportunity to make political in-roads into previous 'no go areas'. For example, while the second phase of armed conflict was essentially between the ANC and UDM over control of Magoda and Ndaleni which were earlier wrested from the IFP, the IFP ironically gained more because it "launched three new branches in Richmond, with Magoda and Ndaleni no longer being 'no go areas' for the party" (Taylor, 2002: 19). In this way, political considerations prevented effective intervention and resolution of a conflict which left hundreds of families, whose breadwinners were victims of the wars, in sorrow and poverty<sup>98</sup>. In 2005, the effects of these wars were still very visible in Richmond town, Magoda and Ndaleni, which were the main battle sites. Evidence of the violent conflict is resplendent in burnt houses which litter the areas. Also, the palpable fear which frames people's opinions of the wars indicates that the conflict is far from over. According to Gugu Hlomuka, a school teacher in Magoda, "people are still scared of talking about the wars because they are don't want to be targeted or killed at night for talking too much because that was what happened to anyone who took sides. We don't believe that everything is ok now" (Interview with Gugu, August, 2005). Indeed, as Taylor summarised the Richmond wars, the failure of the state through its government (national and provincial) to unravel the full web of intrigue and complicity, failure to grant justice to surviving victims (mostly women and children) as well as the failure to unearth hidden arms caches means that the entire KwaZulu-Natal province is far from stable (Taylor, 2002).

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<sup>98</sup> 26 (86%) of the 30 women surveyed in the Richmond town, Magoda and Ndaleni lost their livelihoods and subsequently felt disempowered by these wars. Two of them said they were victims of rape which was visited on them as part of punishment for their husbands' involvement in the conflict. Both women said their husbands were victims of the killings, one in 1994 and the other in 1996.

#### 5.4.2 Shobashobane massacre

Shobashobane is a rural settlement of about seven square kilometres situated some 200 kilometres south of Durban on the lower south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. It forms part of the Ezingolweni area, which from 1990 increasingly became a highly contested political terrain. Underscoring its rural agriculture-based economy, Nebandla (2005: 33) contends that before the outbreak of violence in Shobashobane, majority of its residents survived by means of subsistence farming, growing and harvesting beans, maize and pumpkins amongst other crops. According to him, “many homesteads also owned cattle. Much of the local economy depended on bartering, with a limited cash economy amongst those who could grow enough surplus to sell their products locally” (Nebandla, 2005: 33).

The Shobashobane *Christmas Day massacre of 1995* which is the specific conflict focus of this study is not isolated from endemic conflict in the South Coast area of KwaZulu-Natal. For example, Taylor (2002) records that between 1990 and 1995 alone, there were over 50 massacres in the South Coast area, which “had also been plagued by violent paramilitary structures, hit squads and partisan police” (Nebandla, 2005:33). Indeed, between 1989 and 1997 the Lower South Coast became one of the worst affected areas in the province as violent conflict spread from one area to another leaving hundreds of people dead, thousands displaced and homes and properties worth millions of rand burnt, looted or simply destroyed.

As a brief prelude, Shobashobane before the 1995 massacre was labelled as an ‘ANC area’ because of the calibre of people who moved into the settlement in the 1980s and shifted the worldview of the area from a tradition-oriented to a more cosmopolitan one. According to Nebandla (2005), possibly because of its unique proximity to access roads, educated people began moving in droves into the area and, over time, Shobashobane came to be seen as a safe haven for people escaping from the domination of traditional authorities (Nebandla, 2005: 33). Expectedly, the political connotations of this development meant that it was not long before Shobashobane was labelled and identified as an ANC area, and “as communities across KwaZulu-Natal became increasingly polarised and dominated by one party or another, the branding of Shobashobane as ‘ANC’ resulted in an exodus from the area of people who did not associate themselves with the ANC” (Nebandla, 2005: 34). In this way, Shobashobane

became an island of ANC supporters that was surrounded by IFP-supporting areas and thus setting the stage for the eventual attack of the area by IFP supporters. The first attacks in Shobashobane occurred in 1990 leading to a massive depletion of the area's population. For example, before 1990, Shobashobane was home to approximately 3,000 people but by December 1995, following the 1990 attacks, only 10% of that number (300 people) were living in the area.

These were the targets of the 25 December killings which attracted global headlines and have become known as the *Christmas Day Massacre* of 1995 in which 19 people were killed and the entire Shobashobane community was displaced. According to records and studies, on that fateful Christmas morning, a large group of IFP supporters (numbering about 1,000) armed with an assortment of weapons moved into Shobashobane, attacking residents and burning homes. In the end, more than 47 homesteads including properties were burnt down, and, in the days following the attack, the residents' livestock, crops and remaining valuables were looted. The residents who took refuge spent the next two months living in a church hall in Port Shepstone before returning to the Shobashobane area under the protection of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). For more than a year after their return many of the residents lived in tents provided by the army. They chose to live in tents partly as a result of their homes being destroyed and partly because they feared dispersing in case they were attacked again (Taylor, 2002; Nebandla, 2005). In 2006, more than 10 years after the famous massacre, the few previous residents who went back to Shobashobane still live in tents and makeshift structures, still afraid that they could be attacked (Personal observation by author, August 2006).

Again, as in the Richmond case, there were allegations of police complicity in perpetuating the violence in Shobashobane. The alleged complicity ranged from collusion with IFP supporters and local traditional authorities in planning and executing the violence to inaction when notified of the impending violence as well as failure to respond to frantic calls for assistance during the 'reign of terror'.

According to Taylor, the information pointing directly to the impending conflict was passed on to the local police at Ezingolweni and to the Police headquarters in Port Shepstone and was never acted on. There was even a report from the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) which "clearly pointed to the likelihood of overt conflict

in Shobashobane: an attack will be launched in after 19951215 when factories are closed and migrant workers have returned to their homes at Ezingolweni” (Taylor, 2002: 8), which was also not acted on. The subsequent attempts at ensuring that justice was done through arrests and eventual trial of 18 suspects, five of who were acquitted for insufficient evidence, were hollow, according to Taylor (2002). Apart from the fact that 18 brought to trial were insignificant compared to the over 1,000 who participated actively in the massacres, the futility of the attempts at justice was further underscored by continued violence in the area after 1995. Political leaders on both sides (IFP and ANC) were silently assassinated between 1996 and 1998 and in 2006; people are still too scared to admit openly that they belong to any of the political parties especially the ANC (Observation from survey, 2006).

#### **5.4.3 Nongoma assassinations**

Nongoma is a busy market town located about 50 kilometres north of Ulundi, the former capital of KwaZulu-Natal. With a population of about 1.8 million people, Nongoma serves as the seat of the Zulu royal house where King Goodwill Zwelithini resides. With an unemployment rate of 70% and with most of the households living below the poverty line, Nongoma is a classical case of the human security vulnerabilities that characterise KwaZulu-Natal. This has been made worse by the spiral of open violence and political assassinations which have been prevalent in adjoining areas like Dabhasi, Maye and KwaMinya.

Armed conflict in Nongoma is hydra-headed as it has both economic and political dimensions which are also linked as they drive each other. According to the Violence Monitor (1999), endemic conflict in areas like Nongoma is characterised by “deaths resulting from/linked to taxi conflict, struggles around local government and development, criminal-cum-political gangsterism, ‘faction fighting’ and mysterious execution-style killings” (<http://www.violencemonitor.com/?m=199912> accessed 16/05/05). In Taylor (2002)’s view, being a traditional IFP area, Nongoma was not known for inter-party political conflicts but was rather famous for its faction fights over control of the transport economy and for political influence within the IFP in Nongoma. Indeed, it was the political economy of armed conflict within the IFP that opened up Nongoma for the ANC and this subsequently led to a new era of inter-party violence (from 1999) between the IFP and ANC that later characterised armed

conflict in the area.

Before 1999, according to Taylor (2002: 20), “there was bitter and open conflict between competing taxi organizations over access to routes, sometimes resulting in shootouts in broad daylight in the town”. Continuing, Taylor (2002) contends that “ownership of these taxi organizations was closely interlinked with prominent political leaders in the area”. Initially what happened was that, reflecting the competing territorial politics of chiefly authority in the region, the Nongoma Taxi Association split into two factions led by Mangisi Buthelezi and Mnkhalanka Zungu. According to Mr. G. B Nyembe, an ANC Councillor for ward 10 (Dabhasi) and a Minister of God, taxi owners involved in the conflict in town had their relatives join in from within the local community and so the conflict spilled into family feuds as well. Nyembe also contends that factions within the IFP had men on different sides of the taxi conflict and as such their political differences became merged with the conflict (Interview with Nyembe, 5 August 2006). The violence was exacerbated by the proliferation of guns in KwaZulu-Natal due to armed conflicts that were simultaneously taking place in other parts of the province (i.e. Gingindlovu, Maphumulo, Umsinga, Pongola and Eshowe apart from Richmond and Shobashobane) during the period under study, i.e., 1990 to 2005. As these guns flowed into the taxi industry, a series of attacks and revenge killings which mostly affected the taxi passengers in the area ensued.

According to Taylor (2002), the key figure of the conflict was Joseph Sikhonde, the IFP leader at the time who was a former Mayor of the town and one time principal of Prince Ndabuko High School in Nongoma. Sikhonde became a powerful figure in Nongoma through establishing a ruthless grip on local taxi industry and other trading businesses in Nongoma. Others were Mangisi Buthelezi, Isreal Ngcobo, Langa Ntshangase and Mnkhalanka Zungu who were all initially strong members of the IFP but later switched loyalties to the ANC as tensions between them rose over personal economic imperatives. For example, while Ngcobo and Ntshangase were formerly aligned to Buthelezi against Zungu<sup>99</sup>, they soon fell out as Buthelezi became tainted by increasing ANC sympathies (Taylor, 2002). And as Sikhonde stepped into

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<sup>99</sup> Zungu was over-powered by Buthelezi with the help of his henchmen and forced to leave Nongoma

Buthelezi's place following his forced exile from Nongoma, his own romance with Ngcobo and Ntshangase was also short-lived as they fell out with Sikhonde and according to Taylor, "the reason for the split cannot be clearly tied to political ideology (although it did come to take party political form), and is best understood in terms of access to, and control of, local resources" (Taylor, 2002: 21). This set the stage for the second phase of conflict in Nongoma which started in 1999 and left scores of killings and assassinations in its wake, destroying properties and livelihoods in ways that further compounded the human security vulnerabilities of Nongoma.

With Sikhonde gaining upper hand in the personal feud between him and Ngcobo/Ntshangase due to his vast connections within the party and with the local and Ulundi area police as well as his investment in the taxi industry, Ngcobo and Ntshangase decided to defect to the ANC. This move added a new texture to political conflict in Nongoma as before this time Nongoma was a "no go area" for the ANC and it came at a time the ANC was seeking to establish a formal presence in Nongoma. Through Ngcobo and Ntshangase's help<sup>100</sup> the ANC became the official opposition party in Nongoma politics and thereafter proceeded to expose Sikhonde's illegal activities including the misuse of council funds and a protection racket enforced by former Self Protection Unit (SPU) members and other such atrocities.

According to Taylor (2002), as this new IFP-ANC political fault lines took shape, the result was, for a number of people, fatal. For instance, the main actors, Ngcobo and Sikhonde, were brutally assassinated and Ntshangase's home was torched by unknown persons in an apparent attempt to eliminate him. Thus he was forced to flee Nongoma for his life and he started operating from Empangeni. These assassinations and the attempted murder on Ngcobo precipitated a series of deadly attacks on people and their homes that came to define local political rivalry and armed conflict between the IFP and the ANC in Nongoma and which was characteristic of IFP/ANC relations in the province at the time. For instance, hours after Sikhonde's funeral, a number of attacks on people and their homes were launched, forcing at least 50 people to seek refuge at the local police station, and led to the assassination of the chairperson of the local community policing forum. Also, in the days and weeks following Sikhonde's

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<sup>100</sup> Ntshangase had become the deputy chairperson of the ANC branch in the area

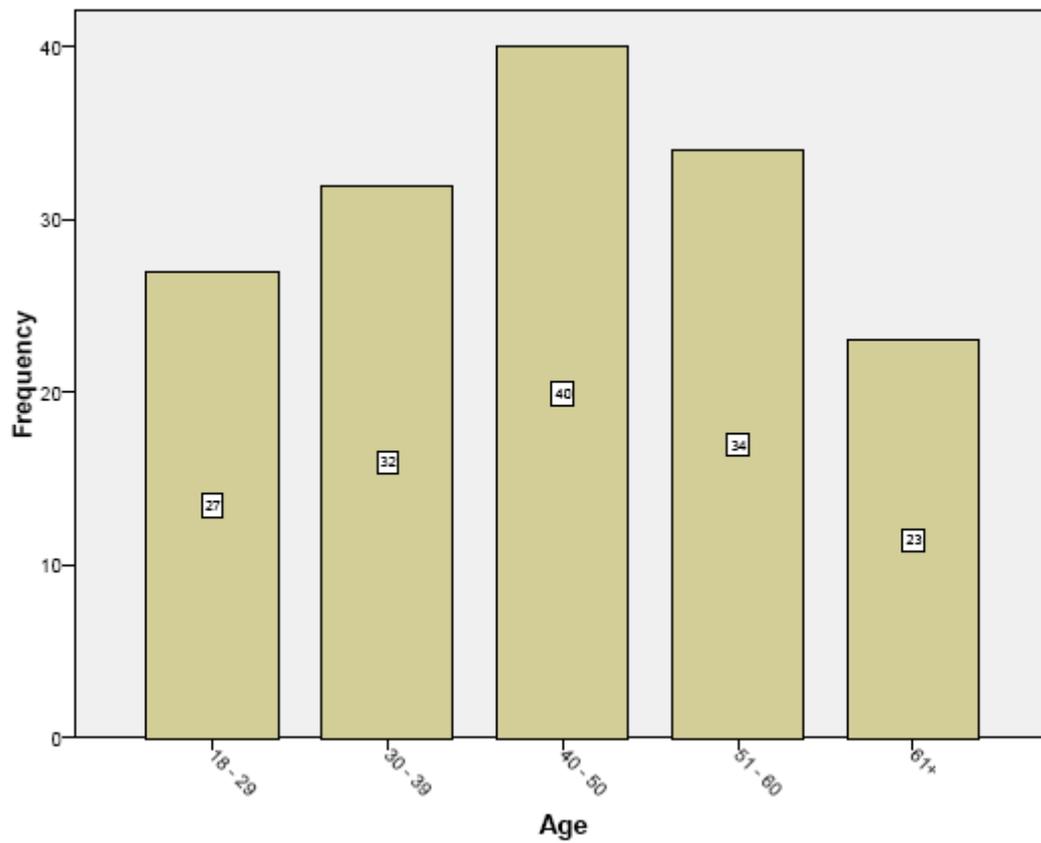
assassination, scores of both IFP and ANC politicians were also assassinated further jeopardising relations between the parties and the peace agreement of 1996 mediated by Jacob Zuma and Frank Mdlalose. At the end of that era of conflict, many families had lost husbands, sons, daughters and properties worth thousands of rand. Hundreds of people were displaced from their homes, women were tortured and raped and households rendered destitute with no breadwinners.

As in the Richmond and Shobashobane cases, apart from the political class, the local police was also indicted in the Nongoma conflicts. For example, according to the Violence Monitor (2000), “despite very obvious leads in the November 1999 murder of Prince Cyril Zulu, no one has as yet been arrested - nor is the family being kept abreast of what the police are doing”. (<http://www.violencemonitor.com/?m=200004> accessed 16/5/05). According to Taylor (2002), police complicity in the Nongoma conflict stems from a dearth of resources to fight crime and the fact that “most of the police stationed at Nongoma are members of the former KwaZulu Police (KZP), some of whom underwent paramilitary training in the early 1990s and were integrated into the new police service post – 1994 in spite of their lack of formal police training” (Taylor, 2002: 24). This has served to compromise their neutrality on issues concerning the IFP considering that they owe their service to the party for training them as paramilitary personnel during the days of Self Protection Units in the province. The judicial system was not spared either as Taylor records that the testimony of Clifford Nkuna, a key state witness in Ntshangase’s trial, was discredited by the judge who described Nkuna’s indictment of Premier Ndebele, Community Safety and Liaison Minister, Bheki Cele (both ANC stalwarts in KwaZulu-Natal) and King Zwelithini as conspirators in Sikhonde’s assassination as “fantastical” (Taylor, 2002: 25). In essence, the rule of law was circumvented and outweighed by political considerations and corruption. The result of such injustice is that today, social and armed conflict reminiscent of the 1990s remains endemic in Nongoma as was shown in the January 2009 broad day light shooting of an ANC chairperson of the Nongoma sub region, Bongani Ngcobo by an IFP councillor in full view of his colleagues at the ANC offices in that area (<http://www.africancrisis.co.za/Article.php> accessed 11/06/09).

## **5.5 Methodology and description of data obtained from study areas**

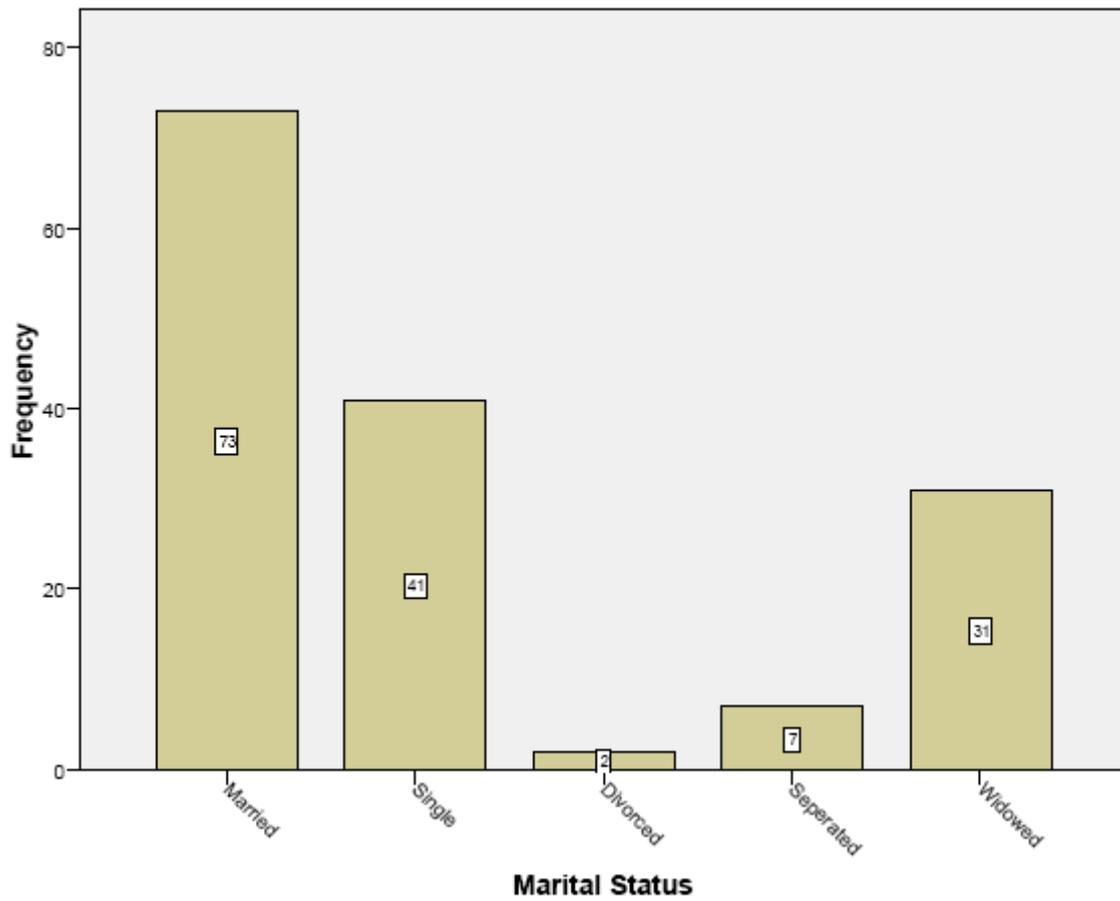
A total of 215 women were surveyed in KwaZulu-Natal: 35 in Richmond, 65 in Shobashobane, and 105 in Nongoma through the use of the questionnaire and focus group discussion instruments. Of the 215 women, 185 were surveyed through questionnaires in Richmond, in Shobashobane and in Nongoma and the remaining 30 (15 in Shobashobane and 15 in Nongoma) were surveyed in 2 focus group discussion sessions. To overcome the researcher's language barrier, a total of three research assistants/interpreters were employed for data collection. The data obtained from this survey were analysed with the SPSS tool for data description and cross tabulations. These are further analysed in the next chapter using the Pearson Chi-Square Technique and Logistic Regression model to test for the significance of variables that could explain women's perceptions on the main hypothesis: an increased political representation of women in decision-making positions would cause lasting peace in community. In KwaZulu-Natal, these variables include age, marital status, occupation and educational background. Accordingly, the age, marital, educational and occupational backgrounds of the 185 women, who responded in varying degrees to our questionnaires, are presented in Figures 1 – 5 below:

Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents



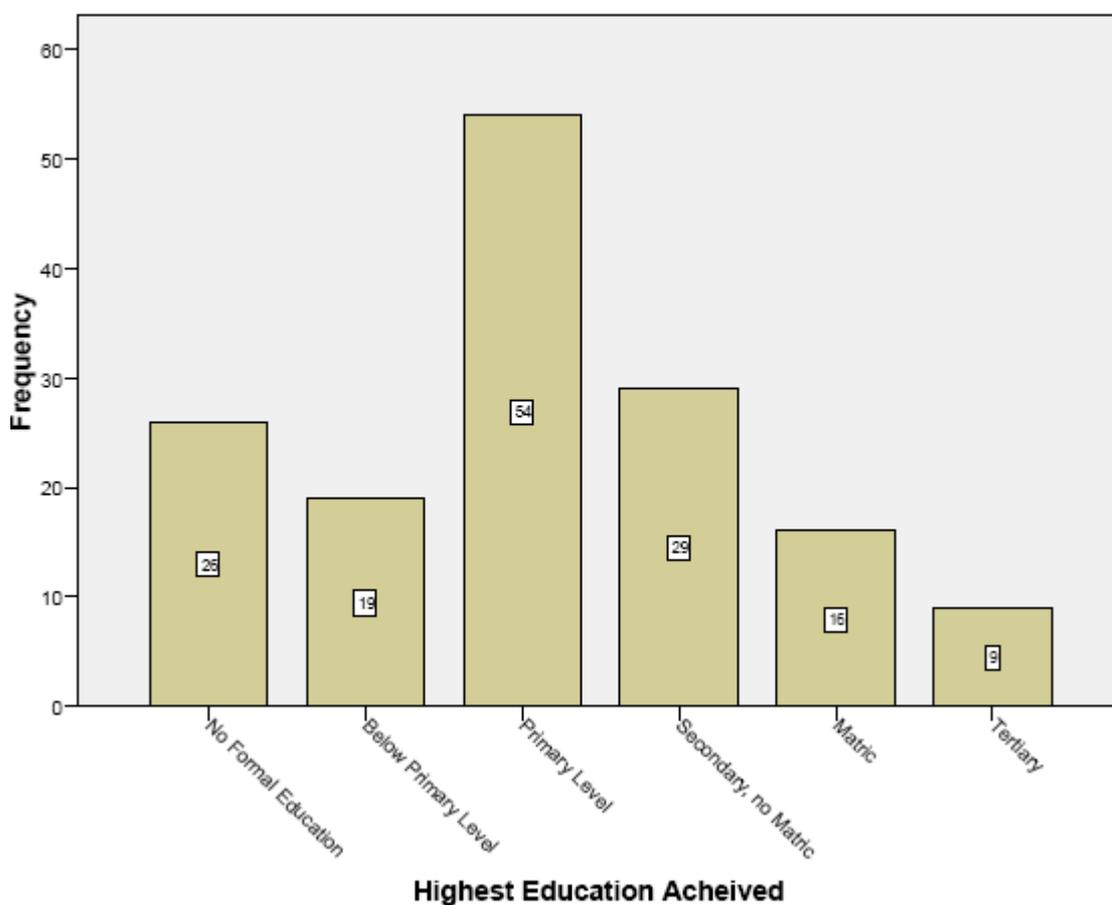
As Figure 1 shows, the majority of the respondents who were comfortable with disclosing their age were those between the 40 and 50 age bracket (25%). This was followed by those between 51 and 60 (22%), between 30 and 39 (21%), between 18 and 29 (17%) and those aged 61 and above (15%) in that order.

Figure 2: Marital background of respondents



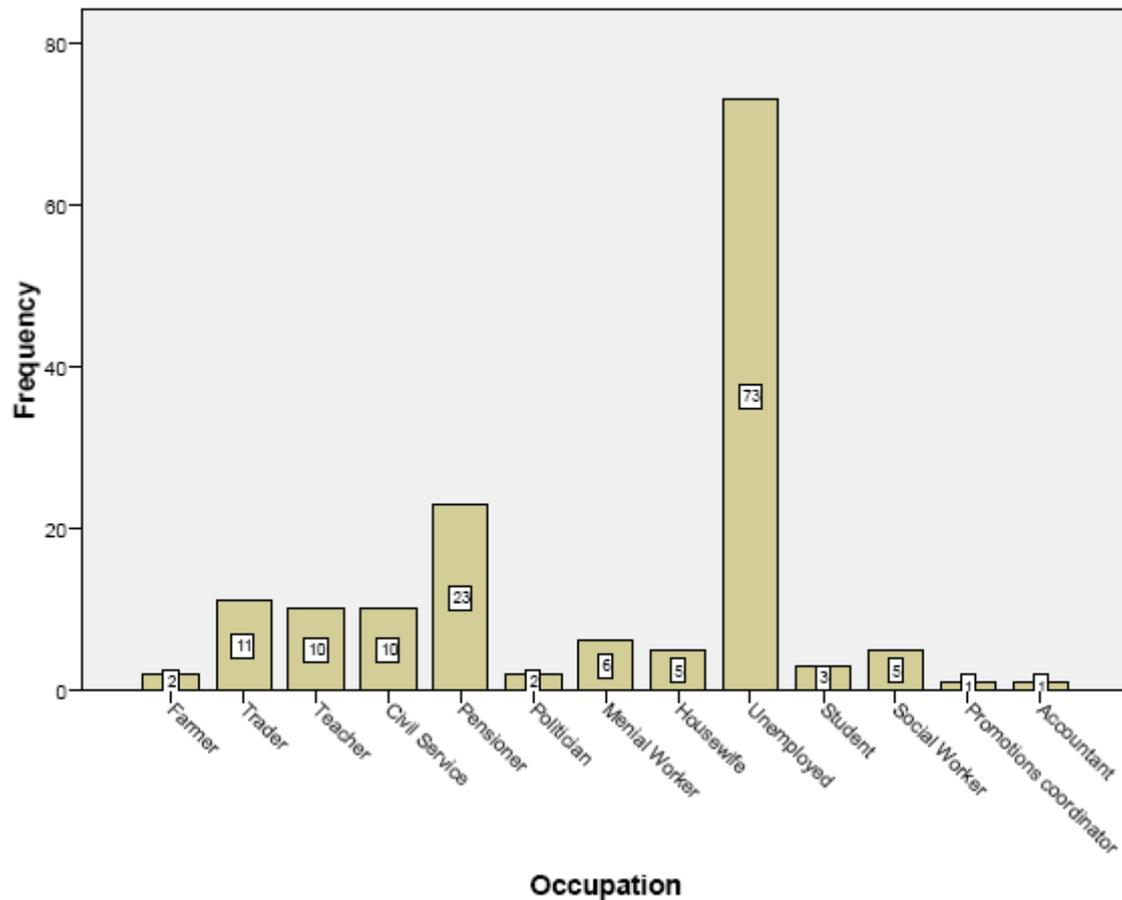
As Figure 2 shows, the majority of our respondents (47%) in KZN are married. 41 of the 154 respondents to this question (representing 26%) are single. 31 (20%) are widowed. Of the remaining 9, 7 were separated as at the time of the survey while two were divorced.

Figure 3: Educational background of respondents



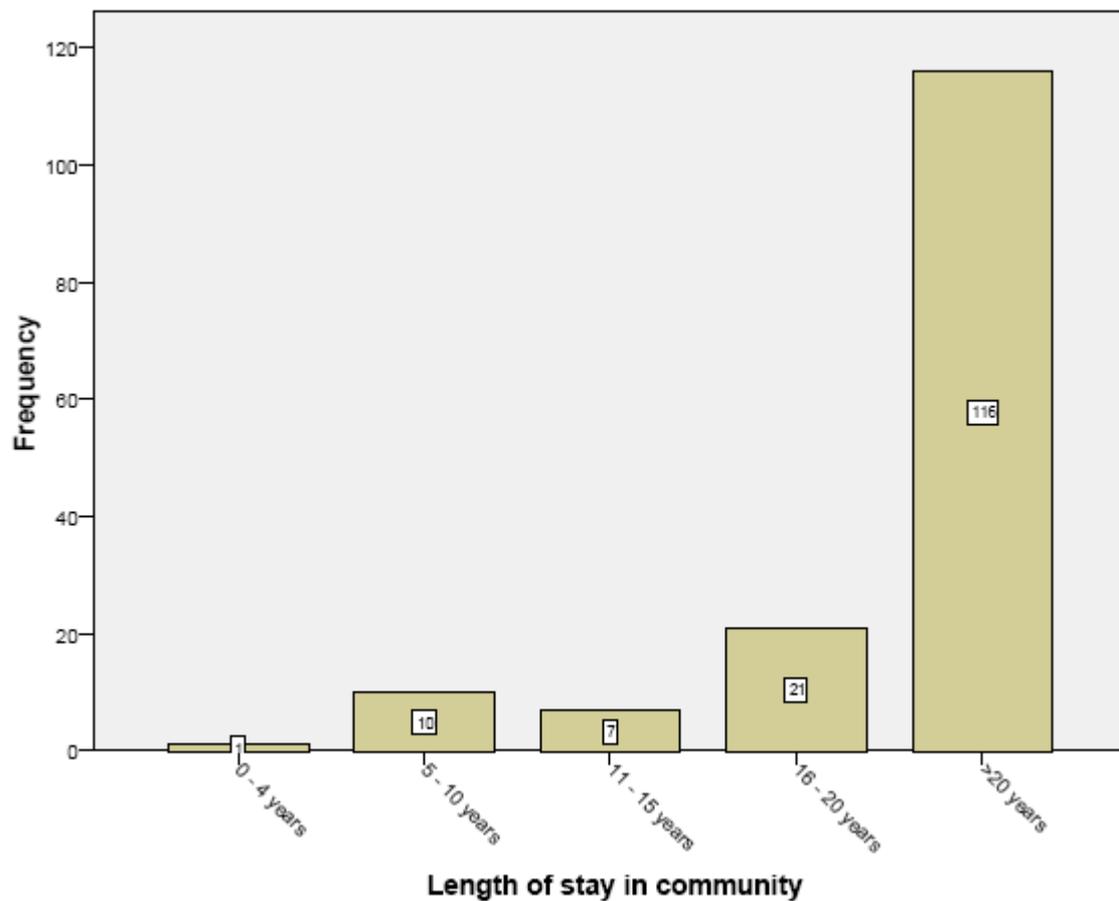
Of the 153 respondents to the question on educational qualifications, 54 (35%) had only a primary education with 29 (19%) having a secondary education without matriculation. 26 (17%) were stark illiterates with no formal education. 16 (10%) were secondary school graduates with matriculation and only 9 (6%) had any form of tertiary education. The combined numbers of those with primary education (which is not a basic education), below primary level and those with no formal education indicate that the majority (99 representing 65% of 153) of the respondents were illiterates and could not speak English.

Figure 4: Occupation of respondents



From the Figure above, almost half (73 representing 48%) of the 153 respondents were unemployed. Pensioners constituted 15% of the 153 respondents while three were students. The remaining 54 (35%) were actively employed in sectors ranging from the educational, agricultural and social work. The study confirms the general trend of expanded unemployment in the province which stands at 47% with women sharing a disproportionate portion of the unemployment burden.

Figure 5: Length of stay in place of interview



As shown in Figure 5 above, the majority (116 representing 75%) of respondents have lived in the conflict areas for more than 20 years. This was an important factor in getting the informed views of the women as those who have continually lived in the areas for so long are more likely to know more about happenings in the area (including the cause and nature of the conflict) than those who have not. This is more so as it implies they were actually living in the areas when conflict started. Of the others, 21 (13%) have lived in the study areas for between 16 and 20 years, 10 (6%) between 5 and 10 years and 7 (4%). The remaining one person, a native of Nongoma, had lived there for only three years but was a willing and active participant in the survey because of her ‘expert’ position as a schoolteacher, mentor and social activist.

### 5.6 Data presentation and analysis of findings on women and conflict

This section is specifically intended to answer research questions 1 and 2 namely:

“what is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas, and how does it define

the women reality with regards to the conflict cycle?” and “how have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas?”

### 5.6.1 Impact of Conflict on Women

As shown below in Figure 6, three quarters of the respondents (137 out 185 surveyed) were living in the selected study areas (Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma) when the particular conflict started.

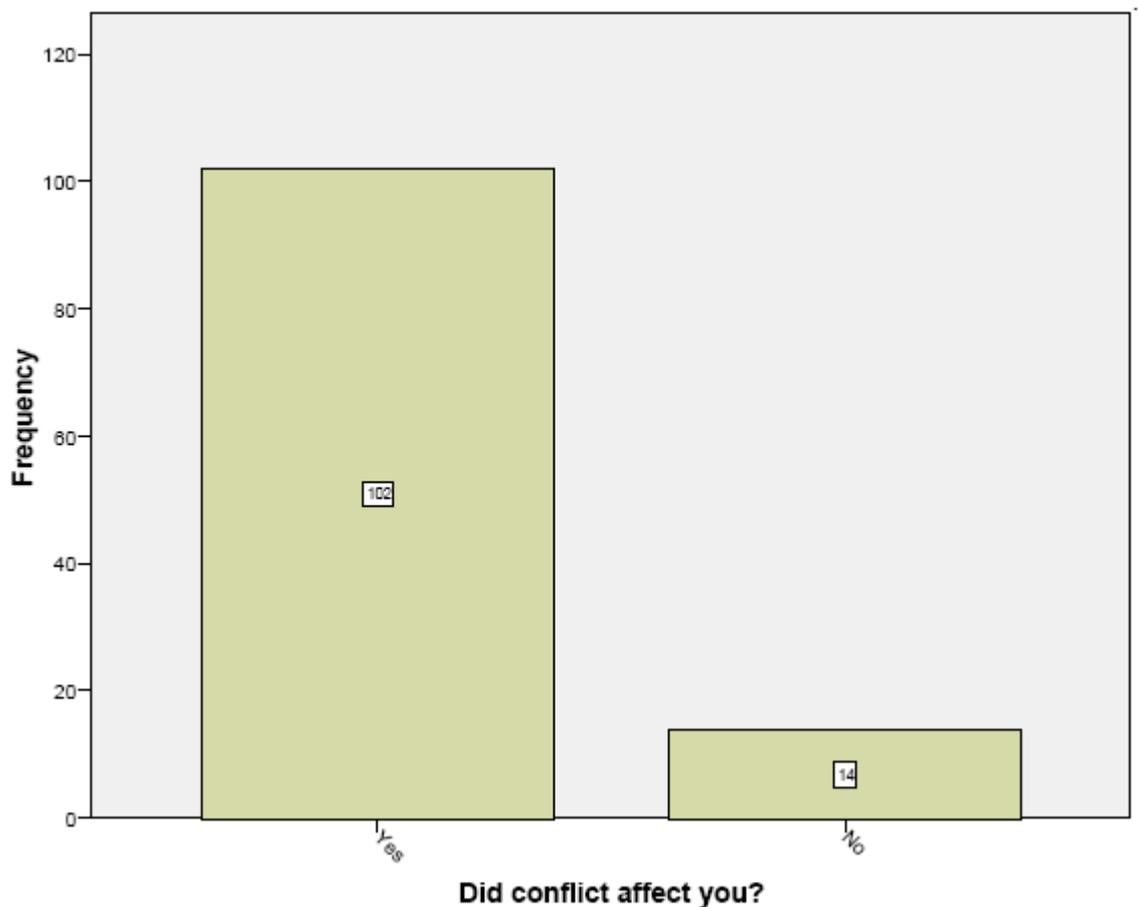
Figure 6: Number of respondents living in study areas when conflict started



In response to a question on the impact of conflict on women, 74.5% (102) of the respondents who were around when the conflict started said they were affected by the conflict and reported losses ranging from loss of property, husband, sons to relatives and friends and livelihoods. Other losses which the study grouped together included psychological trauma arising from rape, physical abuse and torture by youth groups

and armed men<sup>101</sup>.

Figure 7: Conflict effect



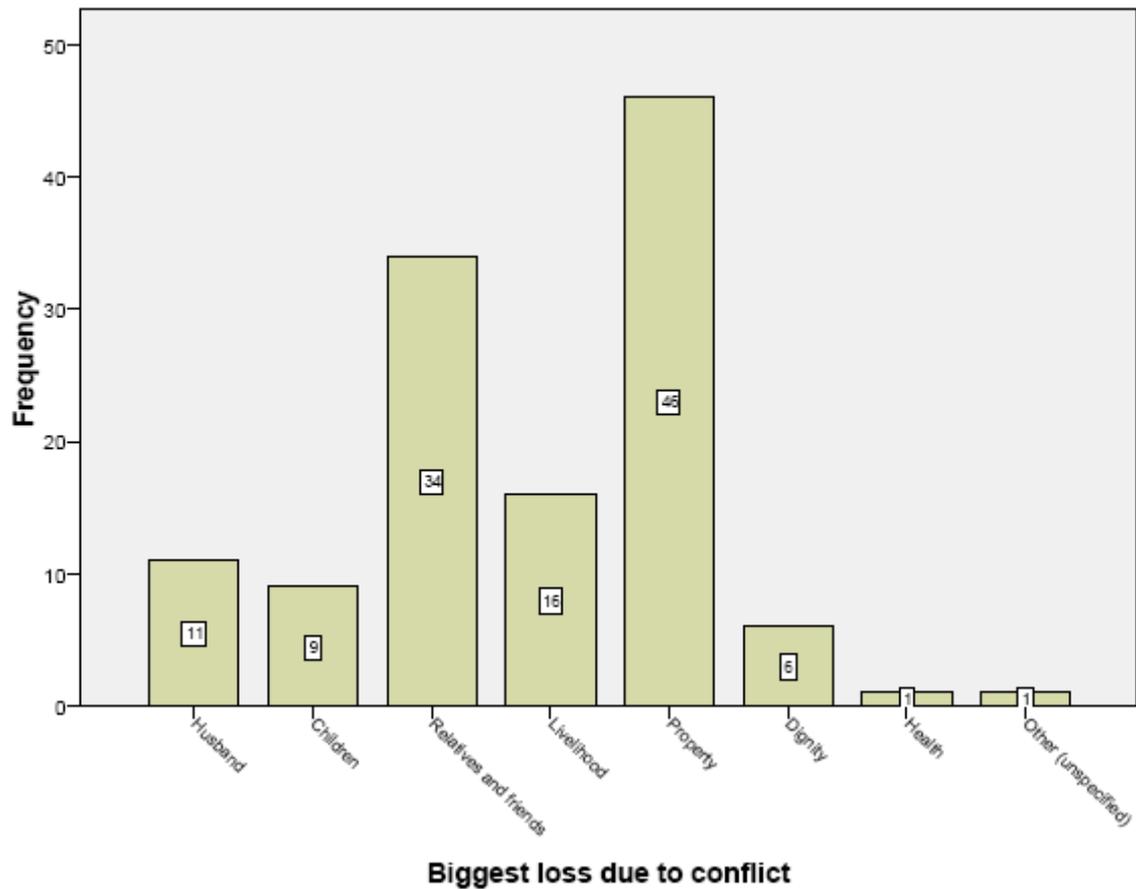
Only 14 (10.2%) of the 137 said they were not affected by the conflict in their communities. The remaining 21 (15.3%) chose to abstain from answering the question on the impact of conflict on them due to personal reasons. What came out from further attempts to get their responses was that they experienced psychological injuries from which they were yet to recover and as such could still not speak about them years after the conflict. Therefore, these 21 women were affected by the conflicts in their communities. If we were to add them to the 102 women who were able to talk about the impact of conflict on them, we will be talking of a 90% impact level for women in areas studied. The range of losses suffered by women as a result

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<sup>101</sup> The women all reported more than one of the type of loss highlighted above. However, we were able to measure the volume of losses the women suffered through a follow-up question on what each of them thought was their biggest loss. They were only allowed one option if they recorded more than one loss in the preceding question. The measures of losses suffered are presented in page

of conflict in the study areas is presented in Figure 8:

Figure 8: Losses in order of value to respondents



As the Figure above shows, a total 124 (90.5%) of the 137 women who responded ‘yes’ to the question of whether the conflict affected them or not indicated what they thought their biggest loss was in terms of its value to them. The frequency of losses they reported ranked from property worth thousands of rand (37%), relatives and friends (27%) to livelihoods (13%), husbands (9%), children (7%) and personal dignity arising from rape, physical abuse and torture including the associated health hazards (7%). Like in the Niger-Delta, the remaining 13 (9.5%) of the 137 women had losses but could not quite specify which loss was biggest compared to the others. Also, women in KZN suffer other consequences of armed conflict in the province. For instance, they bear the brunt of poverty thrust on them by the loss of a breadwinner: husband, lover or son, and the sudden loss of their own livelihoods as a result of political violence. For example, a cumulative 90% of 30 women pooled for two

Focus Group Discussions (15 in Shobashobane and 15 in Nongoma) said they were poorer than before the conflict as they became over-burdened with new responsibilities as heads and breadwinners of households (FGD, 2006). According to Ms Baphilile Skhosana, an administrative officer in Eziqoleni municipality, “though men die more than women from armed conflict, women are usually the worst victims of war as they are left to bear the after-effects of violence including having to conceal the emotional trauma of sexual abuse” (Interview on 31/05/06).

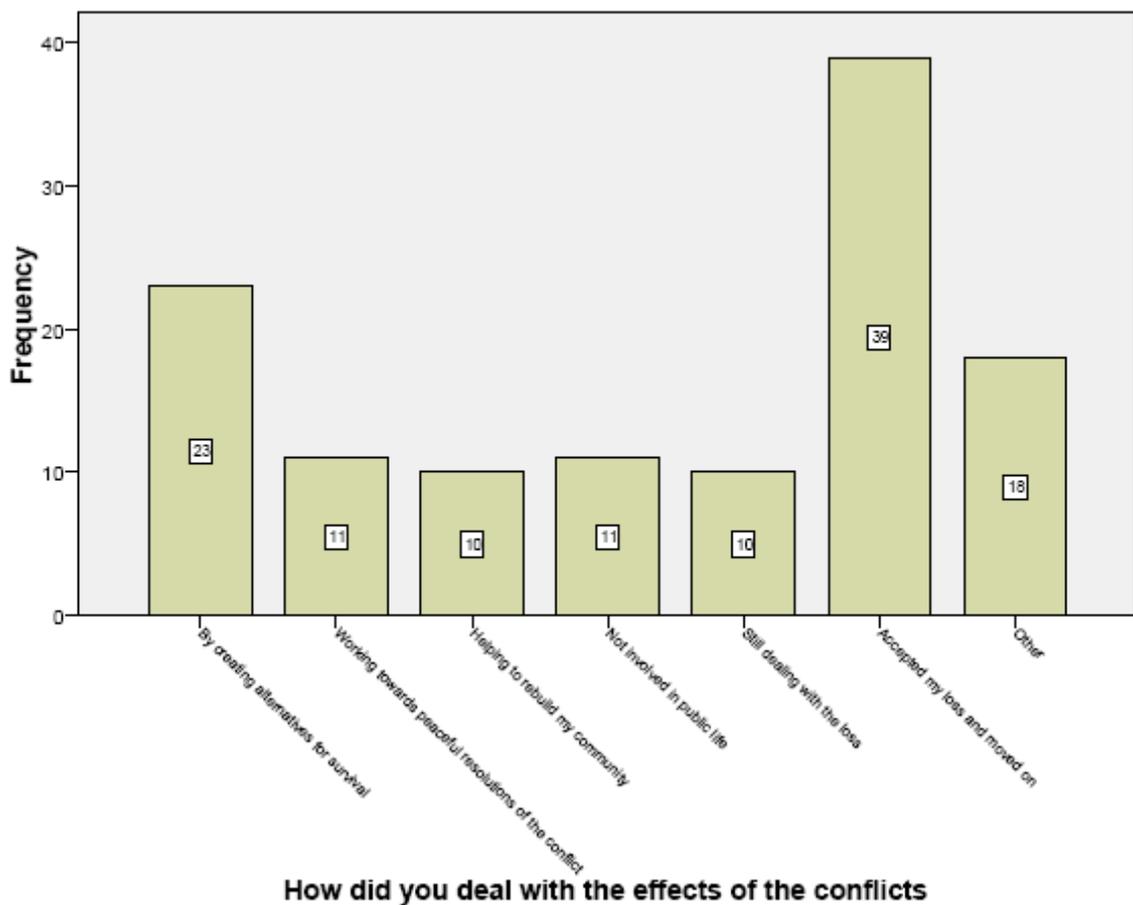
Concisely put, conflict tends to impact on women more than men in KwaZulu-Natal since women continue to bear the after-effects of conflict. These include domestic abuse, rape and its health as well as lingering psychological effects. Therefore, the reality women face with regards to conflict is that even though they are not part of the decision-making processes of their communities that lead to the conflict in the first place, they inevitably become part of conflict as they are left to bear the consequences, some of which linger on till the end of their natural lives. Ironically, despite the impact of conflict on women and how they in turn positively impact on conflict, women are conveniently excluded from post-conflict reconstruction processes of peace making, peace building and rehabilitation.

### **5.6.2 Women’s Response to Conflict**

The respondents were asked about how they responded to the conflict in their area. What came out was that the attitude of KZN women to conflict underscores their response and the roles they play in conflict resolution and this is not unconnected to the African woman’s feminist ethic of care which values interrelationships, connectedness and empowerment rather than conflict and competition. From the Figure below, the general attitude towards conflict is “let us forget the past and look forward to a better future”. This much can be gleaned from the responses of majority of the women ranging from “accepted my loss and moved on” (39), “creating alternatives for survival” (23), “working towards a peaceful resolution” (11), “helping to rebuild my community” (10). This implies that a total of 83 (68%) of the 122 women who responded to the question had a positive attitude towards conflict resolution, peaceful co-existence and development rather than being vengeful, politically apathetic or withdrawn from the rest of society. According to Mrs. Dorah Cele, wife of the *Induna* (traditional Chief) of Eziqoleni, during the Shobashobane

massacre women rallied around themselves meeting regularly in the Chief’s palace to strategise on “how to end the violence, rebuild the community and sustain peaceful coexistence” (Interview with Mrs Cele, 31 May, 2006). For instance, she asserted that during the peace meetings initiated by the government of which she was a part, women worked to ensure an atmosphere that was conducive for negotiating peace by reminding everyone of the need to respect each other.

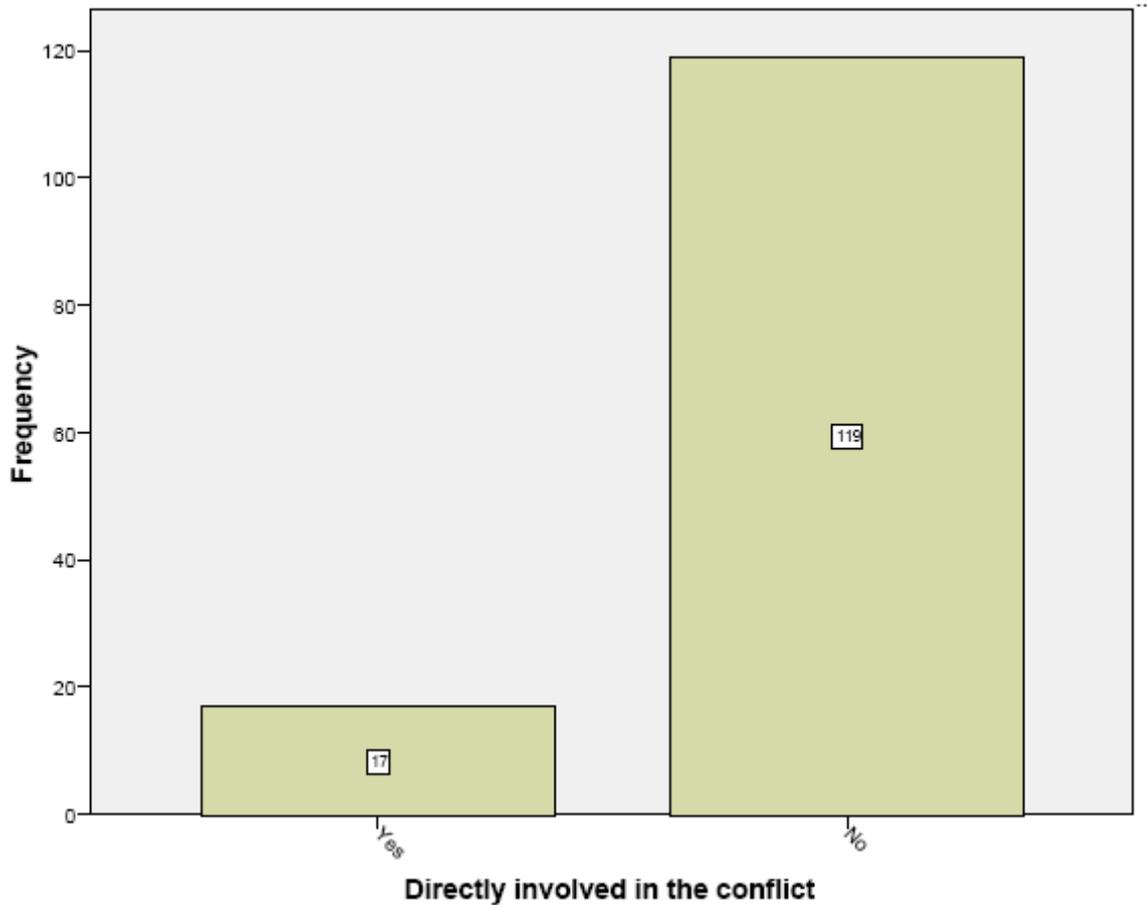
Figure 9: Women’s attitude to conflict



This study shows that KZN women, like women elsewhere in Africa, are resolute in the face of conflict and able to cope with its effects by drawing from the special attributes which characterise their womanhood. These include love, the ethic of caring, a vision of relationship, and disposition towards peaceful co-existence in the interest of their children and that of community as a whole.

The majority of women in KZN are not directly involved in armed conflict even though they are stakeholders in terms of the impact. Of the 137 women who were living in the study areas when the conflict started, only 17(13%) said they were directly involved in armed conflict ranging from direct combat to other forms of active engagement like espionage activities.

Figure 10: Involvement in conflict

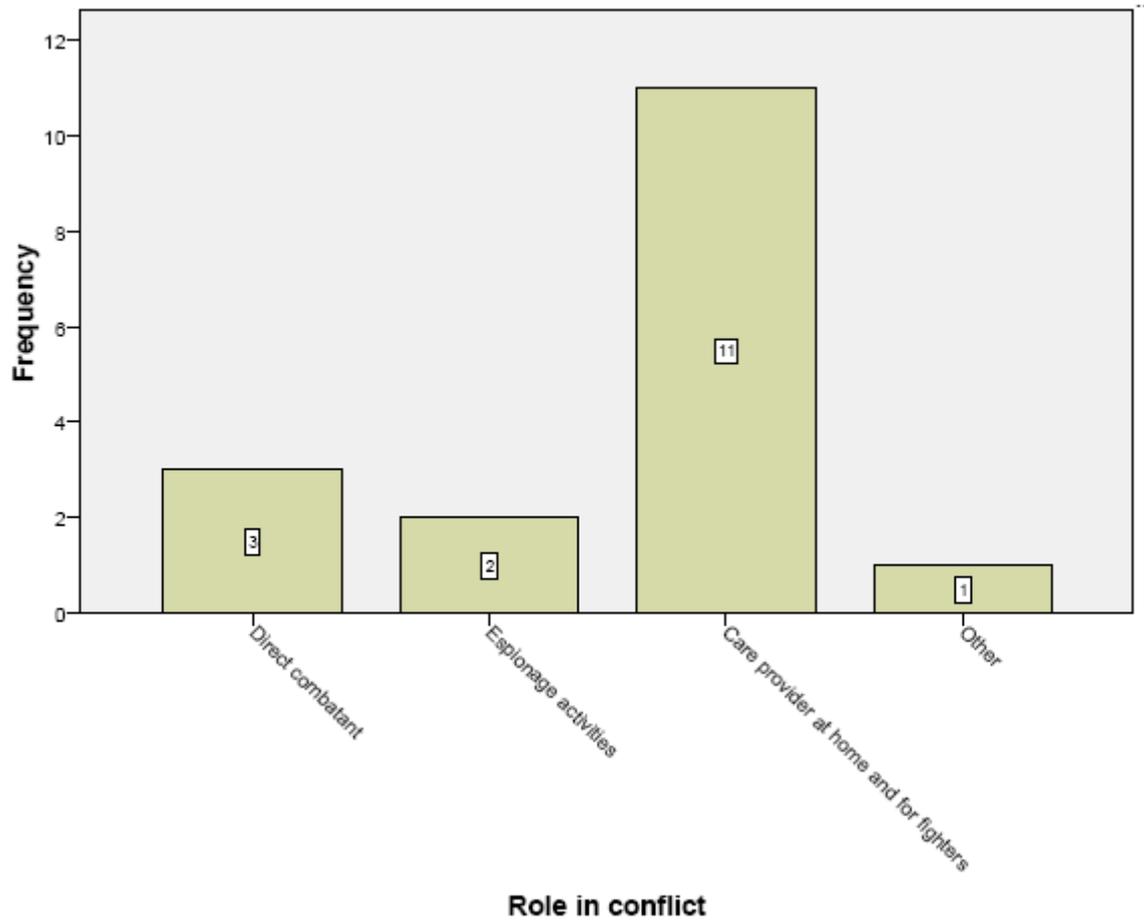


Of the 17 who were directly involved in conflict, three were direct combatants, two engaged in espionage activities, while the other 11 acted as care-givers for wounded fighters. The remaining woman declined to state the exact role she played. According to one of the 11 women who acted as care-givers, Emerencia Zulu<sup>102</sup>, they provided counselling services to families of the bereaved through home visits and helping to organise burial arrangements for these families (Interview with Ms Zulu, 5 August

<sup>102</sup> Ms Zulu is a schoolteacher and former political representative: Councillor at district level in Nongoma.

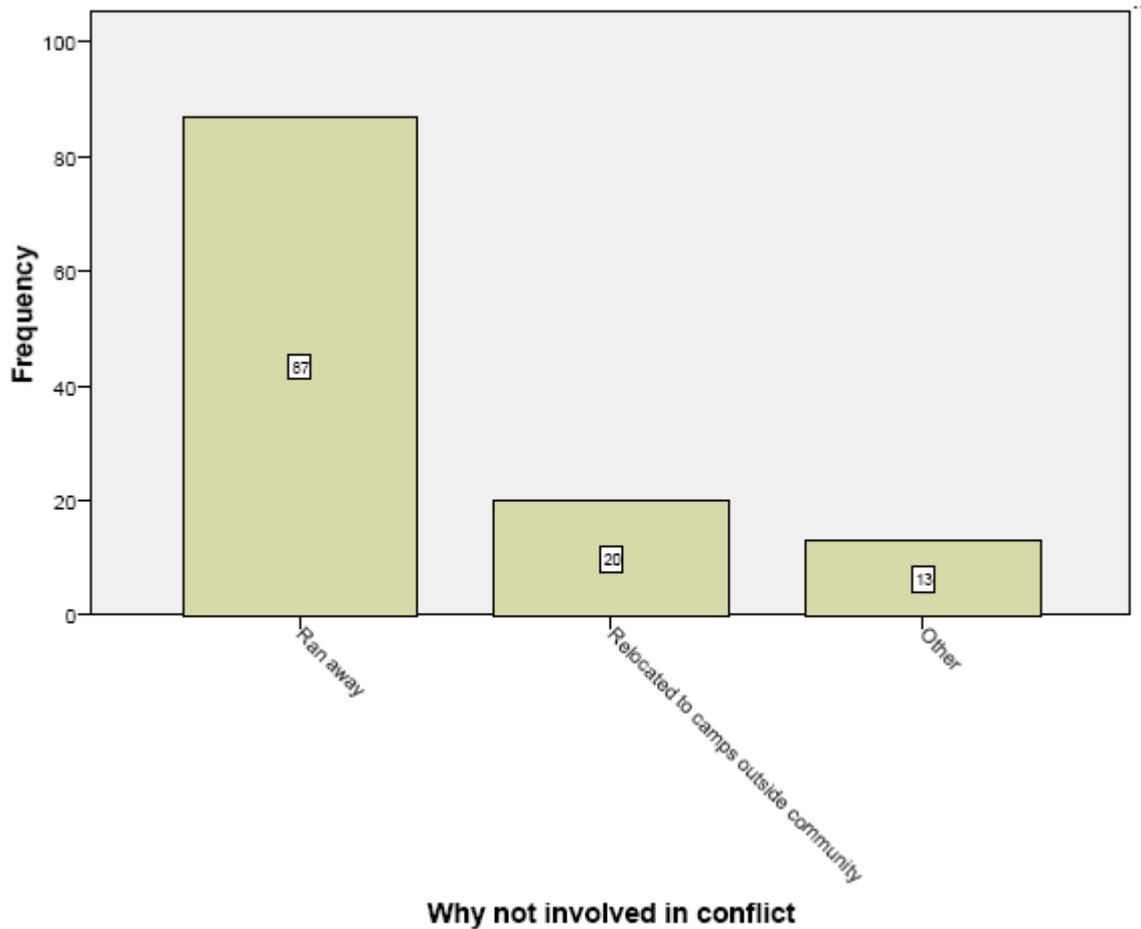
2006).

Figure 11: Direct role in conflict



More than half, 87 (73%) of the 119 women who were not directly involved in conflict said they ran away from the conflict area, 20 (17%) were relocated to a refugee camp put in place by community leaders while 13 (10%) were self-incarcerated staying indoors away from the conflict all through the period.

Figure 12: Reasons for non-direct involvement in conflict



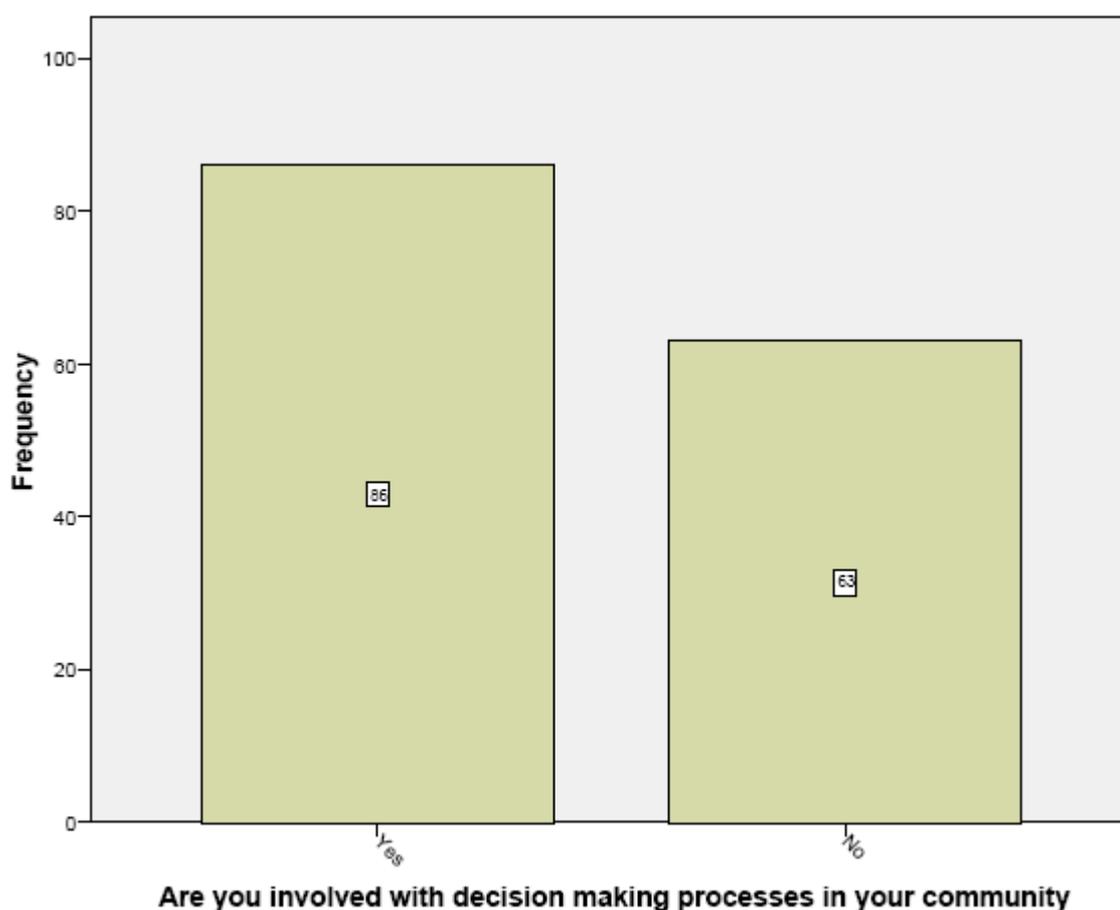
### 5.7 Presentation and analysis of findings on women, politics and peace-building

This section is aimed at answering research question 4, namely: “Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process?” To determine women’s perception on the subject, a number of questions were asked around the nature of women’s political representation and their involvement in peace building at the community levels.

### 5.7.1 Nature of women's involvement in politic/governance<sup>103</sup>

Our findings from the study areas show that women's direct involvement in governance is relatively high at the community/grass roots and local government (municipal) levels. For example, of the 149 women who responded to the question on their involvement in community decision-making, 86 (58%) indicated positively that they were directly involved in decision-making processes in their communities.

Figure 13: involvement in community decision-making

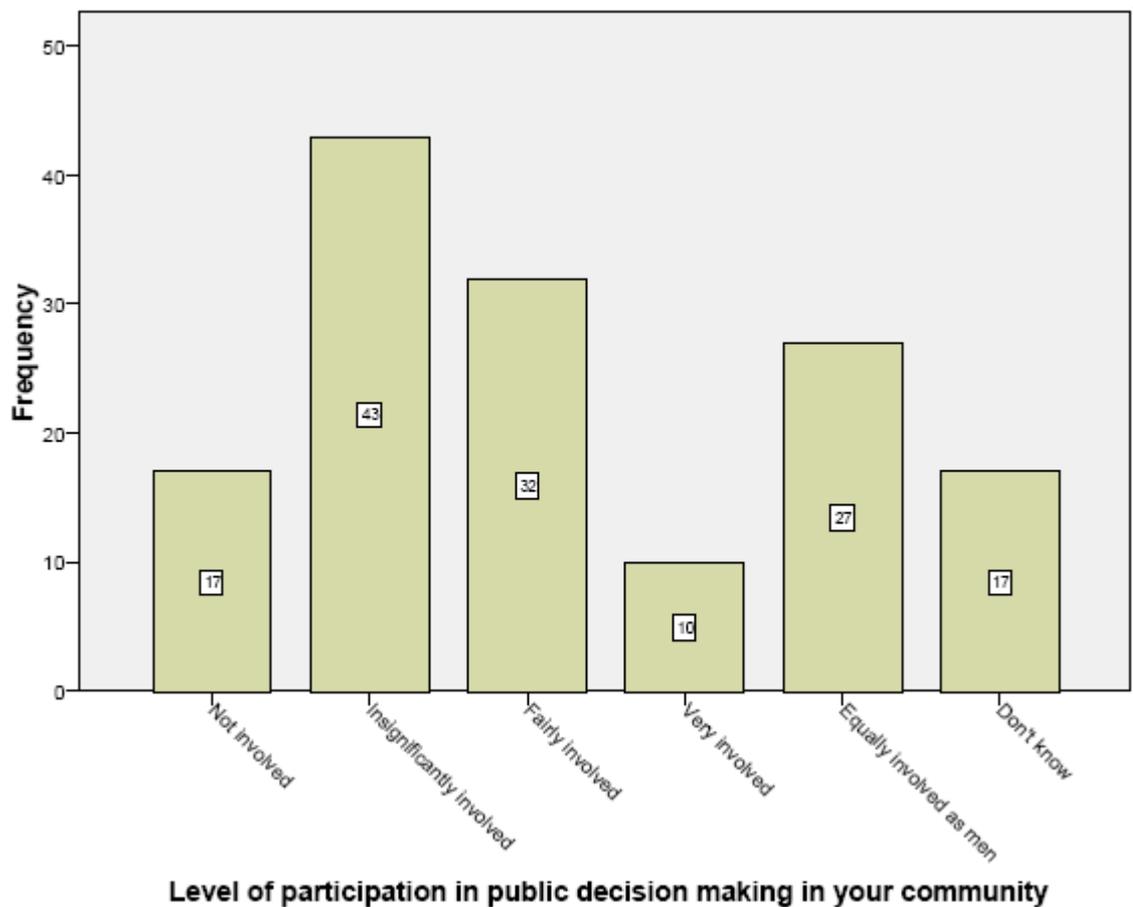


<sup>103</sup> In KwaZulu-Natal, there are four levels of formal political governance: the community, municipal, district municipal and provincial governance. Our interest was in the first two. Public participation in community is effected through attendance of community meetings held in community town halls while party ward committee meetings enable public participation in municipal governance. Majority of our respondents in Richmond and Shobashobane were card carrying members of the ANC while in Nongoma, majority of the respondents were card carrying members of IFP.

Although this figure of women involved in decision-making is only representative of the study areas, it is indicative of the potential involvement of women in governance across the province where women constitute 26.2% of the provincial parliament and 29% of the cabinet.

In terms of perception on the level of women’s political participation, the 63 (42%) who were not directly involved in decision-making processes in their communities felt that generally, women’s participation in community decision-making was non-existent or low. Their perceptions ranged from “not involved” (17) to “insignificantly involved” (43).

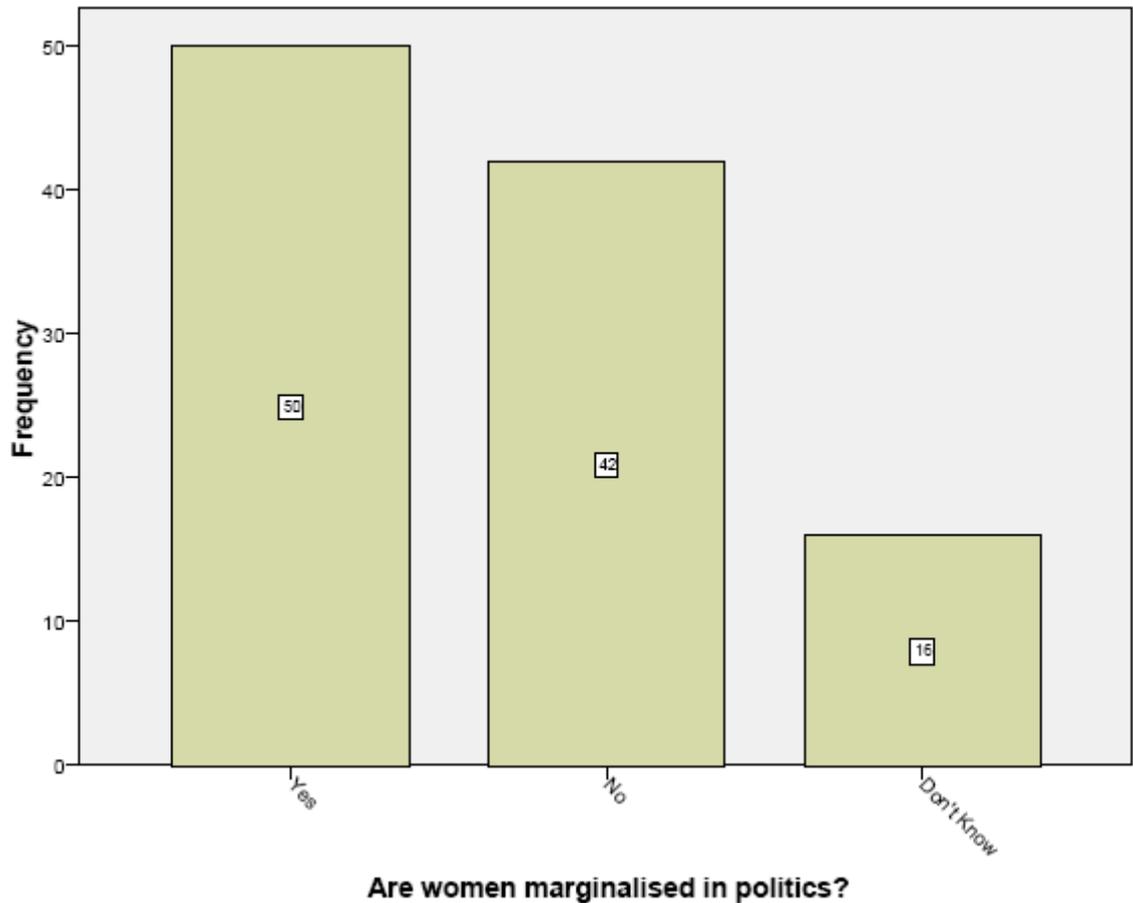
Figure 14: level of participation in community decision-making



When asked to comment on women’s political participation generally in the province, less than half (50) representing 46% of the 108 who responded to this question, felt women were marginalised in the province’s politics. 42 (38%) felt women were not

marginalised while 17(16%) were not sure.

Figure 15: perceptions on women's political marginalisation in KZN



One issue that emerged from our primary data in KwaZulu-Natal is the stigmatizing women politicians as 'cultural deviants'. In Zulu gender discourses, women are culturally expected to be demure, non-confrontational, non-assertive and non-expressive in their relations with men both in the public and private spaces, especially in the public space where they ideally expected to be invisible (See Berglund, 1976; Leclerc-Madladla, 1997; Wood and Jewkes, 1997; Xaba, 2001). This partially explains the labelling of women who rise above these expectations as 'cultural deviants' who have forgotten their place. The popular thinking therefore is that women should not be involved in politics, and when they are, they should remain invisible and serve the men to which they owe their political ascension in the first place.

Commendably, in KZN, there are presently eight women Heads of Department (50%) of the total sixteen departments in the provincial governmental structure, even though these Heads of Department are not political appointees. Women even head so-called ‘hard’ portfolios like Economic Development, Works and Community Safety although ‘more strategic’ portfolios like Transport, Agriculture and Finance are headed by men at both ministerial and departmental levels<sup>104</sup>. At the ministerial level (Cabinet), there are four women (33.3%) of the twelve member Provincial cabinet.

Four out of the eight female Heads of Department who agreed to participate in an interview schedule for this study, under conditions of anonymity, however conceded that they frequently suffered from being labelled by their male colleagues and subordinates as ‘cultural deviants’ in the course of their jobs, especially when they insisted strongly on standards and deadlines. They are thus perceived as ‘social transgressors’ who do not know their place, as ‘disrespectful’, ‘rebellious’ and been ‘out of control’ beyond the culturally conceived limits or boundaries defined by neo-patriarchy. They opined that these kinds of perceptions, attitudes of mind and the subtle defiance that follow it frequently affected their productivity on the job. This form of labelling and its effect was confirmed by one of the female Ministers (MEC) who said:

Innuendoes targeted at undermining our morality and self-confidence are usually used by our male colleagues both in parliament and in the cabinet to reinforce their superiority even though on the outside they all tend to express belief in the political empowerment of women as a panacea to poverty alleviation (Interview with Public Works MEC, 2007).

The University of KwaZulu-Natal, despite its liberating tendencies as a citadel of learning, reformation and transformation is not spared from the effects of neo-patriarchy in the relations between males and females and this call for serious concern given the role of the educational system in producing the future leaders of South

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<sup>104</sup> According to a senior government official who preferred anonymity, traditionally in KwaZulu-Natal, Finance & Economic Development, Agriculture and Transport are the most strategic portfolios in cabinet. It is not a coincidence therefore that Agriculture and Transport are headed by men at both ministerial and departmental levels. Finance & Economic Development is headed by a male minister; Dr Zweli Mkhize at the cabinet level and broken down to two; Treasury and Economic Development, at the department level. The Head of the Treasury department is Mr Siphoshe Shabalala while Mrs Carol Coetzee is the Head of Economic Development

Africa. Female students in the School of Politics feel uncomfortable and intimidated by their male colleagues who give them the impression that they should not be studying political science as they are not suited for it as women. Over 80% of the female students in a third year Political Science class feel intimidated by their male classmates and are not feel confident enough to participate in class discussions which they subsequently allow their male classmates to dominate<sup>105</sup> According to one of them:

The boys believe that we are overly emotional and as a result we cannot be real leaders. A real concern that a boy once had in class was that girls “suffered” from pre-menstrual stress and, therefore, if a woman ever becomes president, he was sure she might just blow up China if she was “going through that time of the month”

They have also expressed fears of our ability and willingness to bear and rear children if we get too involved in politics. Even when we can, they feel that we might not be able to give a 100% commitment if we suddenly find ourselves pregnant. (Interview with Lalla, 2007 )

These kinds of stereotypes, still been held by third year undergraduate students of political science, are inimical to gender balancing in politics and the creation of a truly egalitarian society in a previously divided country. The second statement for example, reinforces male power over women’s sexuality in determining whether and when their female partners get pregnant, and our earlier point about how men’s conception of womanhood and motherhood affect women’s participation in public decision making. These are deep-seated, informal level sources and modes of marginalizing women in politics that will require more than formal legislation to change. They require substantial reorientation and attitude change of men and women alike to address them, as apart from being sources of political marginalization of women, they are also sources of domestic and other gender based violence like rape and passion killing which plaque KwaZulu-Natal in particular and the South African society in general.

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<sup>105</sup> This came out from a Focused Group Discussion on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, 2007 with 25 female students of a Politics class on why female students did not usually participate in class discussions. There are 75 students in that class, 50 males and 25 females.

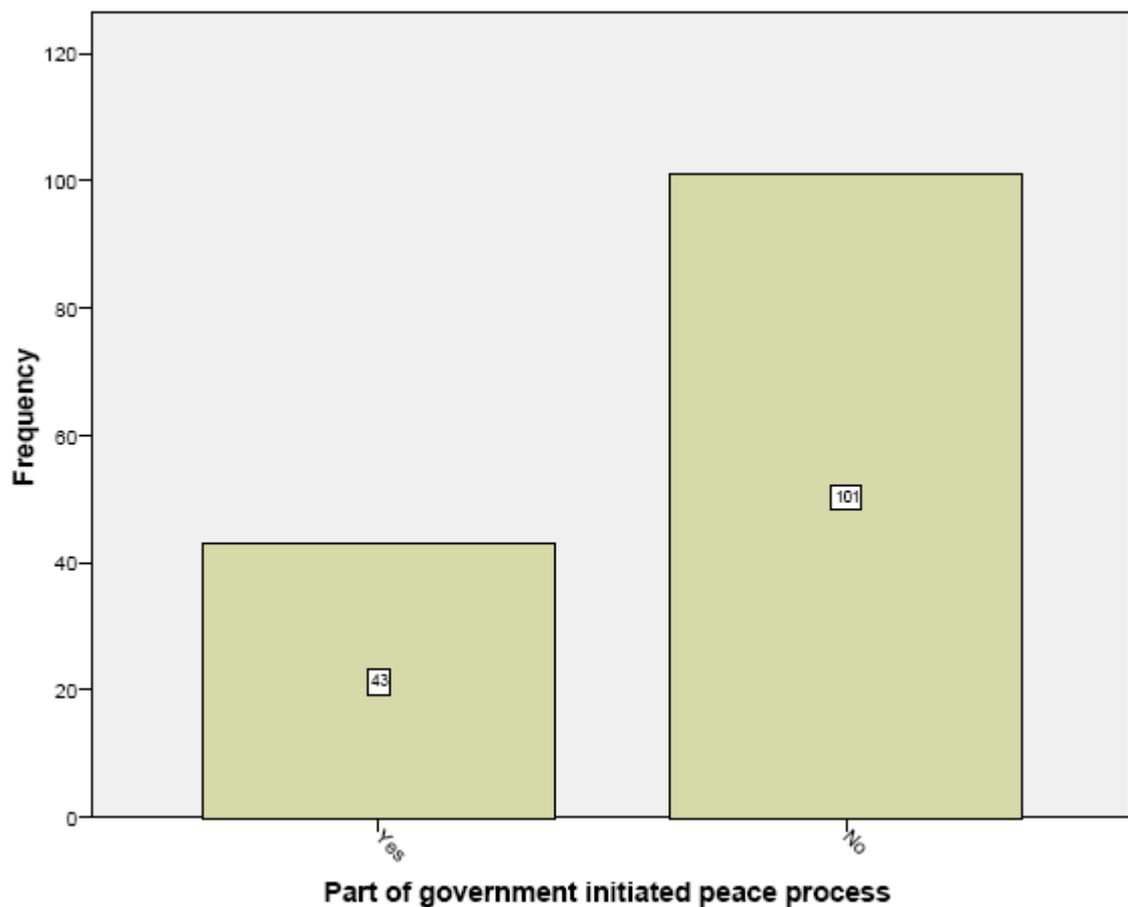
Clearly, South African women have done reasonably well within the political terrain in the post apartheid era. Much of that success has been achieved in collaboration with their male counterparts despite a strong conservative fringe that would have preferred to push women back to their “traditional” roles. Unfortunately, these modes of marginalization and ongoing events such as the simmering contest for the ANC presidency after Mbeki’s departure have laid bare the superficiality of the political gains made thus far by South African women. It seems that South African society (in all of its facets) has remained deeply patriarchal despite those gains. Notwithstanding their strong and growing political prominence, women remain culturally weak and vulnerable. Given the possibility of a reversal of fortunes under a less committed leadership, it would be in the long-term interest of all (women and men) to deepen those gains by institutionalizing them and, as such, safeguarding them from the whims and dynamics of politicians and power struggles. In that way, they would be free not only to make their own choices of leaders but also to push more boldly on matters and agendas that are of most concern to women as a group.

Indeed, beyond posting commendable statistics on women in governance in Africa, South Africa, and in this case KwaZulu-Natal need to find more successful ways of translating the growing and laudable female representation in political organs and institutions throughout the state into more effective gains on issues of most concern to women. Suffice to say that apart from legislation, the attitudes of mind that inform marginalization of women in both the public and private spaces require a deeper understanding, re-orientation and redefinition of African patriarchy and the masculinities it spews.

### **5.7.2 Nature of women’s involvement in peace building**

Women in Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma are marginalised in the post-conflict peace processes of their various communities. 101 (70%) of the 144 women who responded to questions on the nature of women’s involvement in peace processes said they were excluded from the peace processes that followed the cessation of violence at different times in their communities.

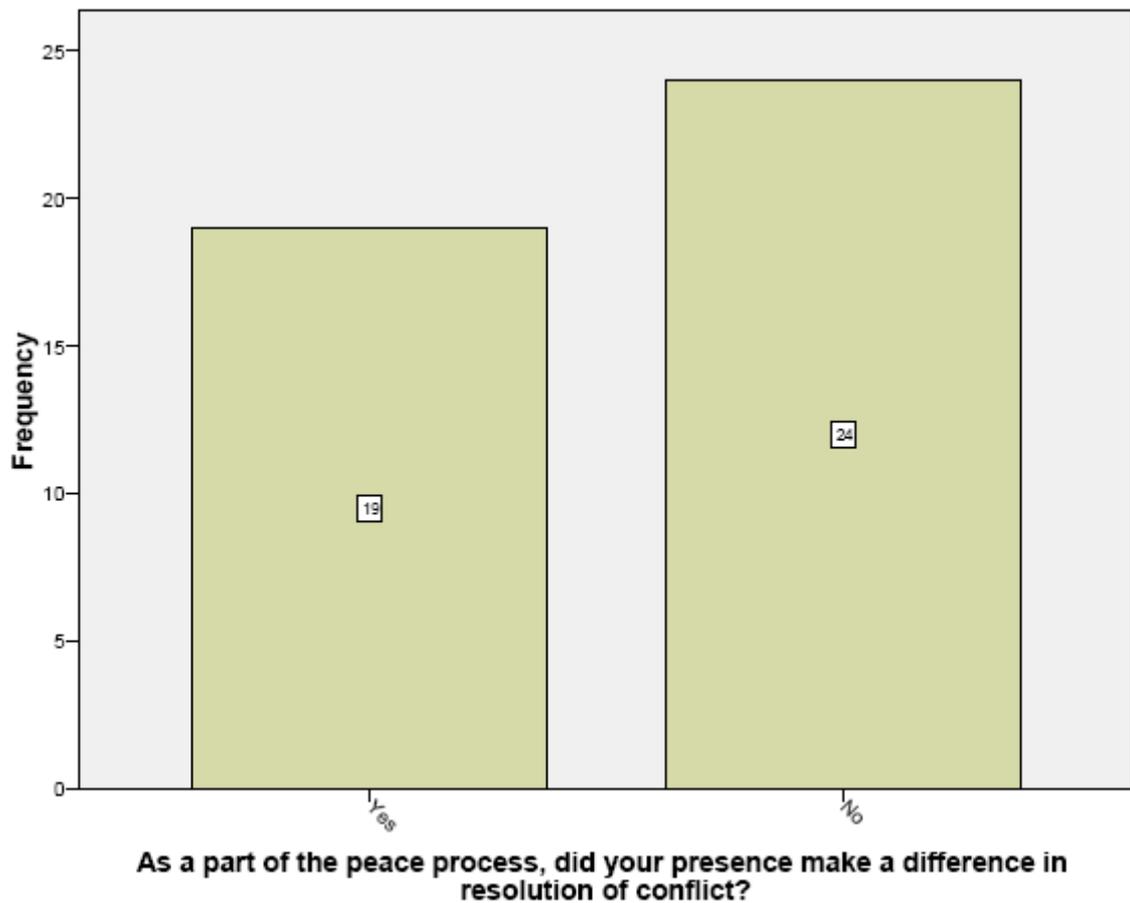
Figure 16: Involvement in government-initiated peace process



However, the remaining 43 women who were part of the peace processes in their various communities attended peace meetings regularly and were never late or absent for once, to underscore their commitment to peace. Of these 43, 19 indicated that their presence in the peace processes actually made a difference in terms of conflict resolution. For example, Ms Zulu stated that she was “very vocal during the peace process and my views were taken into account. For example, I made some recommendations on the kind of persons to be drafted into the mediation meetings and these recommendations were taken and used as part of the criteria” (Interview with Ms Zulu, 5 August 2006)<sup>106</sup>.

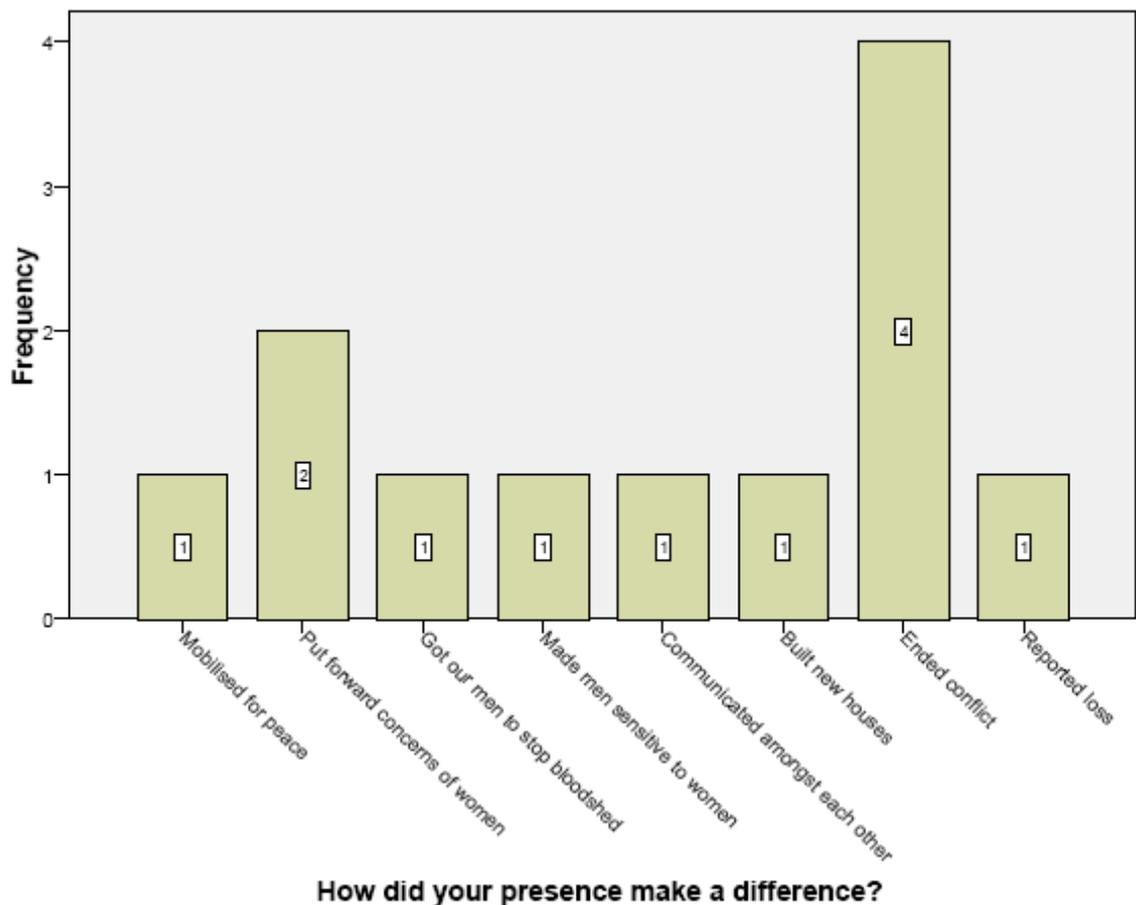
<sup>106</sup> She declined to give details of the recommendations she made, as, according to her, there were security issues which still need to be out of the public domain for the sake of maintaining the peace.

Figure 17: General impact on government-initiated peace process



Although the cell sizes in the figure below are too small to make any meaningful analysis of how women specifically impacted on the conflict positively, they do serve as indicator of the values and contributions women can bring and make if they form a critical mass in peace-building processes. For instance, women engaged in direct mediation talks with warring factions that yielded dividends in terms of all parties to conflict agreeing to back down completely from violence and engage in peace-making through dialogue. See Figure 16 below which shows the responses of 12 of these women who were able to measure their impact in the peace processes they were part of.

Figure 18: Specific impact on government-initiated peace process

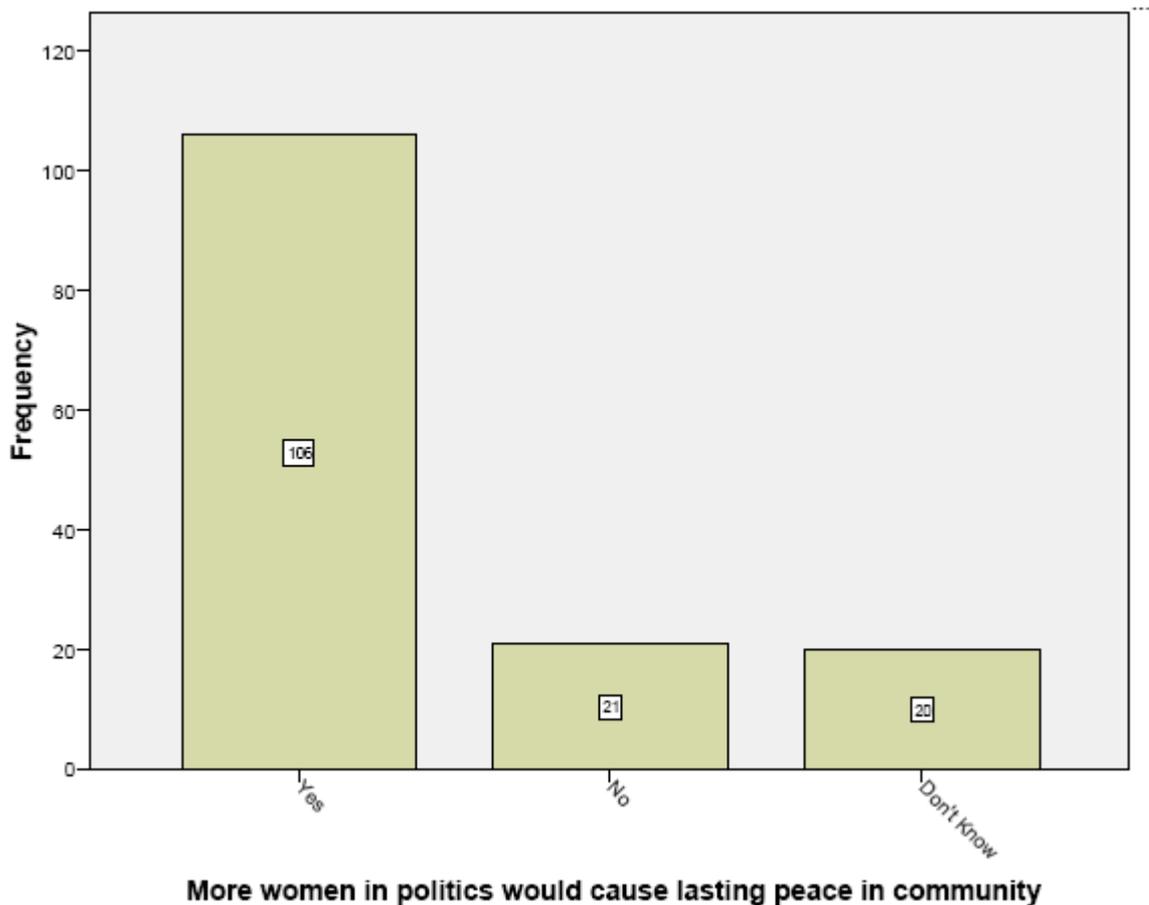


The other 24 women, although they could not specifically measure how their contributions specifically led to the resolution of the conflict, were very positive that their involvement was instrumental to the general peace-building effort and to the present state of peace being enjoyed in their communities. According to Mr. Nyembe, “women were the only visible agitators for peace during the conflict in this area. They organised very strongly for peace and their persistence was rewarded with a seat in the peace meetings during which their voices were loud enough to make us men stay the course for peace” (Interview with Nyembe, 5 August 2006).

### 5.7.3 Perceptions on women’s political representation and peace-building nexus

To gauge their perceptions on women’s political participation and its effect on peace building, respondents were asked, “Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making structures enhance the outcome of a peace process?” The popular perception was that more women in politics would enhance the outcome of a peace process. For instance, a significant majority (106 women, representing 72.2% of the 147 who responded to the question) believe that more women in politics would ensure lasting peace in their communities and in the wider KZN province. Of this number, 21 (14.2%) said more women in politics would not lead to peace and the remaining 20 (13.6%) were not sure.

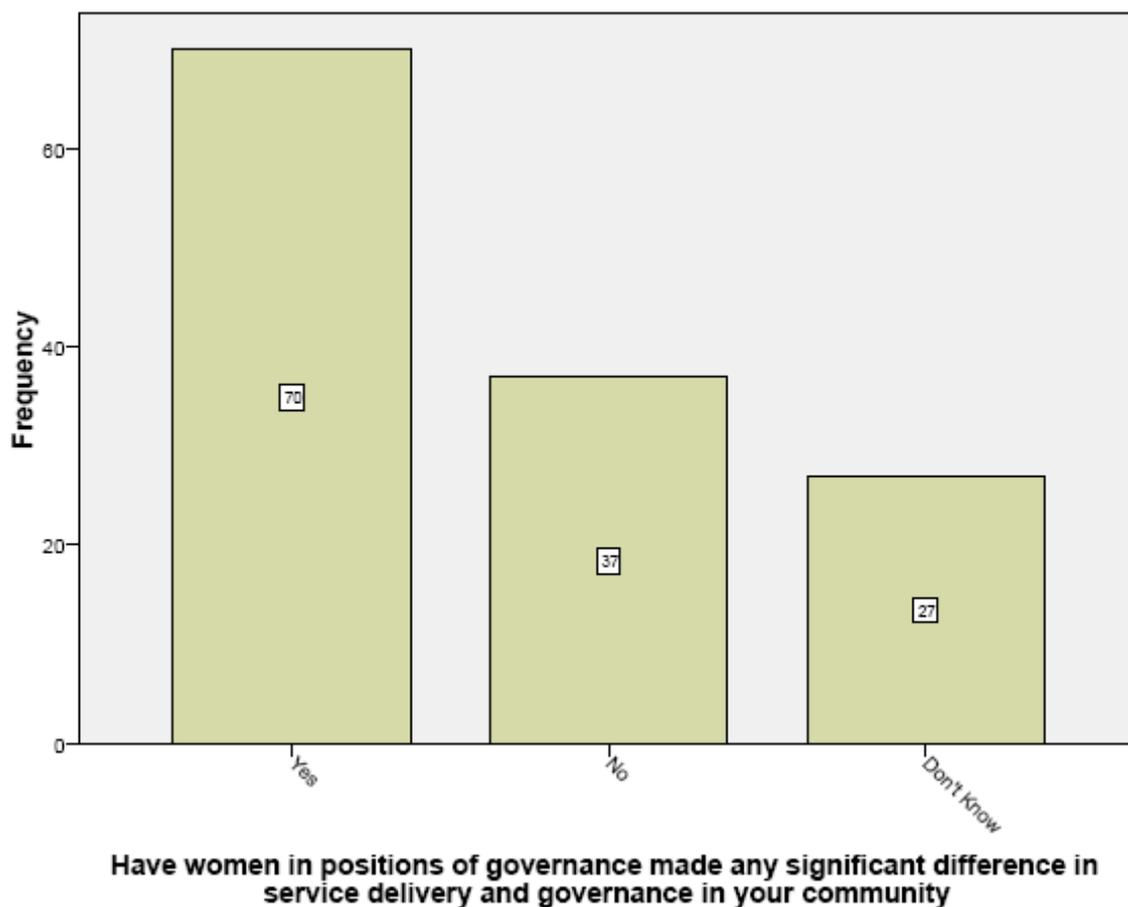
Figure 19: Perceptions on political participation and peace building



#### 5.7.4 Quality of women's representation in politics

In terms of the quality of women's representation in politics, 70 (52.4%) of the 134 respondents agreed that the few women in politics in their communities and those representing them at provincial and national levels have made significant differences in terms of good governance and service delivery. Across the three study areas, names that came out more frequently in relation to good leadership and tangible service delivery than others include Mayor of Zululand, Zanele Magwaza (82%), Mrs. Nelisiwe Nyembe (68%), Mrs. Dorah Moniza Cele (62%), Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Zanele Hlatshwayo (54%), and Mrs. Zanele Sithole (50%). However, of the 134 respondents, 37 (27.6%) felt that women in governance at various levels (municipal, provincial and national) have not made any difference in governance and service delivery. The remaining 27 (20%) did not know whether or not these women's participation in governance have made any difference in service delivery. More than half of these 27 women blamed their ignorance on this question on the fact that they do not know which women represent so they could not comment on their effectiveness.

Figure 20: Women's impact on service delivery and good governance



## 5.8 Discussion and conclusion

Conflict remains endemic in KwaZulu-Natal. Although wide scale armed violence has abated in the last 7 years, the socio-economic effects linger on and exacerbate poverty in a province bedevilled by vast human security vulnerabilities. As we have shown in our study areas, women disproportionately share the burden of armed and social forms of conflict in the province but are marginalised in post-conflict reconstruction and transformation processes. This is antithetical to the positive contributions they make towards peaceful resolutions during conflict and their efforts towards community building and development as shown in the high level and quality of women's representation in community politics. When compared with the percentage of women's representation (26%) at the provincial parliament, women's direct involvement in governance is higher (58%) at the community/grassroots level in the

study areas combined. A plausible reason for this is that in the communities, quotas are not required to mainstream women into the public space, whereas at the provincial level, the political party quota system is the main instrument of gender mainstreaming in politics. For example, as shown in Figure 13, of the 149 women who responded to the question on their involvement in community decision-making, 86(58%) said they were involved in the decision-making processes of their communities. Indeed, women's high participation in politics at the rural level is indicative of the fact that traditionally women are recognised and accepted as active participants in the political processes of their communities. In this way, women's participation at community levels of governance becomes more effective in addressing the concerns of women compared to their representation at the provincial level as these women know and choose those they feel will best represent their interests as women. By implication, women could articulate their interests and set their own agendas. As Figure 20 shows, 70 (52%) of the 134 women who responded to the question were sure, and cited examples, of women in their communities who made a difference in governance and service delivery when they held office and of those who still hold public office. 27 (20%) of the 134 answered "don't know" with more, approximately half that number, adding that they didn't know because they have been politically apathetic and that while they were sure women could make a difference in governance, they were not sure in this case because they had not been paying attention. By implication, therefore, "don't know" in their case does not necessarily mean women in community governance have not made a difference in terms of service delivery and governance.

However, despite the relatively high level of women's involvement in decision-making at the community level, only 27 (18%) of the 146 women who responded to the question on the level of women's participation in community decision-making, agreed that women were equally involved as men. Also, 10 (6.8%) of them indicated that women were very involved. Though implying a contradiction, what came out from a further probing of this issue was that these women still saw their participation as an instrument of legitimising male hegemony. For example, as one of them said in a focus group discussion, "we always end up choosing from the few men who attend the community meetings to fill leadership positions" (FGD with women in Dabhasi, Nongoma, 8/9/06). According to another group led by Nelly Ntombela in Maye,

Nongoma, women are more in the registered list of voters from the area, tend to attend meetings more than men, and yet do not hold leadership positions in the community because “we tend to always appoint men, instead of ourselves, to ward executive positions at the party level because somehow, we believe men are better leaders”. This is a form of women’s marginalisation in politics, which in this case, is perpetuated by women themselves. It also leaves a question mark on the effectiveness of numbers (critical mass) as opposed to quality (critical acts), as despite the fact that women are usually the majority in community meetings, they either do not hold real power or are still suffering from age-long socialisation that women are not capable leaders. For example, when asked if more women in politics would bring lasting peace in KZN, approximately 14.2% (21) of the women said “no”<sup>107</sup>. The reasons for this answer ranged from “we women are petty and can stir a quarrel from very little things”, (4) “women are better suited for the private sphere” (12) to “women can be as corrupt as men” (5). According to Emmerencia Zulu, a schoolteacher and former councillor in Zululand district municipality, “we women do not have faith in ourselves due to lack of knowledge and capability to act and this is a result of a deep culture of patriarchy. That’s why we give our chances to our men”. Although only 15% of the study sample felt that more women in politics would not bring lasting peace in their communities, it is still a cause for concern because there could be more women out there who strongly feel the same way. By expressing such sentiments, they could act as spoilers to gender balancing in politics. However, this study did not discountenance the fact that this kind of thinking could be the long-term result of the masculinisation of society and politics which has successfully socialised women into thinking and feeling incapable of effective politicking. These feelings are not helped by a dominant culture of patriarchy which tends to undermine the effectiveness of women’s representation in politics at the provincial level as our interview with the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Public Works, Mrs. Lydia Johnson shows. As mentioned before, according to her, men use non-verbal communicative methods like expressing doubt on women’s technical ability to carry out a task or simply ignoring them when they make contributions to certain debates in council to undermine the women in ways aimed at deflating their confidence (Interview with MEC, 2 October, 2007). She contends that such a stifling socio-cultural climate is not conducive to effective

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<sup>107</sup> As shown in figure 19, 72.2% said “yes” and 13.6% answered “don’t know”.

participation of women in politics.

Generally, on a positive note, respondents used the good performance of the few women mentioned to justify the need for more women in politics and the effect this would have on lasting peace in their communities and in the province as a whole. However, beyond a descriptive value, how much do these data tell us about the factors that impact on the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace building? In other words, what explanatory variables determine the predictors of women (respondents) who are likely or unlikely to hold such an opinion? Also in relation to this study's hypothesis, what is the probability of the extent to which women's participation in political process or governance can enhance peace building in conflict-affected communities in KwaZulu-Natal and the Niger-Delta? These are some of the questions that we shall ponder on and address in chapter six.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A COMPARATIVE AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is three-fold: first, a comparative analysis of the findings from both cases (the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal); second, presenting the results of testing the study's hypothesis that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities; and third, answering the research question of the veritable lessons that can be learnt from women's involvement in conflict resolution in the case studies. As already alluded to in the closing section of chapter five, a descriptive analysis of the findings from our surveys, apart from producing new knowledge on the specific areas with regards to women, conflict and peace, does not point to new directions in terms of expanding the frontiers of knowledge on the subject matter. At best, they confirm what is already known globally, for instance, that women are victims of armed conflict and that they impact on conflict positively in the sense that they work towards peace-making and peace-building. Therefore, for a deeper insight, and to explore new directions of knowledge on women, politics and peace-building especially as it relates to our hypothesis, other complementary techniques of data analysis are necessary. The hypothesis test uses two statistical approaches; the Chi Square and Logistic Regression Analysis. Basically, the essence is to confirm the result of one with the other, i.e. the significance of the explanatory variables. Accordingly, the data derived from our field survey are cross-tabulated and the Pearson Chi-Square Test is employed to test for the significance of variables that could explain women's perceptions on the main hypothesis which research question three is intended to address. These are further analysed with the logistic regression analysis to establish a cause-effect relationship between the binary dependent variable (probability of an increased political representation of women in decision-making positions would cause lasting peace in community/would not cause lasting peace in community) and selected independent variables, all expected somewhat to impact on

the process of enhancing peace-building in conflict-affected communities in KZN, South Africa and Delta Niger, Nigeria. In other words, we have attempted to identify the characteristics of women who would hold the opinion or otherwise that more women in politics would enhance peace-building in the study areas. Some of the positive predictors in this regard include marital status, education and place of interview.

Also, flowing from the findings of this study, certain issues emerge that throw some light on answering research question five (what veritable lessons can be learnt from women's involvement in conflict resolution in the case studies?). Those that relate to our hypothesis which we shall discuss include the failure of male dominated politics which provides justifiable and practical basis for feminizing politics, the quality of women's representation in politics and intra-gender sexism; the phenomenon of women as spoilers of their own cause, which in itself constitutes an obstacle to feminizing politics and peace-building in the study areas and in Africa generally.

Before we go any further, it is imperative to remind us of our research questions. The study mainly investigated the extent to which women's participation in political processes or governance can enhance peace-building in conflict-affected communities using KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and the Niger-Delta, Nigeria as case studies.

To determine this, a number of specific research questions<sup>108</sup> were posed which include:

- What is the impact of conflict on women in these study areas, and how does it define the women reality with regards to the conflict cycle?
- How have women responded to conflict and its resolution in these study areas?
- *Will increased political representation of women both in government and decision-making points of the peace machinery enhance the peace process?*
- What societal notions and ideologies under gird the role perception and construction of women as 'victims only' in conflict situations, and which help

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<sup>108</sup> The question that relates directly to the study's hypothesis has been marked in red for the sake of emphasis only

to fuel their exclusion from peace processes?

- What veritable lessons can be learnt from women's involvement in conflict resolution in these case studies?

In our analysis in chapters four and five, we sought to answer research questions one, two and three. In testing our hypothesis in this chapter, we explore question three deeper while question five will be addressed in our discussion of emerging issues from the findings of the study.

## **6.2 A comparative analysis of findings**

A comparative analysis of our survey findings on women, conflict, politics and peace building in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa show differences and similarities in the nature of conflict, level of women's participation in governance, the impact of conflict on women and how women respond to conflict, women's peace agency and their perceptions on the study's hypothesis; more women in politics would enhance the peace process. The differences are mainly around the nature and trajectory of conflict in both case studies and level of women's marginalisation in local governance.

Indeed, the nature and character of crisis in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa's most populous province<sup>109</sup>, is different from that of the Niger-Delta of Nigeria which is characterised mainly by natural resource-related conflicts between different actors within the region in particular and Nigeria at large. For example, while the Niger-Delta crisis is characterised by low-intensity warfare between different ethnic militia groups in the region and the Nigerian state and its allies on the one hand, and between communities in the region on the other hand, armed conflict in KwaZulu-Natal is essentially limited to political violence and taxi-rank wars between specific political/economic actors. Also, whilst the Niger-Delta crisis has become sufficiently politicised enough to threaten the national security of Nigeria, post apartheid conflict in KwaZulu-Natal is localised and does not threaten the corporate existence of the South African state. However, this is not to undermine the level and impact of the

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<sup>109</sup> With 21% of South Africa's population, KZN is the country's largest province (National Census, 2001)

violence and other forms of conflict on women and the development in the province.

In terms of political marginalisation, from our survey findings, women's direct participation in community and local governance appears lower in our study areas in the Niger-Delta (40%) than in KwaZulu-Natal (58%). However, a high proportion of women in both cases; (92% in the Niger Delta and 72% in KwaZulu-Natal) feel that women are marginalised in politics. Similarly, respondents in both case studies (91% in the Niger Delta and 70% in KwaZulu-Natal) feel that women are marginalised in peace-building, which is also a function of political participation.

In other areas of similarities, women are victims of conflict in all study areas in both case studies. They suffered similar ranges of losses; husbands, sons, livelihoods, properties and experienced physical dehumanization including rape and its psychological effects. Women in both case studies also impacted on conflict in a positive sense. The proportion of women who responded in different ways towards conflict transformation; healing, forgiveness, reconciliation and community rebuilding are similar across both case studies.

Also, an overwhelming majority of respondents in both cases used the good performance of the few women in politics<sup>110</sup> to justify the need for more women in politics and the effect this would have on lasting peace in their communities and in the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal as a whole. As we will show in section 6.3 (hypothesis testing), majority of respondents in both regions similarly held the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace in their communities.

### **6.3 Hypothesis Testing**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the proportion of women who believe that more women in politics would cause a lasting peace in the community and the proportion that does not.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference between the proportion of women who believe that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in community and the proportion that

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<sup>110</sup> Some where mentioned in chapters four and five

does not.

As aforementioned in chapters four and five and presented in table 1 and figure 1, 89.1% of respondents in the Niger Delta feel that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in their communities while 10.1% did not think so. In the same vein, 72.1% of respondents in KwaZulu-Natal felt more women in politics would enhance peace building in their communities while 27.9% did not think so. Compositely in both cases, 79.7% were positive that more women in politics would enhance peace building and 20.3% were negative.

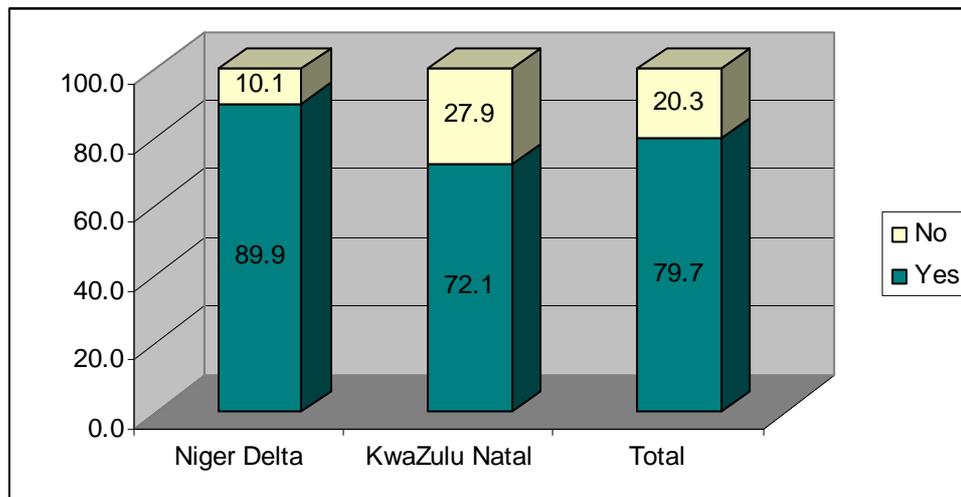
Table1: Will more women in politics cause lasting peace by geographical area

Will more women in politics cause lasting peace?	Niger Delta		KwaZulu-Natal		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	98	89.9	106	72.1	204	79.7
No	11	10.1	41	27.9	52	20.3
<b>Total</b>	109	100.0	147	100.0	256	100.0

\* 'No' comprises those respondents who said 'No' and those who answered 'Don't know'. The assumption that those who answered 'don't know' actually meant 'no' does not make any difference.

In testing for the significance of variables that impact on the hypothesis, a descriptive analysis of the data shows a statistically significant ( $\chi=90.250$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $s=.000$ ) difference between the proportion of respondents (79.7%;  $n=204$ ) that believes 'more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities' and the proportion that does not (20.3%;  $n=52$ ). Rejecting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), and apparently accepting the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) (see above), we can confirm the existence of a widely held perception amongst the women in this study that more women in politics would cause a lasting peace in the selected communities. Our conclusion applies in both study areas: In Nigeria 88.29% ( $n=109$ ) in the sample has that perception, compared to 72.1 % ( $n=147$ ) in South Africa (Figure 1).

Figure 1: More women would cause lasting peace in community by Geographical Area



However, whereas a vast majority of women in both study areas shared the view that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in their communities, the statistically significant differences ( $\chi=12.251$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $\alpha=.05$ ,  $p=.000$ ) in the proportions in the respective areas suggest that women in the Niger-Delta are more likely to hold this perception than women in KwaZulu-Natal. This may raise eye brows because there are more women in formal politics (i.e. 26.2% of women in parliament) in KwaZulu-Natal than there are in the Niger-Delta (i.e. 7.5% in state houses of assembly in the region). This is also confirmed by our survey findings which show that women's participation in communal/grassroots governance is higher in the study areas in KwaZulu-Natal (58%) than in the Niger-Delta (40%). So why does the statistics suggest women in the Niger-Delta are more likely to hold this perception than women in KwaZulu-Natal? If women are meant to bring a different value to politics that is more development and peace oriented, does it not suggest that in KwaZulu-Natal (where women's political representation is relatively high), more women are supposed to hold the perception that increased women's participation would enhance peace-building? If so, then what is happening in KwaZulu-Natal?

A plausible explanatory factor is the mode of women's entry/mainstreaming into politics. In South Africa, the dominant mode of mainstreaming women into politics is

the political party quota system which is controlled by top party officials. In KwaZulu-Natal, the process is managed by the Premier in consultation with National Executive Committee and top hierarchy of the party (mostly men) in the province. No doubt, there are consultations with other male and female leaders; however, the mere fact that women remain dependent on specific men or male-controlled organizations for their political advancement is a cause for serious concern. Certainly, it betrays the fragility of the political gains made by women so far in South Africa. This is pertinent if one considers the general disapprovals (expressed mostly by men) over the appointment of large numbers of women into positions of authority, especially the appointment of the former Deputy President, Mrs. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, which provoked debate on the possibility and ‘appropriateness’ of a woman succeeding the president in the 2009 general elections. Mbeki himself was accused of being authoritarian and unilateral on this issue (SA News, available online <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?t=212468&page=9>. Accessed 16/08/05).

Evidence from Richmond indicate that women still feel largely marginalized in politics despite the ruling ANC’s efforts to improve the number of women in politics at both the national and the provincial levels strides. Apart from issues bordering mainly on inadequate service delivery, the Richmond women were concerned that their marginal participation in politics was still at the whims of men who, it is claimed, decide which women get what positions<sup>111</sup>. This also resonates in Shobashobane and Nongoma where rural woman said quite strongly that they feel disconnected from their female representatives in government, who often, are highly educated, socially sophisticated and politically connected women who serve the main interests of their appointees, and not theirs (rural women). For instance, over 80% of the Shobashobane and Nongoma women complain that they do not even know much about the quota appointees<sup>112</sup>. The point of this discussion is; whether it is the Premier of KZN or the President of South Africa (in collaboration with a group of men and women) that decides for Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma women who their

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<sup>111</sup> 25 (83%) of the 30 women surveyed in Richmond town, a semi-urban settlement, think that women are still largely marginalized in politics A good number of them complained they didn’t know who or how they are represented at the municipal nor provincial levels. They contended that if given opportunity to choose their representatives themselves, they would know the right women to elect to represent them

<sup>112</sup> This emerged mainly from FGDs with 30 women, 15 each in Shobashobane and Nongoma on 31 May 2006 and 8 September 2006 respectively.

councillors, municipal managers, and legislative representatives should be, it is problematic. This is because such arrangements may serve not only to compromise the women's choices of quality or appropriate representation but also, their right of self-determination given the incidence of political patronage and clientele politics.

In order to identify the characteristics of respondents who were likely or unlikely to hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities, the dependent variable was cross-tabulated with selected independent (explanatory) variables. The Pearson Chi-Square Test was then conducted to assess the significance of observed differences in the data. The results are shown in Table 1. The statistically significant variables are 'Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community', 'Level of participation in public decision making in your community', 'Highest level of education', 'Marital status', 'Age' and 'Place of Interview'. These variables are further analysed and discussed below.

Table 1: Chi Square Test of Independent Variables in Cross-tabulation with the Independent Variable

Independent Variable	Chi Sq	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) p<.005
Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community	40.581	2	0.000
Level of participation in public decision making in your community	17.953	5	0.003
Biggest loss due to conflict	11.369	7	0.123
Length of stay in community	4.924	4	0.295
Effects of conflict	6.509	6	0.369
Highest level of education	9.999	5	0.075
Marital Status	9.813	4	0.044
Age	11.496	4	0.022
Place of Interview	48.702	11	0.000

Considering the effect of place of interview on the perception of whether more women would cause lasting peace on community or not, the study finds that a vast majority in each of the places of interview except Shobashobane (37%) agreed with the proposition. The differences in data are statistically significant ( $\chi=48.702$ ,  $df=11$ ,  $p=.000$ ), and this implies that women in Shobashobane are the least likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace (Table 2). This is

hardly surprising to the researcher because overall, we had the smallest amount of willing participants in Shobashobane than anywhere else in both case studies. The women were still too afraid to talk openly about the conflict because of its 'ethnic cleansing' character. Secondly, despite their relatively small number, it was in Shobashobane that we encountered more women (63%) who strongly held the view that increasing women's political participation in the area would not enhance peace building. When pressed further, a few of the women explained (under strict conditions of privacy and a renewed promise of the anonymous nature of the survey) that women who were on the IFP side of the divide were very instrumental to spreading disinformation which contributed to the animosity between those in the community who were ANC and those who were IFP. According to one of them, "our women are too petty and quarrelsome. Politics is not meant for people who talk, talk and talk everyone into trouble" (Anonymous 1, 31 May, 2006). Another said "women in this community cannot be the solution to peace because our women are very jealous. Their jealousy caused the war" (Anonymous 2, 31 May, 2006). A third said she answered no because "women can not keep secrets, women are too feeble/weak for the serious business of politics" Anonymous 3, 31 May, 2006). Clearly, these women were expressing their opinions based on the peculiar role(s) they perceived women played in causing the crisis. We say perceived here because it is not documented anywhere in the available literature on the Shobashobane massacre (which was globally reported) that women fuelled the crisis in any way. However, this is not to say that it is not a possibility because none of the studies on the conflict so far were from a women's perspective. The conclusion we can draw from this is that although there could be general patterns in the respondent's perceptions that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in their individual communities, the peculiarities of conflict in each area and the role women played in causing conflict is a factor that impacts on that perception.

Table 2: More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community by Place of Interview

Place of Interview	More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community		Total
	Yes	No	
Igbokoda	94.1	5.9	100.0
Odi	70.6	29.4	100.0
Uzere	92.7	7.3	100.0
Shobashobane	37.0	63.0	100.0
Nongoma	77.8	22.2	100.0
Richmond	91.7	8.3	100.0
Magoda	100.0	0.0	100.0
Ndaleneni	72.7	27.3	100.0
Izingolweni	66.7	33.3	100.0
Maye	72.0	28.0	100.0
Dabhazi	81.3	18.8	100.0
Ulundi	100.0	0.0	100.0
Total	79.7	20.3	100.0

In Table 3, an overwhelming majority within all age groups hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities. However, with statistically significant ( $\chi=11.496$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differences in the data (see Table 1) women within the 30-39 years age bracket are more likely to hold that perception

Table 3: More women in politics would enhance peace building by Age

Age (Years)	More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community		Total
	Yes	No	
18 - 29	65.7	34.3	100
30 - 39	92.0	8.0	100
40 - 50	84.6	15.4	100
51 - 60	73.3	26.7	100
61+	80.0	20.0	100
Total	80.0	20.0	100

Within marital status (Table 4), majority in each category hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities. However, with statistically significant ( $\chi=9.813$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differences in the data, ‘divorced’ women (60.0%) are the least likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace. In terms of total numbers, in both case studies, the

majority of the respondents (55%) were married within which 82.01% hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities. After those married, the next in line were widowed women (25 in the ND and 31 in KZN) who constituted 21% of the total respondents in both case studies. Within the ‘widowed’ category, 85.19% held the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace. The ‘widowed’ category was followed by the ‘separated’ respondents (7 constituting 3% of 264) and all (100%) hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace. Divorced women were the least in terms of numbers (5 constituting 2% of 264 respondents) and were also the least in terms of those who perceive that more women in politics would cause lasting peace. Therefore, in terms of numbers, we can conclude that married women are more likely to hold this perception than widowed women in the study areas. The cell sizes of separated and divorced women are too insignificant in these regard to countenance with.

**Table 4: More women by Marital Status**

Marital Status	More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community		Total
	Yes	No	
Married	82.01	17.99	100
Single	66.67	33.33	100
Divorced	60.00	40.00	100
Separated	100.00	0.00	100
Widowed	85.19	14.81	100
Total	79.92	20.08	100

Within ‘the level of participation in public decision making’, respondents who did not know the level of participation of women in public decision making (47.1%) are the least likely to agree with the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities. In contrast, respondents who indicated that women were ‘fairly involved’ (89.8%) were more likely to concur that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in community. A similar pattern is observed within ‘Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community’ (Table 6). A vast majority of the respondents within this category (94.5%) indicated that more women in politics would

cause lasting peace in communities. With statistically significant ( $\chi=9.813$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differences in the data it can be concluded that respondents who agreed that women in positions of governance had made a significant difference in service delivery and governance are more likely to hold the view that more women in politics could cause lasting peace in communities.

**Table 5: More women in politics would cause lasting peace by Level of participation in public decision making**

Level of participation in Public decision making	More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community		Total
	Yes	No	
Not involved	84.2	15.8	100
Insignificantly involved	85.2	14.8	100
Fairly involved	89.8	10.2	100
Very involved	69.2	30.8	100
Equally involved as men	79.4	20.6	100
Don't know	47.1	52.9	100
Total	81.1	18.9	100

**Table 6: More women in politics would cause lasting peace by ‘Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance?’**

Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community	More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	94.5	5.5	100
No	65.5	34.5	100
Don't Know	56.3	43.8	100
Total	82.1	17.9	100

Based on our analysis of the factors underlying the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace, we can conclude that the statistically significant variables are age, marital status, place of interview, respondent’s perceptions on the

quality of women politicians contributions and on the level of women's participation in community decision making. For example, women within the 30-39 years age bracket, married women and respondents who agreed that women in positions of governance had made a significant difference in service delivery and governance are more likely to hold the perception that more women in politics could cause lasting peace in communities. However, what is the extent to which women's participation in governance can enhance peace building? And what is the nature of the relationship between the dependent variable (probability of an increased political representation of women in decision-making positions would cause lasting peace in community/would not cause lasting peace in community) and selected independent variables such as education, marital status and place of interview. We shall attempt to answer these questions developing and utilising a logistic regression model.

#### **6.4 Logistic Regression Analysis: Conceptual Model**

In order to achieve the main objective of the study, a women participation model is applied to capture the probability of the extent to which women's participation in political process or governance can enhance peace-building in conflict-affected communities in Nigeria and South Africa. To this end, this study adopts the maximum likelihood estimation, specifically, a logistic regression or logit model. The choice was made to use logit model to establish a cause-effect relationship between the binary dependent variable (probability of an increased political representation of women in decision-making positions would cause lasting peace in community/would not cause lasting peace in community) and selected independent variables, all expected somewhat to impact on the process of enhancing peace-building in conflict-affected communities in KZN, South Africa and Delta Niger, Nigeria.

A second comprehensive model that tests the hypothesis that "more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities" as the dependent variable and selected explanatory variables that determine the predictors of women (respondents) who are likely or unlikely to hold such an opinion will be used later in the analysis to ascertain if individual country's characteristics hold when generalized.

#### 6.4.1 Women Participation Model

The women participation model is presented below in equation (1) with its expected signs which will inform this study about the direction of its *a priori* effects:

$$q26morewomen = \beta_1 q1place + \beta_2 q3marital + \beta_3 q4educat + \beta_4 q5occup + \beta_5 q7comleng + \beta_6 q10living + \beta_7 affectcombine + \beta_8 q16biggestloss + \beta_9 q30ratepartic + \beta_{10} q32sigdiff + \epsilon_t \quad (1)$$

Where:

q26morewomen = More women in politics would cause lasting peace in community/would not cause lasting peace in community.

q1place = Place of Interview

q3marital = Marital Status

q4educat = Highest Education Achieved

q5occup = Occupation

q7comleng = Length of stay in community

q10living = Living in area when conflict started

affectcombine = Effects of conflict

q16biggestloss = Biggest loss due to conflict

q30ratepartic = Level of participation in public decision making in your community

q32sigdiff = Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community

$\epsilon_t$  = the error term

- Note: The dependent variable on the left hand side measures whether an increased political representation of women in decision making positions will enhance peace-building in conflict-affected communities or not.

The purpose of this model is to test whether there is a self-perceived capacity among women in enhancing peace-building in conflict-affected communities, if their political representation in decision making position increases. If this is the case, peace-building in conflict-affected countries in Africa should include increased political representation of women in decision making positions. Then an aggregate model which encompasses all causal variables to effect enhancing peace-building in conflict-affected countries in Africa can be suggested.

## 6.5 Results and Discussion

Some variables were dropped to correct for multi co-linearity and sample size. The logistic regression was then carried out on the rest of the variables and the results are presented in Tables 7, 8 and 9.

### 6.5.1 Logistic Model of Women Participation in Politics in Niger Delta, Nigeria

This section discusses the results obtained from the regression of the logistic model of women participation using a sub-set of data pertained to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Logistic Model of a Women Participation in Politics, Niger Delta, Nigeria, 2008

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a) q1place	-5.106	3.657	1.950	1	.163	.006
q3marital	-2.254	1.750	1.660	1	.198	.105
q4educat	20.771	1289.038	.000	1	.987	4 E+8
q5occup	-3.158	3.096	1.040	1	.308	.043
q7comleng	-15.893	2345.034	.000	1	.995	.000
q10living	1.031	4.110	.063	1	.802	2.803
affectcombine	-1.533	1.713	.801	1	.371	.216
q16biggestlos s	-1.566	1.428	1.202	1	.273	.209
q30ratepartic	1.831	1.953	.880	1	.348	6.243
q32sigdiff	-.259	2.784	.009	1	.926	.772
Constant	81.981	11795.819	.000	1	.994	E+32

The analysis shows that none of the variables is a statistically significant predictor of the likelihood or otherwise of a respondent holding the perception that more women in politics could cause lasting peace in the Niger Delta, Nigeria.

### 6.5.2 Logistic Model of Women Participation in Politics in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

This section discusses the results obtained from the regression of the logistic model of women participation using a sub-set of data pertaining to KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Logistic Model of Women Participation in Politics, KZN, South Africa, 2008

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a) q1place	.180	.127	1.990	1	.158	1.197
q3marital	.401	.227	3.118	1	.077*	1.493
q4educat	.330	.273	1.458	1	.227	1.390
q5occup	-.296	.144	4.228	1	.040**	.744
q7comleng	.132	.381	.120	1	.729	1.141
q10living	-.385	1.227	.098	1	.754	.681
affectcombine	.277	.247	1.264	1	.261	1.320
q16biggestlos s	-.138	.286	.234	1	.628	.871
q30ratepartic	-.206	.240	.742	1	.389	.814
q32sigdiff	-.869	.422	4.239	1	.040**	.419
Constant	1.763	3.035	.337	1	.561	5.828

\*Significant at 10 percent level

\*\* Significant at 5 percent level;

\*\*\* Significant at 1 percent level

In KwaZulu-Natal, the logistic regression analysis shows that three factors are statistically significant predictors but at different significance levels – *marital status*, *occupation* and *Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community*. However, only one

of the variables; *marital status* has the appropriate sign, and is consistent with the *a priori* model. In other words marital status is a significant predictor of women who are likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in Kwazulu-Natal.

#### 6.4.3 Logistic Model of a Comprehensive Women Participation in Politics in Africa

This section discusses the results obtained from the regression of the logistic model of comprehensive women participation using the composite data pertaining to both Niger Delta and KZN and results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Logistic Model of A Comprehensive Women Participation in Politics, Niger Delta, Nigeria, and KZN, South Africa, 2008

	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a)						
q1place	.176	.103	2.948	1	.086*	1.193
q3marital	.115	.177	.421	1	.517	1.122
q4educat	.426	.235	3.275	1	.070*	1.531
q5occup	-.212	.103	4.278	1	.039**	.809
q7comleng	-.655	.471	1.936	1	.164	.519
q10living	.101	.999	.010	1	.920	1.106
affectcombine	.285	.231	1.531	1	.216	1.330
q16biggestloss	-.258	.218	1.392	1	.238	.773
q30ratepartic	-.444	.196	5.153	1	.023**	.641
q32sigdiff	-1.156	.372	9.676	1	.002***	.315
Constant	6.875	3.214	4.577	1	.032**	968.182
<b>N=85</b>						
<b>Log likelihood = -20.43</b>						
<b>Prob&gt;chi<sup>2</sup> = 0.0003</b>						
<b>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> = 0.503</b>						

\*Significant at 10 percent level

\*\* Significant at 5 percent level;

\* \*\* Significant at 1 percent level

Results show that *marital status, length of stay in community, living in community when conflict started, Effects of conflict, Biggest loss due to conflict* variables failed to agree with the a priori expectations. Not only were the coefficient associated with *place* and *education* found to be statistically significant at 10 percent level, they also agreed with the a priori expectation.

Amid the self-perceived capacity, results show that all log-odds regression coefficients associated with the variables *Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community, occupation* and *Level of participation in public decision making in your community* were statistically significant at 1, and 5 percent levels respectively but appear with the wrong signs which failed to agree with the a priori expectations.

In light of above findings, there is inconsistency between the self-perceived capacity as reflected in the survey and the results. The inconsistency highlights the problem of relying on self-reporting as empirical basis for conclusions in social research. Perhaps the introduction of response validation mechanisms at the construction phase of the research instrument could have helped to circumvent the problem.

In summary, when compared, results of the chi square and logistic regression analyses show some differences in the variables which are significant in relation to our hypothesis in both case studies. For example, while ‘place of interview’, ‘age’, ‘marital status’, ‘Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community’, and ‘Level of participation in public decision making in your community’ were statistically significant in the chi square analysis, only marital status was a significant predictor. And this was only in KwaZulu-Natal as none of the variables were a significant predictor of women who are likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would cause lasting peace in the Niger Delta. Other predictors which were significant but at different levels include: ‘Occupation’ and ‘Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community?’ These differences are due in part to the influence of one factor on the other in the logistic regression analysis.

## 6.6 Discussion of emerging issues and lessons learnt

From the study (literature review, theoretical framework and survey findings) so far, a number of issues emerge that have significance for our hypothesis. These include the failure of male-dominated politics which provides grounds for feminising politics, the quality of women's representation in politics, and the 'woman obstacle' to feminising politics and peace-building. Overall, the main lesson learnt is that women in partnership with men at all levels of public decision-making make peace building more effective than if there are few or no women. This is consistent with the findings of studies on the role of women in peace-related missions and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa such as that of South Africa (see King, 1997).

### 6.6.1 The failure of male-dominated politics and governance

What comes out from the study of conflict in the study areas in the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal is that politics has failed in its essence as an instrument of good governance, development and peace. But then is it politics that has failed or those who control politics? In other words, does politics have a life in itself? As a system, David Easton sees politics as the authoritative allocation of values for the whole of society (Easton, 1953: 129). From such a functionalist perspective, we can ultimately reduce the essence of different political systems to instruments (politics) of enabling (allocating) the common good (values). Therefore, if politics is only an instrument, then its effectiveness is largely dependent on those who operate the instrument or system. In this way, when a political system fails to prevent, mediate or manage conflict within it, we can deduct that it is not politics that has failed but those at the helm of politics; it is not politics that is dirty but those who play the game of politics. And since, as an African proverb admonishes, "insanity is doing the same thing the same way over and over again and expecting a different result"<sup>113</sup>, sanity here will mean changing the way we do things. Impliedly, if a political system is such that breeds conflict, then perhaps it is time to change the operators of that political system

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<sup>113</sup> As quoted by Prof Senyo Adjibolosoo, Director of the International Institute for Human Factor Development IIHFD during a presentation on "Leadership Effectiveness in Democratic Governance: The Quality of the Human Factor" hosted by the School of Politics, UKZN, 10 July, 2009.

to enable operators with a different; more collaborative, tolerant and empathetic approach. As the study of conflict in the study areas show, the failure of age-long male-dominated politics to be proactive, to be tolerant and empathetic to the good of all, the failure of state institutions such as the police and the state machinery itself to assume a neutral posture in times of conflict is at the root of conflict in different parts of the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal.

According to Okonta (2000: 12) “at the core of the crisis in the Niger-Delta is the failure of politics to allocate authority, legitimise it, and use it to achieve the social and economic ends that conduce to communal wellbeing”. This is further buttressed by CASS (2005), which explained conflict in the region as been the result of “the failure of existing structures and processes to resolve fundamental issues of allocative and distributive inequities (cultural, economic, political and social) and therefore, of justice and good governance in the area” (CASS, 2005:8). More specifically, it traced local women’s protests and activism in the Niger-Delta to “the failure of traditional governance system and communal/ethnic elites to obtain benefits and distribute same to community members. Rather, they have become corrupt and compromised by the MNCs” (CASS, 2005:65). In KwaZulu-Natal, Taylor (2002) contends that “the militarization of KwaZulu-Natal, the fact of Inkatha and the ANC being at war and the effects of this war have been masked by a politics of denial” in which senior political figures (in political institutions dominated by men), and have been implicated in political violence. According to him, the violence in KwaZulu-Natal needs to be understood “in terms of a matrix of integrated issues that are rooted in what is a systematic problem (underlying all events and cases), in which the forces of law and order are implicated” (Taylor, 2002: 4). More specifically, he contends that at a deeper level, post-apartheid armed conflict in the region “has been systematically over-determined by and fuelled by a failure to confront past wartime divisions and their legacy” (2002: 5). This failure of politics, which weakens the state in terms of realizing its essence, is also reflected in the proliferation of social movements, ethnic and youth militias, cults and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), all competing, sometimes violently, against the state on the one hand, and between themselves on the other. In many ways, both the existence and the activities of some of these groups,

which serve to provide alternative sites for political engagement<sup>114</sup>, implicate the Nigerian and South African states as a weak or shadow state<sup>115</sup>. These groups are more pervasive in the Niger-Delta than in KwaZulu-Natal<sup>116</sup>. Examples of these groups in the Niger-Delta include the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger-Delta (MOSIEND), Movement for the Survival of Itsekiri Nationality (MOSIEN) Isoko Front, the Urhobo Economic Foundation (UEF) and the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC). Other categories include ethnic militias like the *Egbesu Boys*, Niger-Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger-Delta (MEND). In KwaZulu-Natal, examples of militia groups are paramilitary groups formed by the ANC such as the Self Defence Units (SDU) and the one formed by the IFP Self Protection Units (SPU). The proliferation of these groups is as much about the diversity of interests that they need to secure as it reflects the general failure of the Nigerian state to provide basic services and to earn the confidence and support of the people of the region.

In addition, the state's inability to maintain law and order and to entrench the rule of law serve not only to deflate the people's confidence in government but also to force them to resort to securing themselves from the encumbrance the state has become to them by transferring their support to these groups and therefore legitimizing them. The ensuing anarchy has become not only a part of the objective conditions of the Niger-Delta region, but also a key distinguishing feature with political intrigues,

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<sup>114</sup> Some of them provide alternative social services to their constituencies where the government has failed or is too inept – thus making rallying points for ethnic nationalism. Also, see *Tell December 2005* interview with Chevron's Environmental & Regulations Compliance Manager, who said MNOCs serve as substitute government.

<sup>115</sup> On the weak/shadow state, see Clapham (1996) that “up to a point, an effective and functioning state might provide a useful mechanism through which rulers could help to assure their long-term survival by meeting the needs of their people and building up a sense of their legitimacy. Once the state ceased to be able to perform such functions, much of it became an encumbrance” (1996:251-252). Also, according to Tell, April 2003 Special edition, the failure of government in Nigeria gave rise to an era of corporate rule by oil companies which saw the people relying on these companies for basic infrastructure and services

<sup>116</sup> Although a good number of NGOs and CBOs exist in KwaZulu-Natal, some of which engage in service delivery, people do not see them and or turn to them as alternative governments the way people in the Niger-Delta turn to such groups. This is perhaps because in KwaZulu-Natal, government has a big presence in people's lives in the form of extensive social grants that make people completely reliant on the state. In fact, studies show that over-reliance on government has created a dependency culture of entitlement that stifles personal initiative and is thus inimical to economic growth and development.

kidnappings, extortions, vandalism, protests, intra-communal violence, and other forms of violent acts against both the state and MNCs now forming an integral part of daily existence in the region. In KwaZulu-Natal, a cycle of political violence, poverty and disease perpetuates a crisis of human insecurity which if not effectively confronted soon enough will implode with damaging consequences. And as aforementioned, women share a disproportionate burden of the effects of this failed politics, which ironically, is being perpetuated by their men folks<sup>117</sup>. At the root of this failed politics is the scourge of political corruption. The male leaders who have dominated leadership at various levels of society have become so corrupt that leadership positions at all levels are now perceived as “opportunities to make it in life” or “have a share of the national cake”<sup>118</sup>. The empathy and responsibility towards community and people development which are hall marks of leadership that is accountable have been eroded.

Clearly then, in the face of the feminization of poverty, environmental degradation armed conflict and the crisis of lawlessness, which are all products of political corruption, there is need for a new kind of approach to the conception and practice of politics. Indeed, politics in and towards the Niger-Delta needs to be transformed to become more inclusive and relevant to the development needs and aspirations of the people, who ideally, should be the means and end of politics, the state and development. As Okonta (2000) argues, the alternative to massive militarization in the Niger-Delta is a new political and economic framework, guaranteed by a new federal constitution, that would transfer power, and with it the control of economic resources, to local people in the region. According to him, this would entail the democratisation of politics in such a way that the ordinary people would become the object and subject of development, and thus would development be democratised (Okonta, 2000). Although our study shows that democracy in the study areas in KwaZulu-Natal is

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<sup>117</sup> In Nigeria, for example, formal politics and governance has been dominated by men since the inception of the Nigerian state. A gender analysis of national elections since the ‘fourth wave’ of democratization, between 1999 to the 2007, reveal that women constituted an insignificant average of 5% in the National Assembly. For example, they were 3.2% of the National Assembly in the 1999 elections, were 5.1% in the 2003 elections and now stand at 7.6% in following the 2007 elections. Across the country, there are 54 (5.4%) women out of the 990 people elected to state Houses of Assembly in 2007.

<sup>118</sup> This emerged from FGDs with women in Igbokoda, Odi and Uzere who all agreed that personal ambition and greed were the overriding motive behind seeking political positions in the region.

more inclusive than in the Niger-Delta<sup>119</sup> given higher levels of women's participation in community governance processes, it does not in any way mean that the need for democratization of politics pertains only to the Niger-Delta. In fact, in KwaZulu-Natal, both women who said they were involved in community decision making and those who said they were not involved were in agreement that beyond the community level, often times they did not know the women who were deployed to represent them at the District Municipal, provincial or national levels. This is because they have no say in how the women are appointed<sup>120</sup>. Also, a good number of the women 42% who said they were not involved in community decision making feel that local/community governance is still not democratic enough hence their inability to participate as they would want to. According to them, it is those women who are affiliated to the main political parties in the areas (ANC and IFP) and those who are more formally educated that more often appointed or deployed into political positions. In community meetings where women dominate men in numbers, it is the category of women described above who dominate proceedings. This is also the case in the Niger-Delta where the majority (59%) of respondents said they were not involved in community decision making. According to them, they were over-shadowed by those who had better formal education and were as such in a better position to establish and maintain women groups or other civil society organizations. For example, as table 10 below shows, 51% of respondents in both KwaZulu-Natal and the Niger Delta said only formally educated women are appointed or put up election into political positions therefore marginalising the majority of women who are illiterates. The situation is worse for women in Nigeria where there are no affirmative action policies or principles in practice. Therefore, at the local government, state or national levels of politics in the Niger-Delta, women compete with men for political positions, and often times, they lose out because they do not have access to the kind of resources needed to campaign for election (see Ibrahim and Salihu, 2004).

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<sup>119</sup> The findings show that women's political participation at the community/grassroots level is relatively higher in KZN than in the Niger-Delta. This is in tandem with the fact that KZN has a better women representation record than the Niger-Delta. For instance, women constitute 26.2% of the province's parliament, and in the march 2007 local government elections, the province implemented a 50/50 women and men ratio which is still in force.

<sup>120</sup> As aforementioned, the instrument for mainstreaming women into politics in KZN, and by extension in South Africa is the political party quota system. The criterion for such deployments which is usually at the instance or good graces of the Premier/President in consultation with the party hierarchy (mostly men) is not clear.

Table 10: Category of women who get appointed/sponsored into political positions

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Which women get appointed in politics	Only women who are actively involved in political parties are appointed or elected	65	23.6%	30.2%
	Only elite women are appointed or elected	10	3.6%	4.7%
	Only women affiliated to civil society groups or womens institutions are elected or appointed	6	2.2%	2.8%
	Any ordinary woman interested in politics can be elected or appointed	53	19.3%	24.7%
	Only formally educated women can be elected or appointed	141	51.3%	65.6%
Total		275	100.0%	127.9%

Therefore, democratising politics in such a way that the ordinary people would become the means and end, object and subject of development involves mainstreaming more women in politics in ways that allow women to choose their representatives themselves. In this regard, we contend that feminizing political processes in the Niger-Delta especially and enabling women to choose their own leaders in KwaZulu-Natal has a transformative value, not only because of its potential for equity, fairness, justice and democratic decentralization, but also because women, by their very nature, approach politics and the use of power differently from men (FGD with women in ND and KZN). Therefore, in other not be guilty of the ‘insanity’ of doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, there is a need to enable a process that will bring more women into politics on an equal basis with men. This will bring a desirable fresh tone and perspective to politics that will be proactive enough to prevent violent conflict. However, since numbers alone do not guarantee quality performance, there is also a need to emplace machineries and processes that will enable women, majority of who live in rural areas in Africa, to determine and choose their own representatives themselves. The idea is to bring in women who will think and act as women; those that will not be encumbered by clientelist considerations and whose loyalty will be to the women constituency from which their powers derive in the first place, and to the ideals that define womanhood.

While these ideals are not necessarily African only<sup>121</sup>, they should take cognisance of African realities and particularities, for as Ake (1996) argued, any development paradigm that does not factor in the historical specificities of the African socio-cultural reality is bound to fail.

### 6.6.2 Quality of women's political representation

Beyond arguing for the feminization of politics in the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal based on theoretical considerations of equity, fairness, justice and human rights/human security, the findings from this study show that there are also practical considerations for feminizing politics. These considerations also help to push the quantity versus quality debate in favour of quality because they show that the values that women can bring into politics help to enhance the quality of political governance as an instrument of enabling the common good. This is more so if they come in as women from a women constituency rooted in a women ideology of politics.

#### 1. Women are more empathetic to community needs

This study shows that women see politics more as an instrument of service for community development rather than as a means of personal advancement. In the Niger-Delta for instance, unlike the men and youths in the whose engagement with oil companies and with the federal government of Nigeria have tended to deviate from the development objective of the struggle, women's engagement have always shown unwavering focus and commitment to community development rather than on personal aggrandizement. According to one respondent, "because we are mothers, we tend to empathize with community needs as our children's needs are the same as the community needs, so we understand better not to toy with those needs because ultimately, it will come back to affect us" (Interview with Madam Amafadie, 6 June, 2007). In all our 3 study areas in the Niger-Delta, there were no cases or issues of women leaders who sold out on the people's struggle in order to satisfy personal interests or for self-enrichment purposes as was prevalent amongst elder men and youths who have variously been at the vanguard of the struggle. Indeed, as Ikelegbe &

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<sup>121</sup> For example motherhood and the nurturing characteristics that go with it are not necessarily African only, it is universal.

Ikelegbe (2006) put it, the demands of various Niger-Delta women protests relate mainly to issues of poverty arising from declining incomes underlined by oil-based despoliation of the environment and social disruptions. They also focus on marginalization and neglect of corporate social responsibility by the MNOCs, and accordingly, tailor their demands to align with the development issues they raise. In KwaZulu-Natal, women mobilisation at the community levels in Richmond and Nongoma bring issues of community development concerns to the table ahead of personal interests. According to Emerencia Zulu, “women are better leaders because women are capacity builders. They are more interested in community development and using their offices and experiences to better society” (Interview with Zulu, 5 August, 2006). On her part, Nelly Ntombela<sup>122</sup> (Nongoma), “women councillors show concern for community development and have generally brought development projects (water, sanitation, housing) into our community more than male councillors have” (Ntombela, 4 August 2006). Similarly, Phumzile Ngema (Richmond) told us that “women are always ready to develop their community because they are mothers. In Richmond, they have helped us women to start our own businesses through a micro-credit scheme” (Ngema, 3 November, 2005). In the same vein, Guguletu Hlomuka contends that during conflict, “women are always the ones who organise to pray for the community. And hardly will you ever find a man present in such prayer sessions” (Hlomuka, 3 August 2006). For more on these kinds of views, see table 10 which contains string variables of responses to the question on significant difference women in community governance have made in the study areas.

Table 11: String responses of respondents on women’s significant contributions in community governance

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<sup>122</sup> She is one of the few respondents in KZN with a matric and who could speak English.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1121	88.3	88.3	88.3
Adult education lobby. Creek bridge. Women community development centre	1	.1	.1	88.3
Alleviate poverty in general	1	.1	.1	88.4
Alleviation of poverty people dont want to fight women provide the poverty alleviation	1	.1	.1	88.5
Allow women to stand up for their rights. More jobs for women now.	1	.1	.1	88.6
Always deliver good governance since they are mothers who have the fear of God at heart	1	.1	.1	88.7

## 2. Women are perceived to be less corrupt than men in politics

Majority of the respondents in both case studies (55% in KwaZulu-Natal and 67% in the Niger-Delta) perceive women politicians to be less corrupt than men (For example of specific comments in this regard, see tables 11 and 12). Perceptions do matter in politics and women politicians are perceived to be more trustworthy and less corruptible than their male counterparts. The universality of this perception was tested by a World Bank study by Dollar *et al* (1999) who found out that “at the country level, higher rates of female participation in government are associated with lower levels of corruption” (Dollar *et al*, 2001: 426). They went on to conclude, based on their findings in this regard, that

....there may be extremely important spin-offs stemming from increasing female representation: if women are less likely than men to behave opportunistically, then bringing more women into government may have significant benefits for society in general (Dollar *et al*, 2001:427).

In Africa, a 2007 World Bank study revealed that women politicians in Uganda were less corrupt than men. These perceptions were re-echoed by women in our study

areas. When asked why they thought more women should be in politics, majority (61%) of the total respondents in both case studies answered “because women were less prone to corruption than men”. They believed that women were in a better moral position to change the present mode of politics which is corruption-driven.

### 3. Women are more politically tolerant

Three quarters of the respondents (198 out of 264 in both case studies) feel that women are more collaborative and accommodative in their political dealings than men. This has implications for conflict transformation as an accommodative and collaborative approach to politics tends to be less conflictual and as such peace-oriented. According to Anderlini (2007), women are more amenable to practicing the co-operative strategy, which is a shift away from the zero-sum paradigm associated with male dominated politics to a win-win approach. This has proved rather successful in Rwanda, for instance, where women members of Parliament (MPs) worked across party and ethnic lines in a forum of women parliamentarians, leading to the formation of two other cross-party caucuses on population and regional peace (Powley, in Anderlini, 2007). This is the attitude that women in Burundi, the DRC and MARWOPNET member countries (Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone) adopted in their engagements with men to enable peace in and between their countries. The collaborative attitude also resonates in the Niger-Delta where, an examination of women protests in 2002 and 2003 reveal, amongst other insights into the patterns of their engagements, that women’s actions are en masse, denoting a high level of unity, collaboration and mobilization that cross ethnic boundaries (Ikelegbe and Ikelegbe, 2006: 188). In KwaZulu-Natal, apart from Shobashobane, majority of respondents in Nongoma and Richmond believe that women are more politically tolerant and consensual than men. This is confirmed by Mrs Johnson (MEC for Public Works) who said from her experience as a parliamentarian and now MEC in KwaZulu-Natal, she can conclude that women see politics as a means of accommodating difference and fostering co-operation because “we are stronger as a people and achieve more when we work together” (Interview with Mrs Johnson, 2 October, 2007).

#### 4. Women are effective negotiators

Women have shown to be successful negotiators in their own right. In the Niger-Delta for instance, they have been known to be more result-oriented in their struggles against state oppression and in their negotiations with MNOCs for development dividends. One of the negotiation tools women have used successfully in the region is protest. When they have to protest, and often they do only as a last resort, they are usually well coordinated, non-destructive and peaceful even in protest. According to CASS (2005: 59), women protests in the region “traditionally push issues beyond a threshold because the women folk are regarded as more patient, respectful and morally compelling”. In terms of analytical utility, women protests in the Niger-Delta have led to several Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between women, their communities and the MNOCs (Ogbodo, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2006). In his study of the July 2002 Ijaw women protests against Chevron in Delta state, Ogbodo (2002) observed that apart from the MOUs, the company (Chevron) also granted concessions to the women and their communities in terms of providing sustainable community development, local business development training and skills development which have taken elder men and youths longer time than it took the women to achieve (Ogbodo, 2002). While it is possible that other factors could have been at play in the response of Chevron to women’s agitations and protests, a Public Affairs Officer with the company agreed that ignoring a group of peaceful women protesters was actually akin to portraying the highest sense of corporate insensitivity

Initially, we did not want to simply yield to the women’s demands so as not to set a precedence where it will become an everyday expectation to grant women’s demands, especially in cases where they are been used to extract unrealistic concessions. However, we had to do something quickly when we started getting pressures from even the most unexpected quarters to do something about the women. We were made to understand it was better to deal with a group of peaceful protesters and than to deal with a group of rascally youths<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> This official only agreed to an interview under condition of strict anonymity because of his position. The interview took place at Chevron’s Head Office in Warri, Delta State on 19 June, 2007.

In South Africa, women's protests against state excesses have also been effective in addressing their concerns and those of their communities in general (Beall *et al*, 1987; Walker, 1997; Bonnin, 2000). For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, women in Mpumalanga Township protested against the excesses of the South African Defence Force soldiers who were deployed for peacekeeping in the area during the ANC/UDF versus IFP conflicts there in 1993. In one instance, the women mobilised themselves to the local police station where they peacefully protested against the soldiers' excesses in the area and demanded that they leave. According to Bonnin (2000: 313)'s account, the women's activities were directly confrontational of both the authorities and the discourse of 'the good wife', but were peaceful and effective:

We women were there. We were complaining about the special constables *o-blom*. Because they were killing in broad daylight, shooting people. ... Women were full in the police station that day, we went to the station commander, complaining, still complaining, asking the station commander to tell the [unclear] that we don't want special constables. ... Me and Mrs Mvelase were taken in and the police said we were ring-leaders. "How can all these women come to be here?" Because the other women are from Unit One, and other from Two, the others, some from Three and Four. "How could all the location know about meeting here?" And I went up and said "me!" [Laughter] I phoned Mrs Mvelase and said tell Unit Three and Four should come to the police station, and I phoned Mrs Nene and said tell the women to come to the police station. That's how we all came together here, and that other, eh, tall policeman with white hair said "it was so quick, the message was so quick". I said "hey darling, these days, the messages!" [Laughter] Aike!

Bonnin (2000) contends that these protests were not isolated events, and that while locally organized and raising specifically local issues, they fell within the political 'tradition' of women's protests in South Africa, which in many cases, have yielded positive results. Indeed, women's negotiation and mobilisation abilities were brought to the fore during the country's constitutional talks between 1992 and 1994.

According to King (1997)<sup>124</sup>, the presence of so many women in leadership positions in the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA), over 50% for the first 16 months, acted as a catalyst to change the views and attitudes of many of the local women, irrespective of party affiliation (King, 1997:1). Apart from the positive influence of women in the UNOMSA team, ordinary women in South Africa mobilised and organised themselves across class, religious, ethnic and racial lines to contribute positively to the peace process and lay the foundation for empowering women in the new South Africa. Based on her South African experience, King (1997:5) concluded that

Women are as successful negotiators as men. They may approach negotiation, differently, but in many instances are capable of proposing constructive if more unorthodox approaches. They are action-oriented and reach out to groups within the community, which although effective have a lower status profile, in finding the means to establish dialogue between polarized groups

According to King (1997), one of the lessons learnt from the South African case was that women's presence in peace processes seems to be a potent ingredient in fostering and maintaining confidence and trust not only within the mediating team, but also among the local population. This is because "when a critical mass of women is involved in a peace-related mission, women in the host country, often a key element in the settlement of disputes at the community level, are mobilized through a positive demonstration effect of the role models of the women on the mission" (King, 1997:4).

##### 5. Women as active peace agents

From the study, women respond to conflict by embracing peace and adopting collaborative methods of engagement. The attitude of women to conflict, which underscores their response and the peace-oriented roles they play in conflict

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<sup>124</sup> Angela King was the Head of the UNOMSA contingent to South Africa and one of only two women who have headed a United Nations peace and security mission.

resolution, is not unconnected to the African woman's feminist ethic of care which values interrelationships, connectedness and empowerment rather than conflict and competition. For example, according to Mrs Iyoha<sup>125</sup>, while men view conflict as 'struggle or war which must be fought', women tend to see them as 'necessary evils in communities' and only give in to or endorse war after all avenues for peaceful resolution of conflict have been exhausted, and even then, they tend to hope for and pursue prospects for peace during war (Interview with Mrs Iyoha, 13 June 2007). Also, since the injured and dead in conflicts are more often their sons, husbands and brothers, they tend to focus on the cessation of violence and the rebuilding of their homes, families and communities (FGD with Odi women, 3 May 2007). Indeed, according to Dr (Mrs) Okolocha<sup>126</sup>, "because women feel the impact of conflict more than men, they naturally advocate for peace and pursue conflict resolution". This is corroborated by a cumulative 73% (131 out of 180 responses) of the women in the both case studies who were affected by conflict and who said they responded to the conflict in their area by "creating alternatives for survival" (47), "working towards peaceful resolution of the conflict" (12), "accepted their fate and moved on" (62) or "helping to rebuild community" (10). Another finding (lesson) from King (1997)'s study in this regard is instructive:

In performing their tasks with male colleagues, women were perceived to be more compassionate, less threatening or insistent on status, less willing to opt for force or confrontation over conciliation, even it is said less egocentric, more willing to listen and learn--though not always--and to contribute to an environment of stability which fostered the peace process (King, 1997:4).

Concisely, women have a positive attitude and approach towards peace, as while men spoil for a fight, women toe the alternative route for peace and calm to reign. Apart from interviews responses, reasons the questionnaire respondents gave ranged from

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<sup>125</sup> Mrs F E Iyoha is the Clerk of the Legislative arm and Chief Administrative Officer of Oredo Local Government Area of Edo state and a former Head of Family Support Programme in the Local Government Area

<sup>126</sup> Dr (Mrs) H.O Okolocha is a politician, writer and lecturer of English and Literature at the University of Benin, Nigeria

the population stake of women in the study areas, and women’s interest in peace and community development, to the perception that women are less corrupt compared to men and are better suited to consensus building than men.

Table 12: Reasons why women in politics will enhance peace-building

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Why women in politics will bring peace	Woman are more than half the population and should be part of the solution to societal problems	85	22.3%	45.0%
	Woman are equally capable leaders and will help the quality of decisions that will also address their concerns	102	26.7%	54.0%
	Woman are equal stakeholders in ensuring peace and development	95	24.9%	50.3%
	Woman are less corrupt and better suited to consensus building	100	26.2%	52.9%
Total		382	100.0%	202.1%

Our survey findings reveal that women’s peace agency is also rooted in their agency for good governance as can be seen in the respondent’s responses (tables 13 and 14) on women’s significant contribution to governance and community development. An aggregation of similar responses show that women are community developers (installed electricity, running/tap water, poverty alleviation, concern for community building/development). They also introduce a caring and sharing approach to politics that is rooted in their femininity and motherhood (softness to society, joy, motherly care, remembers everyone, not autocratic and corruption free) and are peace-oriented (pray for community peace, bring harmony and standing against trouble). The significance of their good governance agency for peace building can be understood in the light of how male dominated leadership’s failure to allocate resources equitably has fuelled social and armed conflict, not only in the study areas, but also in other parts of Africa.

Table 13: String responses on women's significant contributions in community governance

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Pray for the community	1	.1	.1	94.9
Pray for the promotion for this community	1	.1	.1	95.0
Proved themselves good developers of society	1	.1	.1	95.0
Proved to be corruption free	1	.1	.1	95.1
Providing services for community development	1	.1	.1	95.2
Ready to move nation forward as proved through effort of former Minister of Finance	1	.1	.1	95.3
Ready to serve. not autocratic and ready to better the lot of people since they are mothers	1	.1	.1	95.4
Running water has been installed	1	.1	.1	95.4
She is a peace maker	1	.1	.1	95.5
She will bring softness to the society	1	.1	.1	95.6
She prays	1	.1	.1	95.7
She taught us to farm	1	.1	.1	95.7
Standing against trouble	1	.1	.1	95.8
Started installing taps	1	.1	.1	95.9
The difference is fair but not impressive. At least a woman was able to give us light in this community	1	.1	.1	96.0
The significant difference made is women know that their opinion can develop the community because it was a woman that installed electricity in this community	1	.1	.1	96.1
There are a number of women in politics who are doing well	1	.1	.1	96.1
They're trying but haven't yet been fully accepted	1	.1	.1	96.2
They always remember the grass root people via distribution of dividends of democracy at festive period	1	.1	.1	96.3
They are about to install running water	1	.1	.1	96.4
They are making women more enlightened	1	.1	.1	96.5
They bring and give motherly care	1	.1	.1	96.5
They bring joy peace and harmony	1	.1	.1	96.6
They bring peace	1	.1	.1	96.7
They bring peace and harmony	1	.1	.1	96.8

Table 14: String responses of respondents on women’s significant contributions in community governance

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Women are not corrupt and have proved they can take this nation to a greater height	1	.1	.1	99.1
Women are now very involved in mining farming industries where it used to be men's world	1	.1	.1	99.1
Women are ready to deliver goods to the society	1	.1	.1	99.2
Women bring peace	1	.1	.1	99.3
Women councillors show concern for community development. Men beginning to take women more seriously	1	.1	.1	99.4
Women have demonstrated they are better than men from the way they are handling positions given to them	1	.1	.1	99.4
Women have fear of God	1	.1	.1	99.5
Women have brought developmental projects into community	1	.1	.1	99.6
Women in govt tried to mobilise other women to be involved in community decision making and have factored women's interests generally into the public agenda	1	.1	.1	99.7
Women like Mrs Osomo made sure the staff of office was given to traditional rulers	1	.1	.1	99.8
Working towards peace building	1	.1	.1	99.8
Zanele Magwaza meetings in community poverty alleviation	1	.1	.1	99.9
Zanele community building	1	.1	.1	100.0
Total	1270	100.0	100.0	

Generally from both case studies, the major instruments women employ to play their peace advocacy roles include suggestions to relevant stakeholders for dialogue, appeals to MNC’s community liaison officers, preaching and advocacy for the ideal of peace, persuasion of their husbands, sons and local community leaders to embrace

peace, advising youths and children, representation and frequent meetings with stakeholders, prayers and peaceful protests when all these fail. In the Niger-Delta, women sometimes went to the extreme measure of threatening to go naked. However, as Ikelegbe (2005) notes the threat or use of the collective social power of nakedness has been deployed not only against the MNCs, but has also been used as an interventionist instrument against the excesses of traditional ruler-ship structures and groups and their anti-social activities such as youth violence and sea piracy in the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe, 2005: 266).

This study therefore validates that of CASS (2005), which contends that women and their groupings constitute the main formation of moderation and peace building in the Niger-Delta in spite of their growing activism. Indeed, according to Chief Akhorta, even though women are not usually the cause of conflict, and in spite of the fact that they bear the effects of conflict disproportionately with men, they still impact on conflict positively. As aforementioned, “they operate from the private family level, using moral suasion to convince their husbands and then community leaders not be hawkish in their approach to dealing with conflict situations, and most often, their views are respected because of the myth of ‘the sanctity of womanhood’ which surround women” (Interview with Akhorta, 2007). Also, Rachael Umukoro, the *Osu-eya* (Women’s leader) in Uzere (Niger-Delta) says that women always work towards conflict resolution using their special nature which appeals to calm, love and togetherness. To her, “women have special abilities that make them cope with difficulties; they are patient, hopeful and closer to nature than men” (Interview with Umukoro, 6 June 2007). Indicting male egoism as a cause of conflict and juxtaposing it against women’s peace and community building orientation, wife of the traditional ruler of Izingolweni, Mrs Dorah Cele said:

Men are hard-headed and that’s why there is always conflict. They don’t want to listen; they don’t want to be enlightened by anyone. Instead of talking about how to rebuild, they concentrate on other things and at the end of the day, nothing is done. They know if they allow women to participate in politics there will be peace, yet they don’t allow us to participate. We should all work together towards a better community.

(Interview with Mrs Cele, 31 May, 2006)

Re-echoing the view of Mr. Nyembe in KwaZulu-Natal, “women were the only visible agitators for peace during the conflict in this area. They organized very strongly for peace and their persistence was rewarded with a seat in the peace meetings during which their voices were loud enough to make us men stay the course for peace” (Interview with Nyembe, 5 August 2006). According to Chief Sbiya of KwaDhabasi, “culturally, women are seen as pure and innocent souls, which in a way explain why they are the best candidates for peace because we can trust them to be neutral mediators” (Interview with Sbiya, 5 August, 2006).

Clearly then, women in the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal are resolute and focussed on peace, community rebuilding and development in the face of conflict. They are able to cope with the effects of conflict drawing from the special attributes which characterize their womanhood. These include love, caring, a vision of relationship, and disposition towards peaceful coexistence because of their children. These characteristics engender peace thus making women veritable agents of peace. Based on the evidence from the study, we can conclude that women bring different values into politics; values that tend to enhance the quality of their representation in politics and could be the missing link between politics, peace and development in both regions of Nigeria and South Africa. However, apart from the nature of the political landscape, which is unfriendly to women’s participation, there are other hindrances to their participation and effective representation which was observed from this study. Of particular note is that of intra-gender sexism and it is common to both case studies.

### **6.6.3 The ‘woman obstacle’ to feminizing politics and peace building**

The study ironically reveals that women themselves also pose as obstacles to the quest to feminize politics and peace-building. According to Mr. Nyembe, an ANC Councillor in ward 10, Nongoma (KwaZulu-Natal), “I still don’t understand how it is that women are the majority in the registered list of voters in KZN and tend to attend ward and committee meetings more than men but yet when it comes to choosing who should represent them especially at the local ward committee and community meeting

levels, they still overwhelmingly elect or support the few men rather than themselves” (Interview with Nyembe, 2006). According to him, “this is rather unfortunate because my experience with women so far show me that they are even better leaders than us men” (Nyembe Interview).

Table 15: Reasons why women in politics will not bring peace

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Why women in politics won't bring a peace	Women are as much war mongers as men	13	40.6%	54.2%
	Woman are not capable leaders as they are better suited to private space as caregivers/mothers	5	15.6%	20.8%
	Woman can be as corrupt as men	8	25.0%	33.3%
	Women's relations with men at informal levels are still defined by patriarchal notions and attitudes	6	18.8%	25.0%
Total		32	100.0%	133.3%

As shown in figure 15, a total of 32 women in both case studies, for multiple reasons, believe that women cannot be the panacea to peace-building in the study areas (most of these women were in Shobashobane). Some of the women actually believe that women can be as much war mongers and as corrupt as men. They also believe, perhaps based on long years of patriarchal socialization that women are better suited to the private space as care-givers, nurturers and mothers. In explaining this phenomenon, Ms Zulu said “women don't have faith in themselves due to lack of knowledge and capacity to act. This is the result of a deep culture of patriarchy and which actually made us believe that women's place is the home. That is why we give our chances to men” (Interview with Zulu, 5 August 2006).

Closely tied to the ‘women obstacle’ discourse is the issue of women politicians de-feminising themselves by acting as men; assuming behavioural characteristics associated with men, when they get into positions. This tends to compromise the value that can bring into politics if they approached political issues as women. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, of the 134 respondents, 37 (27.6%) felt that women in governance at various levels (municipal, provincial and national) have not made any

difference in governance and service delivery. The most recurring of the reasons they gave, apart from the issue of how women politicians were deployed into politics, was that the women politicians do not bring in their womanhood into their jobs. According to one of the respondents, “they act as if they are men just to prove that they are capable or deserve the position”. This also resonates in the Niger-Delta where 21% of respondents felt that women in governance at various levels (municipal, provincial and national) have not made any difference in governance and service delivery. When probed further, women in the Niger-Delta study areas voiced that “we don’t even know the difference between our women and the men any more. Sometimes we think men should just continue to run the show because these women do not really represent us when they behave as men” (Mrs Agbi, Igbokoda, 2007). This implies that when women in political positions, for any kind of consideration<sup>127</sup>, relegate their femininity to the background, they compromise their effectiveness in politics. This is based on the fact that given the feminist ethic of care (rooted in motherhood) and women’s nature, which is tolerant of difference, collaborative and non-violent, they represent an approach that is different that of men, and which by its nature is peaceful. In this sense we can argue that when women come into politics and ‘act as men’ they endorse the stereotype that politics is a male domain; a game for the tough and the detached. This endorses the status-quo which has failed to guarantee the utilitarian essence of the modern state and failed to prevent armed conflict and war.

Therefore, there is a need for women in Africa to reinvent the political ideologies/values that defined their socio-economic and political relations with men in pre-colonial times. This does not necessarily conduce to bringing back all ancient practices; especially those that we can empirically determine are no longer relevant in today’s world. It does not imply a return to patriarchal practices and norms that emasculated and properticised women. Rather, it is an inward-looking approach that seeks a convergence of whatever is good about the past (tradition) with whatever is good about the present (modern); one that seeks a cultural understanding of Africa with a view to reviving and creating an authentic African feminine/masculine personality (see Isike and Uzodike, 2008: 12). This means modernizing without

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<sup>127</sup> These can include the need to ‘prove themselves’, show loyalty to their political benefactors/godfathers and sometimes based on the radical feminist obsession with the belief that women and men are the same

necessarily westernizing; combining African tradition with Western modernity to recreate functional femininities and masculinities that we can utilize for peace building and development. Borrowing from Murithi (2006), to reinvent African masculinities, and this also applies to African femininities, “we have to create a framework that is a hybrid between indigenous African traditions and modern principles to ensure the human dignity and inclusion of all members of society – women, men, girls, and boys” (Murithi, 2006: 14). In a word, this implies a combination of “present notions of gender equality with progressive indigenous norms and principles to create something that is uniquely African” (2006: 14).

As aforementioned in chapter two, women and men in pre-colonial African cultures and societies held positions in the social, economic and political milieus and co-existed as complementary subjects living in a mutual world of responsibility sharing, where differences were appreciated and celebrated. These can be reinvented and utilized in post-colonial Africa without a backlash from men because they are not entirely strange to men. This is because the gender worldview that underpinned and defined masculinities in the pre-colonial era was one that saw women as spiritual and earthly leaders with awesome abilities and sacred powers to produce economically and reproduce existentially. According to Isike and Uzodike (2008), this kind of worldview and the attitudes that flow from it would have driven men’s responses to be more caring and responsible than they are presently if pre-colonial societies had encountered the HIV and AIDS epidemic. “Men would have taken responsibility not only by avoiding reckless sexual behaviour, but also by providing emotional support and care for women and children infected and dying from the epidemic” (Isike and Uzodike, 2008: 12). The virtues of care, protectionism, family accountability and responsibility were part of masculine socialization and initiation into male adulthood in these societies and they were maintained by an inner recognition and acceptance of the role and essence of women as partners in progress, and in reaffirming their (men’s) existence as *ubuntu* dictates. These positive virtues which under girded pre-colonial gender relations are still retrievable from indigenous African cultures and can be enlisted alongside some positive attributes of modern (western) culture in the bid to combat our human development challenges. For example, they can be used to combat not only gender-based violence, but also other human security vulnerabilities such as poverty, HIV and AIDS, illiteracy and environmental despoliation, which are

caused by the failure of male dominated politics and which breeds armed conflict. Indeed, they can be incorporated into our feminist model for peace which values inter-relationships, connectedness and empowerment from which springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love; necessary requirements for amicable resolution of conflict and for sustaining peace.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

A comparative and statistical analysis of our findings from all the study areas in our two case studies (KwaZulu-Natal and the Niger-Delta) confirms the study's hypothesis that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in the study areas. For example, there was a statistically significant ( $\chi=90.250$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $s=.000$ ) difference between the proportion of respondents (79.7%;  $n=204$ ) who believe 'more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities' and the proportion that does not (20.3%;  $n=52$ ). The analysis indicates that the statistically significant variables that impact on the hypothesis are marital status, education, place and age. For instance, women within the 30-39 years age bracket and married women are more likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in their individual communities. The conclusion we can draw from the 'place of interview' variable is that although there could be general patterns in the respondent's perceptions that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in their individual communities, the peculiarities of conflict in each area and the role women played in causing conflict is a factor that impacts on that perception as Shobashobane shows. Also, with statistically significant ( $\chi=9.813$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differences in the data, it can be concluded that respondents who agreed that women in positions of governance had made a significant difference in service delivery and governance are more likely to hold the view that more women in politics could cause lasting peace in communities.

An emergent issue from these analyses that speaks to our hypothesis is the failure of the extant male-dominated politics, which underscores practical considerations for feminising politics and peace-building. For example, we learn that in the face of the failure of politics to guarantee human security and prevent armed conflict, enabling more women into politics to bring in a feminist perspective is a most veritable

panacea. Since the feminist perspective is defined by a feminist ethic of care which is rooted in motherhood, and values inter-relationships, connectedness and empowerment from which springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love, it has potentials for peace building.

We have also learnt that bringing more women into politics is not enough in itself. These women must come into politics as women and bring in the vital relational values that are the missing link between conflict and peace. To achieve this, the processes of mainstreaming women into politics must be such that enables women, especially in rural areas to determine and choose their representatives. It must also be such that enable them to reinvent and nurture an African feminist base and ideology that is rooted in African cultural realities. As aforementioned in chapter two, it is one of the internal variables that have compromised women's political participation in post-colonial Africa. It has also constrained the full development of capitalism in the continent and the potential full blown capitalism has for gender equality<sup>128</sup>. Apart from been a useful tool for deconstructing patriarchy, educating men and mobilizing women for the challenge of achieving gender equality in post-colonial Africa, an African feminist base also has the utility of creating a female consciousness and confidence with which to approach politics and add the value that women can and should bring to politics and *ipso facto* peace-building. The caveat here, as Ake (1996) argues, is that full capitalism and the western cultural baggage (i.e. western feminism) it carries with it cannot be "imported wholesale" into Africa and expected to fit effectively into the continent's development efforts. This indeed underscores the imperative of modernizing without westernizing; combining modern notions of gender equality with progressive indigenous norms and principles to create something that is uniquely African which can be appropriated in politics.

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<sup>128</sup> See Gordon (1996) who contends that gender equality is often associated with liberal capitalist states where capitalism, having fully developed, embodies individualism, entrepreneurial effort, meritocracy and innovation which are, with some adjustments, compatible with feminist goals of freeing women from economic, cultural and political discrimination (Gordon, 1996: 9). However, in the African context, she was quick to point out that capitalism's liberal ideology and its potential to support gender equality is limited by a number of factors some of which include internal and external constraints on the full expansion of capitalism in the continent and the inherent contradictions of socio-economic (class) inequalities which capitalism breeds. In her opinion, this challenge requires an alliance not only between capitalism, socialism and feminism, but also between political and cultural ideologies as well as between women and men.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 Summary of findings

The study investigates the extent to which women's participation in political processes and governance can enhance peace building in conflict-affected communities. It is a comparative cross-country study using KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and the Niger-Delta State, Nigeria as case studies. It adopts both a qualitative and quantitative research method which it combines with a feminist research and comparative approach in its collection and analysis of data from a total of 355 women in 6 main study areas in the two case studies.

Having introduced the study, its objectives, questions, hypothesis and methodological approach in Chapter One, Chapter Two attempted a deconstruction of African patriarchies from the pre-colonial era in order to create a new understanding of patriarchies and the masculinities they spew in contemporary Africa. This was also to lay the basis and need for a reinterpretation and reinvention of masculinities and femininities in the continent. Chapter Two concludes that the feminisation of poverty, the masculinisation of politics and exclusion of women from formal peace processes in post-colonial Africa are consequences of the interaction between pre-existing patriarchies, capitalism and new patriarchies introduced by colonialism. These new patriarchies interrupted pre-existing modes of gender relations, which, despite being discriminatory against women in some ways, valued them greatly, as women had opportunities and spaces within which they operated as strong forces in society. In this light, deconstructing contemporary African patriarchies and the negative masculinities they spew is a good first step towards creating new understanding and practice of gender relations in post-colonial Africa. For example, it is a veritable basis for reinventing African patriarchies to emplace new and positive masculinities and gender relations which are foundational for peace. Also, within this

deconstruction discourse, there exists the potential for women to reclaim their lost spaces and power within society, as the knowledge of women-power in pre-colonial African societies and cultures is itself a source of empowerment. As the notion of gender equality in politics gains increasing ascendancy in Africa, the possibility and reality of inter and intra gender opposition to it will be reduced as both men and women gain new understanding of pre-colonial gender relations.

The point is that, from time immemorial, African women have shown a capability for political engagement even in societies that were patrilineal. Also, since the old patriarchies recognised women's capabilities in this regard, African men should not frown upon gender balancing as westernisation. Rather, it should be seen and accepted as part of the African cultural rejuvenation. In essence, the empowerment of women really represents the revival of traditional African values which enabled societal harmony, peace and development of Africa before the modern contact with Europe and the subsequent colonial enterprise. This understanding should be incorporated into the African Renaissance project as part of the revival of African traditional values, which enabled women and men to live in a mutual world of responsibility sharing, where differences are appreciated and celebrated. This is what African matriarchy entails and it should form the basis of understanding African feminism, a cultural feminism that does not subtract from gender equity or equality, but one that reaffirms the special nature of women. The ethics that defined women's behaviour and contributions in pre-colonial societies is still relevant in today's largely masculinised politics which is devoid of development ethics. Modernisation without westernisation does not in any way subtract from attaining the goal of gender equality or equity in political representation.

In Chapter Three, the study explores the utility of four theoretical approaches/models for feminising politics and peace building in the study areas and across Africa. These include the human security paradigm, human rights discourse, the human factor paradigm and the moral imagination model espoused by John Lederach. The crux of our theoretical argument is that the human security approach to politics and development is consistent with the practical imperative of feminising politics and peace building because, from a human security perspective, development is about

people. Such a people-centred paradigm opens up the political and development spaces for people's needs and human rights to come to the fore. In this way, the realities and challenges of women's existence, their vulnerabilities and relations to armed and social conflict become part of the security, human rights and development discourse. A human security approach to development therefore enables the state and society to recognise that women also have rights, first as human beings and as women and that these rights need to be effected in accordance with the dictates of the human security approach. One of such women's rights is the right to political participation and representation, which, if validated, will empower women to come into politics as women. In this way, they will be able to bring with them a different value and approach that is more conducive to peace building.

However, increasing the number of women in politics does not automatically translate to peace because according to Lederach (2005), peace building requires a positive human agency with certain characteristics to be able to transcend and ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles within which conflict is perpetuated. These characteristics include love, compassion, humility, responsibility and an ability to envision relational mutuality of human existence (*ubuntu*). Based on a rich pre-colonial history of peace-making and peace-building experience, we conclude that African women are well endowed with the appropriate moral imagination capacities and human factor dimensions based on their natural make-up as women and the ethic of care which defines their motherhood roles and experiences. These characteristics positively predispose them to bringing in a less confrontational, more collaborative, empathetic and relational approach to politics and *ipso facto* peace building. Accordingly, we contend that these characteristics can be developed into an African feminist model of peace building which can be appropriated as both a conflict prevention measure and post-conflict reconstruction model aimed at sustaining peace in conflict-prone areas of the continent. Indeed, African women were and continue to be an embodiment of the ethic of care and the moral imagination which is very critical to changing the face and essence of politics to be more human-centred. This is expected to have some positive significance for conflict prevention, resolution and peace building in the continent.

In Chapter Four, we undertook an overview of armed and social conflict in the Niger-Delta of Nigeria which manifest in armed confrontations between ethnic/youth militias and the federal government, community versus oil company tensions, community versus community violence and intra community confrontations. Underlying these conflicts is a general crisis of underdevelopment, abject poverty, environmental despoliation and other human security vulnerabilities which combine to threaten the existence of the Niger-Delta peoples. While examining the disproportionate impact of the regions' crisis on women, the chapter presents its findings on women, politics and peace building from a survey of 140 women in the three case studies of Igbokoda, Odi and Uzere.

Evidently, even though women in the study areas in the Niger-Delta are generally not combatants in the ongoing armed conflict in the region, they are equally victims of the violence through rape, torture and physical abuse which they suffer from all parties to the region's crisis. They also suffer a disproportionate burden of the crisis of underdevelopment which plaques the region given their familial roles. Apart from confirming that women are disproportionately affected by the conflicts in the study areas, the study also confirmed that women respond to and thus impact on conflict positively. This is based on an attitude to conflict that is different from that of men. For example, while men view conflict as 'struggle or war which must be fought', women tend to see it as 'necessary evils in communities' and only give in to or endorse war after all avenues for peaceful resolution of conflict have been exhausted, and even then, they tend to hope for and pursue prospects for peace during war (Interview with Mrs Iyoha, 13 June 2007). Generally, because they end up being the worst victims most often, women tend to focus on the cessation of violence and the rebuilding of their homes, families and communities (FGD with Odi women, June 12 2007). As confirmed in the study areas, women's peace techniques in the Niger-Delta, depending on the particular type of conflict, include prayers, moral suasion, representations, meetings, non-violent protests and threat or use of their ultimate traditional arsenal against injustice, tyranny, and misrule: the shame of nakedness.

On political participation, the study showed that women's direct involvement in formal governance is low at the community/grass roots and local government levels of government. This is indicative of the low level of women's political representation in

the region at the state and national levels of governance. For example, about 60% of the respondents are not involved in the running of their daily community affairs. Also, 92% of the sample population in the Niger-Delta felt women were marginalised in the region's politics. This is not consistent with the commonly-held belief that traditionally women are recognised and accepted as active participants in the political processes of their communities, an indication that westernisation of the region's political culture has taken firm roots.

In terms of involvement in peace building, which is also a function of political participation; women in the Niger-Delta are marginalised in the peace processes of their various communities after conflict. This is in spite of the reality of the disproportionate impact of conflict on them and the fact that they make positive contributions towards peace in times of conflict. For instance, 91% of respondents to questions on the nature of women's involvement in peace processes said they were excluded from the peace processes that followed the cessation of violence at different times in their communities. The women frowned at their marginalisation from the peace table as 89% of the total study population in the region believed that more women in politics would ensure lasting peace in their communities and in Niger-Delta.

On a more positive note, the study shows that women's participation and organisation at community levels of governance is more effective in addressing their concerns compared to their representation at the state level<sup>129</sup>. This is because at the community level, the women know and choose those who they feel can best represent their interests as women. 70% of the 109 women who responded to the question were sure, and cited examples, of women in their communities who made a difference in governance and service delivery when they held office and of those who still hold public office. Therefore, even though, as our sample shows, women's participation at rural grassroots level is low in the Niger-Delta, the qualitative impact of the few who participate are thought to be very effective in addressing women's concerns. Accordingly, a significant majority agreed there should be more women in politics and believe that their increased representation can actually yield peace in their

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<sup>129</sup> For example, see Figure 13 for the testimonies of the 40% of respondents who said they are involved in community decision making

communities and in the wider region. For these women, it was not just a question of fairness and numbers; it was also about what value women could bring into politics that would have qualitative impact governance, peace building and development.

Some of the lessons that emerged from the study include widely held perceptions that women are more empathetic to community needs than men, adopt a collaborative and accommodative approach to politics, women by their nature as mothers are peace agents, and that women are less corrupt than men. Other more measurable lessons include the fact that women are known to have been more result-oriented than youths, elders and traditional rulers in the people's struggle against state oppression and MNOC exploitation in the Niger-Delta. For instance, in all documented cases of women's protests and other peaceful engagements with oil companies, the women have always ended getting more concessions for their communities than was previously the case when men and youths (mostly males) were engaging on their behalf.

In Chapter Five, an overview of conflict in KwaZulu-Natal indicates that political violence and social conflict remain endemic in South Africa's most populous, third poorest and most politically violent province. While it is bedevilled with assorted forms of conflict, such forms of conflict as political violence, taxi-rank wars and poverty are the most prominent ones in KwaZulu-Natal and they are inter-related. For instance, historical political struggles between the two dominant parties in the province, the IFP and the ANC, have always been a defining feature of conflict in the province and in certain cases of taxi-related violence; the main actors have been same opposing actors in the political struggle (Nongoma). Apart from the fact that this violence often leaves the involved communities poorer, the people's poverty has always been exploited to their support. Although wide scale armed violence has abated in the last 7 years (between 2002 and 2009), the socio-economic effects linger and exacerbate poverty in a province bedevilled by vast human security vulnerabilities. To determine women's place in the conflict, politics and peace-building nexus, the study used three conflict cases of Richmond, Shobashobane and Nongoma as study areas.

Like in the Niger-Delta, findings from these study areas show that women

disproportionately share the burden of social and armed forms of conflict in the KwaZulu-Natal. For instance, women in the province bear the brunt of HIV and AIDS more than men, have less secure employment than men, earn lower incomes and have less access to formal education. Also, in terms of armed conflict, 74.5% (102) of the respondents who were around when the conflict started said they were affected by the conflict and reported losses ranging from loss of property, husband, sons to relatives and friends and livelihoods. Other losses which the study grouped together included psychological trauma arising from rape, physical abuse and torture by youth groups and armed men on different sides of the conflict. According to Ms Baphilile Skhosana, “though men die more than women from war, women are usually the worst victims as they are left to bear the after-effects of violence including having to conceal the emotional trauma of sexual abuse” (Interview on 31/05/06). Therefore, the reality that women face with regards to conflict is that even though they are not part of the decision-making processes of their communities that leads to the conflict in the first place, they inevitably become part of conflict as they are left to bear the consequences, some of which linger on till the end of their natural lives.

On the other hand, as conflict impacts on women, so do they impact on conflict, albeit positively. For instance, 68% of our total respondents reported a positive attitude towards conflict resolution, peaceful co-existence and development rather than being vengeful, politically apathetic or withdrawn from the rest of society. According to Mrs. Dorah Cele, wife of the *Induna* (traditional Chief) of Ezinqoleni, during the Shobashobane massacre women rallied around themselves, meeting regularly in the Chief’s palace to strategise on “how to end the violence, rebuild the community and sustain peaceful coexistence” (Interview with Mrs Cele, 31 May, 2006).

Ironically, despite the impact of conflict on women and how they, in turn, positively impact on conflict, women are conveniently excluded from peace and post-conflict reconstruction processes. For example, 70% of the 144 women who responded to questions on the nature of women’s involvement in peace processes said they were excluded from the peace processes that followed the cessation of violence at different times in their communities. This is antithetical to the positive contributions they make towards peaceful resolutions during conflict and their efforts towards community building and development as shown in the high level and quality of women’s

representation in community politics<sup>130</sup>.

When compared with the percentage of women's representation (26%) at the provincial parliament, women's direct involvement in governance is higher (58%) at the community/grassroots level in the study areas combined. A plausible reason for this is that in the communities, quotas are not required to mainstream women into the public space, whereas at the provincial level, the political party quota system is the main instrument of gender mainstreaming in politics. However, despite the relatively high level of women's involvement in decision-making at the community level, only 27 (18%) of the 146 women who responded to the question on the level of women's participation in community decision-making agreed that women were "equally involved" as men. Also, 10 (6.8%) of them thought that women were "very involved". Though implying a contradiction, what came out from a further probing of this issue was that these respondents still saw women's participation as an instrument of legitimising male hegemony. This is a form of women's marginalisation in politics, which, in this case, is perpetuated by women themselves. It also leaves a question mark on the effectiveness of numbers (critical mass) as opposed to quality (critical acts), as, despite the fact that women are usually the majority in community meetings, they either do not hold real power or are still suffering from age-long socialisation that they (women) are not capable leaders.

Generally, on a positive note, respondents used the good performance of the few women mentioned to justify the need for more women in politics and the effect this would have on lasting peace in their communities and in the province as a whole. For instance, a significant 72.2% of respondents believe that more women in politics would ensure lasting peace in their communities and in the wider KZN province. Although the cell sizes showing how women specifically impacted positively on government-initiated peace processes are too small to make any meaningful analysis, it does serve as an indicator of the values and contributions women can bring and

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<sup>130</sup> The study shows that women's direct involvement in governance is relatively high at the community/grass roots and local government (municipal) levels. For example, of the 149 women who responded to the question on their involvement in community decision-making, 86 (58%) indicated that they were directly involved in decision-making processes in their communities.

make if they form a critical mass in peace-building processes. Like in the Niger-Delta, these values include empathy, interconnectedness, collaboration, tolerance and incorrigibility. However, the study notes that in both regions, there were ‘women spoilers’ who did not believe that women were marginalised in politics and yet another category who felt more women in politics would not make the expected difference in peace building and development. Together, they add to the ‘women as their own obstacle’ discourse. This is a cause for concern because there could be more women out there who strongly feel the same way. By expressing such sentiments, they could act as spoilers to gender balancing in politics. However, this study did not discountenance the fact that this kind of thinking could be the long-term result of the masculinisation of society and politics which has successfully socialised women into thinking and feeling incapable of effective politicking.

In Chapter Six, we attempted a comparative and statistical analysis of our findings from all the study areas in our two case studies (KwaZulu-Natal and the Niger-Delta). The essence of the statistical analysis was to probe our findings deeper with a view to producing new knowledge on the characteristics (predictors) of women who are most likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would enhance peace building in their communities and thus confirm our hypothesis. The analysis confirms the study’s hypothesis that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in the study areas. For example, there was a statistically significant ( $\chi=90.250$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $s=.000$ ) difference between the proportion of respondents (79.7%;  $n=204$ ) who believe ‘more women in politics would cause lasting peace in communities’ and the proportion that does not (20.3%;  $n=52$ ). Also, it indicates that the statistically significant variables that impact on the hypothesis are marital status, education, place and age. For instance, women within the 30-39 years age bracket and married women are more likely to hold the perception that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in their individual communities. The conclusion we can draw from the ‘place of interview’ variable is that although there could be general patterns in the respondent’s perceptions that more women in politics would enhance the peace process in their individual communities, the peculiarities of conflict in each area and the role women played in causing conflict is a factor that impacts on that perception as Shobashobane shows. Also, with statistically significant ( $\chi=9.813$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differences in the data, it can be concluded that respondents who agreed that women

in positions of governance had made a significant difference in service delivery and governance are more likely to hold the view that more women in politics could cause lasting peace in communities.

An emergent issue from these analyses that speaks to our hypothesis is the failure of the extant male-dominated politics, which underscores practical considerations for feminising politics and peace building. For example, we learn that in the face of the failure of politics to guarantee human security and prevent armed conflict, enabling more women into politics to bring in a feminist perspective is a most veritable panacea. Since the feminist perspective is defined by a feminist ethic of care and values inter-relationships, connectedness and empowerment from which springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love, it has potentials for peace building.

We have also learnt that bringing more women into politics is not enough in itself. These women must come into politics as women and bring in the vital relational values that are the missing link between conflict and peace. This appears to be the reason why women politicians in KwaZulu-Natal are perceived to be failing to deliver despite their significant political representation. Therefore, to enable women come into politics as women, the processes of mainstreaming women into politics must be such that enable them, especially those in rural areas, to determine and choose their representatives. It must also be such that enables women to reinvent and nurture an African feminist base and ideology that is rooted in African cultural realities. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this is one of the internal variables that have compromised women's political participation in post-colonial Africa. It has also constrained the full development of capitalism in the continent and the potential that full-blown capitalism has for gender equality<sup>131</sup>. Apart from being a useful tool for deconstructing patriarchy, educating men and mobilising women for the challenge of achieving

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<sup>131</sup> See Gordon (1996) who contends that gender equality is often associated with liberal capitalist states where capitalism, having fully developed, embodies individualism, entrepreneurial effort, meritocracy and innovation, which are, with some adjustments, compatible with feminist goals of freeing women from economic, cultural and political discrimination (Gordon, 1996: 9). However, in the African context, she was quick to point out that capitalism's liberal ideology and its potential to support gender equality is limited by a number of factors some of which include internal and external constraints on the full expansion of capitalism in the continent and the inherent contradictions of socio-economic (class) inequalities which capitalism breeds. In her opinion, this challenge requires an alliance not only between capitalism, socialism and feminism, but also between political and cultural ideologies as well as between women and men.

gender equality in post-colonial Africa, an African feminist base also has the utility of creating a female consciousness and confidence with which to approach politics. In this way, it will add the value that women can and should bring to politics and *ipso facto* peace building. The caveat here, as Ake (1996) argues, is that full capitalism and the western cultural baggage (i.e. western feminism) it carries cannot be “imported wholesale” into Africa and expected to fit effectively into the continent’s development efforts. This indeed underscores the imperative of modernising without westernising, combining modern notions of gender equality with progressive indigenous norms and principles to create something that is uniquely African which can be appropriated in politics.

## **7.2 Concluding remarks**

This study underscores the central thesis of the human development/human security and human factor paradigms of development that people are the means and end of the development process<sup>132</sup>. Within this human agency framework, conflict, which is a function of broken relationships, becomes inevitable. However, conflict can be transformed through reconciliation and healing of these relationships to enable sustainable peace. This study contends that a necessary and sufficient condition for such transformation is if critical masses of people with positive human factor traits are part of the governance structures and processes where the decisions to make war are made in the first place. Both the human factor and moral imagination paradigms tell us that beyond a people-centred (human security) approach to development, the quality of people who can make peace and development possible also matter. In other words, there is need to focus on the character traits and human dimensions of people

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<sup>132</sup> According to Terry (2007: 9), the human development approach is a multi-dimensional approach to development that concentrates on people and their ends (what people want from their lives) rather than means (money) and recognises that there is no automatic link between economic growth and human well-being. In tandem with human development, Axworthy (1999), defines human security as safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is a condition of being characterised by freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety or even their lives.... It is an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or government. And still from a people perspective. In theorising on the essence and type of people that can power a development process, Adjibolosoo (1995: 33), defined the human factor as “the spectrum of personality characteristics and other dimensions of human performance that enable social, economic and political institutions to function and remain functional over time”.

who are more likely to make peace and development happen, and appropriate their services accordingly. For example, while according to Adjibolosoo (1995), positive human factor qualities such as integrity, accountability, selflessness and truthfulness can create a fertile environment for good governance and development, Lederach (2005), sees relatedness, collaboration, love, empathy and tolerance as necessary and sufficient factors for creating a fertile environment for peace building.

Our findings show that women in the Niger Delta and KwaZulu-Natal are sufficiently disposed to both the human factor characteristics/dimensions and the moral imagination capacities which make development and peace possible. In other words, as other studies have also shown, women have the required spectrum of personality characteristics and dimensions human abilities that are necessary and sufficient for good governance and peace building (see Nodding, 1989; Soest, 1995; King, 1997; Gagnon, 2003; Ngongo-Mbede, 2003; Ntahobari and Ndayiziga, 2003; Anderlini, 2007). While Lederach (2005) may not have clearly articulated the political dimensions of peace building, the peace process indeed requires a kind of politics which is crucial for its success. This is the politics of responsibility, accountability, tolerance, empathy, accommodation, love, truth-telling and forgiveness. And it is the politics that women generally represent and can bring to bear if they come into politics as women. These are the virtues that bring us to the pregnant moment; the turning point that makes the difference between violent conflict and peace. Applying this to the peace discourse enables us to call attention to the kind of human beings who can make peace and development possible rather than focusing on the kind of institutions, techniques and systems that guarantee peace (Lederach, 2005). Within this human-centred framework, research into the realities and potentials of women, who constitute over half of the world's population, as instruments of a more peaceful world is a worthwhile venture. Based on our findings in respect to the Niger-Delta and KwaZulu-Natal, we can make the following specific conclusions which in themselves can serve as lessons for peace building in other conflict spots in Africa:

- As women are victims of armed conflict, so also they are agents of peace
- Women often articulate conflict and peace in different ways to men based on the ethic of care

- Women are active peace agents as reconciliators and community builders at the informal levels in their communities. They can be used for reconciliatory roles in the peace process, i.e. to break down gender dualism which perpetuates conflict
- Women in partnership with men make peace building more effective than if there are few or no women. Therefore there is a need to mainstream women into politics on an equal basis with men, and men need to be carried along in this project.
- Given the failure of male dominated politics to prevent and manage violent conflict, women need to be encouraged to come into politics as women so that they can bring their own values to bear.
- Based on statistical analysis, some of the positive predictors of the characteristics of women who would hold the opinion or otherwise that more women in politics would enhance peace-building include marital status, education and place of interview (context).

Women's peace agency is rooted in the values of their womanhood and an ethic of care that values relationships, inter-connectedness and empowerment from which springs forth empathy, co-operation, tolerance and love. These values are necessary requirements for amicable resolution of conflict and for sustaining peace. They worked very well in pre-colonial African societies, especially in matriarchal ones, where women had traditional roles in preventing violence, mediating conflicts and reconciling those in conflict. For instance, women in traditional African societies had responsibilities for socialising children to value peaceful co-existence, where ambassadors of peace between warring communities and frequently carried out peace sacrifices and purification/cleansing rites to reintegrate their warriors to civil society. In some of these traditional societies, gender was defined in flexible terms such that allowed men and women to straddle socially constructed male and female spaces. For instance, according to Amadiume (1997), a flexible gender system in pre-colonial Igbo societies in Nigeria was enabled by a flexible language structure which presented "no language or mental adjustment or confusion in references to a woman performing a typical male role" (Amadiume, 1997: 17). Appropriating the utility of a flexible gender system for peace building in Africa, Amisi (2008: 11) contends that the idea of

a flexible gender system provides for a language that allows a formulation of a concept of peace and also of war in gendered terms that approximates the reality of a number of African societies whose gender relations are similar to those of the Ibos that Amadiume studied<sup>133</sup>. In other words, although the idea of flexible gender and language systems may be alien to some African societies that have a different worldview of gender relations, it offers a valuable model of understanding armed conflict and peace, and “it can be a resource for the envisioning of peace even in societies that may not be aware of the idea” (Amisi, 2008: 12). This is more so that in Africa, women are traditionally known to have the critical skills, spiritual and social capital as well as human potential and moral imagination capacity to transform conflict from violence to peace.

However, the potential of women’s peace agency is clogged by their exclusion (by both men and women themselves) from the peace processes of their communities and nation-states. As the study confirms, mainstreaming more women into politics will enhance the peace processes of conflict-prone societies. It is implied that excluding them from politics serves to perpetuate their exclusion from the peace table<sup>134</sup>. In this way, calls for feminising politics with a view to feminising the peace process are a right step in the right direction. The challenge is how to mainstream women into politics in such a way that can enable them bring in those values that have the potential to change the tone and character of politics and prevent armed conflict *ab initio*. And in cases where conflict becomes inevitable, values that can help provide a critical mass of human resources who can transcend the divisiveness of conflict to make peace.

A main challenge in this regard is how to circumvent intra-gender sexism that makes women obstacles to their own empowerment. Although only approximately 20% of the total study sample disagreed with the perception that more women in politics

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<sup>133</sup> See Weir (2008) and Gasa (2008) who also document evidence of women in pre-colonial Southern African societies (i.e. Zulus, Lovendus) assuming what today are strictly defined as ‘male roles’ by engaging in woman to woman marriages, owning cattle (traditional symbol of male power) and fighting wars.

<sup>134</sup> This reinforces Anderlini’s (2007: 58) explanations of why women are absent from formal peace talks. According to her, “the paucity of women in leadership positions in political parties, the state, or non-state groups is perhaps the most pertinent reason for their absence from peace talks”.

would enhance peace building<sup>135</sup>, we are concerned that there are likely to be more women out there who feel this way and could cumulatively become *spoilers* to gender equality in politics and peace-building efforts. Within this discourse, there is also the question of women politicians *defeminising* themselves by acting as men, i.e., assuming behavioural characteristics associated with men, upon coming into political office. This serves to defeat the essence of advocacy for feminising politics based on the values that women can bring in. One lesson we learnt from our deconstruction of pre-colonial gender relations in most African societies is that men and women co-existed in a binary world of patriarchy *versus* matriarchy and patrilineality *versus* matrilineality. However, at the same time, that dualism was defined by responsibility sharing such that gender differences were appreciated and celebrated. As Amadiume (1997) observes, the dialectic relationship African patriarchy and matriarchy was mediated by a non gendered system of roles and statuses that acted as a bridge between them, uniting them under a “non-gendered universalistic term for a common humanity, *nmadu*<sup>136</sup>, human being, person” (Amadiume, 1997, 19). At the risk of being repetitive, we contend that the worldview that under girded gender relations then, and the values that defined women’s active political participation in some of these societies remains relevant today and can be appropriated and developed into a feminist model of peace building in post-colonial Africa.

A significant insight from this study is that men remain critical to calls and efforts towards feminising politics, and *ipso facto*, peace building. According to the famous African-American historian and writer, Lerone Bennett:

Men act out of their images, they respond, not to the situation, but to the situation transformed by the images they carry in their minds. In short, they respond...to the ideas they have of themselves in the situation. The image sees... the image feels...the image acts, and if you want to change a situation you have to change the image men have of themselves and of their situation (Bennett in Chinwezu, 1987: 211)

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<sup>135</sup> They cited different ranges of reasons from women are petty, envious and are equally war mongers as men, to women are more corrupt than men, for their perception that women are not the answer to peace making

<sup>136</sup> This is the Ibo word for *ubuntu* and what it represents in Southern Africa

In postcolonial Africa, the images African men have of themselves as men are distorted images of pre-colonial African masculinities. Like femininities, the original cultural images of manhood have been corrupted over time by the external influences of imperialism, colonialism and now globalisation. Therefore, until men are re-socialised to accept women empowerment as part of the validation of their humanity, and until post-colonial African men begin to see women empowerment as part of African renaissance and not a western imposition, they will continue to be a frontline of resistance against gender equality in any form. In this way, efforts to feminise politics and peace building will continue to grasp at straws. Therefore, African men need a cultural paradigm shift from the present worldview of masculinities that view women as sub-humans to one that acknowledges them as part of a whole web of interdependent relationships without which their own (men's) existence is empty. African men need to reconnect with *ubuntu* -- the moral imagination and understanding of self and other, of taking personal responsibility for their every action and acknowledging the mutuality of human existence. Morrell (2001: 30) suggests that a moral understanding of humanity based on the principle of *ubuntu* (the cornerstone of Desmond Tutu's work as chairperson of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission) was one of the positive fall-outs of the TRC for gender relations: "for many, acceptance and forgiveness have been incorporated into new self-understandings of what it is to be a man (sic)". It is this kind of mental consciousness or attitude that is needed as we seek to emplace sustainable peace and development based on gender equity and justice in all parts of our continent. African men must understand that taking on preventive and caring responsibilities in the face of HIV and AIDS, and generally supporting notions of gender equality will serve to enhance the quality of their own lives since in the long run, as *ubuntu* dictates, men are men because women are and women are women because men are.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

Based on the issues and lessons that emerged from the study and the challenges emerging from our concluding remarks, this study makes the following recommendations, including suggestions for further future studies on the subject of

women, politics, conflict and peace building.

### **7.3.1 Electoral policies to enable women appropriate their own political spaces**

Beyond the calls for feminising politics based on equity, fairness and justice, there is a need to appropriate women's values in politics especially in the face of the failure of male dominated politics to guarantee peace and development in post-colonial Africa. Accordingly, we recommend that women should be allowed their own political spaces where all women, irrespective of social class, education and marital status will be able to participate freely. In this light, we will specifically recommend that all states in Africa amend their constitutions to enable constitutional guarantees for a minimum of 30% of women's political representation in all public decision-making structures in society. This is to cement the gains that a critical mass of women's representation in states like South Africa has made in the last decade. Otherwise, if a leadership less committed to women's empowerment assumes power in the future, they are very likely to erase the gains made by women in terms of political participation, no matter how bland that representation might be today.

Secondly, to maximise women's effectiveness in politics, we recommend that African states adopt a dual electoral system for women that can enable them to vote for male and female candidates separately in the same elections. In other words, women can vote for men but they should have reserve powers to exclusively vote for the women who will take up the 30% guaranteed by the constitution for women. While this is just a budding idea that is not by any means foolproof for now, it can be operated differently in different states depending on their present level of women's representation in politics. In South Africa, for instance, there can be a short time limit to this practice because of its relatively longer experience of a critical mass of women's representation compared to Nigeria for instance. In this scenario, Nigeria can have a longer go at this experimentation until such a time when the idea of women in politics would become a norm and when women would have proved themselves enough to compete openly with men for political positions.

### **7.3.2 Engendering peace building**

The study finds that women are very effective as peace agents at the grass root level, particularly in reconciliation efforts and community development. The implication here is twofold: one, there is a possibility of women assuming certain roles in the peace process which itself could assume a gendered character, and second, it provides an opportunity for reinventing traditional peace building practices which are still relevant for peace building in post-colonial Africa. Accordingly, it is recommended that after peacemaking, in the wake of violent conflict, women should be saddled with reconciliation efforts in order to completely transform violent conflict and the negative relations it spews. Feminising particular peace building roles can be a starting point for eventually feminising other aspects of the peace process such as formal peacemaking and peace keeping.

### **7.3.3 Cultural re-enlightenment of men**

As Chinweizu (1987) have argued, to change the current situation of hegemonic and dangerous masculinities in Africa, African men would need to be mentally decolonised of the patriarchal ideology that informs the conception of women as inferior beings. Through deliberate and systematic projects of cultural engineering (employed using institutions – churches, mosques, traditional organisations), African men can be re-enlightened culturally to see that embracing gender equality is truly African. By identifying and promoting progressive virtues of masculinities, African men are returning to their roots while also laying the foundation for safer, healthier, and more peaceful and productive African communities. According to Nomundo Mseleku, there is need to encourage traditional practices like male circumcision which was a veritable instrument of transmitting progressive masculine behaviour amongst Xhosa men in South Africa as it was used to teach young boys to respect and have regard for women and to be socially responsible in their sexual relations with women (Interview with Mrs. Mseleku, 28/01/08).

### 7.3.4 Co-parenting

The family is the building block of society; therefore, the quality of people (men and women) a society has is dependent on the character of childrearing. Thus, the origin of patriarchy can be traced to childrearing in varied cultural and social contexts. According to Balbus (1987), the pre-Oedipal experiences of a male child in “mother-dominated” childrearing presupposes him to assume oppositional stances and withdrawal attitudes towards their mothers in the absence of a parent of his gender (father) who he can identify with (Balbus, 1987: 110-127). This scenario is aggravated by the fact that in mother-dominated childrearing, the mother is also the ‘first overwhelming adversary’ of the will of the child, the constant representative of authority which he always confronts, eventually loathes and must resist and overcome if he is to become a ‘man’. This hatred of the mother is subsequently “transferred to all those who came to represent her, i.e. to women in general. And the exclusion of women from positions of authority outside the family reflects the terror of ever again experiencing the humiliating submission to the authority of the mother within it” (Balbus, 1987: 113). Balbus therefore contends that since the mother is both the source of the satisfaction and the frustration of the imperious needs of the infant, “co-parenting is the key that can unlock the possibility of a society in which the nurturance and caring that have thus far been largely restricted to the arena of the family come to inform the entire field of human interaction” (Balbus, 1987: 119).

African men should be socialised to get involved in the rearing of their children on an equal basis with women in order to dismantle the basis of patriarchy in society and in the process enthrone a new kind of civilisation; a civilisation without domination where the moral imagination that enables *ubuntu*, *ujamaa* or *nmadu* will guide the interaction between men and women and where men will feel free to openly discuss their sexuality with women and feel the need to identify with rather than oppose their feminine side as a way of reaffirming their masculinity. This is imperative considering that gender equality in private and public life is both a necessary and sufficient factor for peace building.

### 7.3.5 Suggestion (s) for further research

The findings from our logistic regression analysis indicated there is inconsistency between the self-perceived capacity as reflected in the survey and the results. For example, on the one hand, results show that *marital status, length of stay in conflict community, living in study area when conflict started, effects of conflict, and biggest loss due to conflict* variables failed to agree with the a priori expectations. And not only were the coefficients associated with *place* and *education* found to be statistically significant at 10 percent level, they also agreed with the *a priori* expectation.

On the other hand, amid the self-perceived capacity, results show that all log-odds regression coefficients associated with the variables *Have women in positions of governance made any significant difference in service delivery and governance in your community, occupation* and *Level of participation in public decision making in your community* were statistically significant at respectively 1, and 5 percent levels but appear with the wrong signs which failed to agree with the a priori expectations. We recommend that a possible resolution of this problem is possible through a computation of new independent variables for further analysis, which in our case, is constrained by time. This notwithstanding, it may be observed that the inconsistency highlights the problem of relying on self-reporting as empirical basis for conclusions in social research. As a way out of this challenge, we suggest response authentication; a mechanism that is built into the construction of the research instrument from the outset of the project. Based on our hypothesis and study objectives, this is beyond the scope of this thesis, and for now it may suffice to rely on the results of the chi square analysis which relates to our hypothesis, with the proviso that further research needs to be done to confirm the significance of the observed predictors in this study. For example, how significant is education, marital status or occupation a predictor of women who are most likely to perceive that more women in politics would enhance peace making and those who do not? Also, in another dimension, further research can also ask questions around the extent to which variables such as age, education and motherhood experience impacts on women's political performance in service delivery. A statistical analysis of these variables will definitely shed new light onto

women's world and provide a nuanced understanding of women's potentials as good governors and as peacemakers.

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### **Interviews and place:**

Chief Lepe, April 2007, Igbokoda

Chief (Mrs) J. Ilara, April 2007, Igbokoda

Dr (Mrs) Nonhlanhla Mkhize, May 2005, Pietermaritzburg

Dr (Mrs) Okolocha, 2007, University of Benin, Benin City

Head, Department of Community Safety and liaison, October 2007, Pietermaritzburg

Head, Department of Housing, October 2007, Pietermaritzburg

Head, Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, October 2007,  
Pietermaritzburg

Head, Department of Works, October 2007, Pietermaritzburg

Hon (Mrs) Esohe Jacobs, Edo State House of Assembly, Benin City

Lalla Vasha, July, 2007, Pietermaritzburg

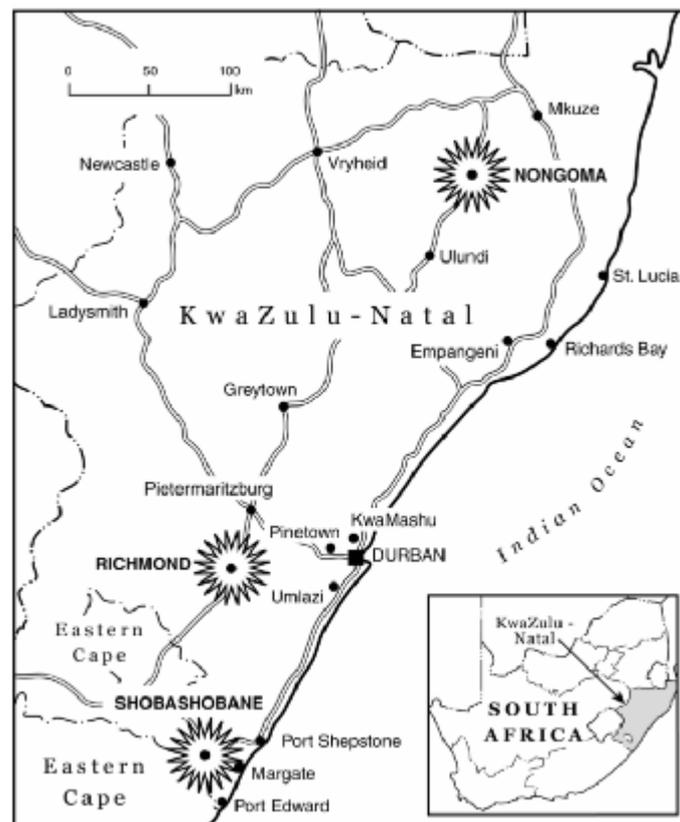
Madam Amafadieie, June 2007, Odi  
Minister (MEC), Public Works, October 2007, Pietermaritzburg  
Mrs E Iyoha, 2007, Oredo Local Government Area, Benin City  
Mrs O Orimisan, April 2007, Igbokoda  
Mrs Esejuwon, April 2007, Igbokoda  
Mrs E Ewarawon, April 2007, Igbokoda  
Mrs Kumasiere, June 2007, Odi  
Mrs. Mseleku, January, 2008, Pietermaritzburg  
Mrs A. Ogburu, June 2007, Odi  
Mrs. R. Umukoro, June 2007, Uzere  
Mr Jabulani Sithole, May 2005, Pietermaritzburg  
Mr Isreal Akportha, June 2007, Uzere  
Mr Nyembe, August 2006, Nongoma  
Ms B Skhosana, May 2006, Shobashobane  
Ms D Cele, May 2006, Shobashobane  
Ms E. Zulu, August 2006, Shobashobane  
Ms Gugu Hlomuka, August 2005, Richmond  
Ms N. Ntombela, September 2006, Nongoma  
Pearl Sokhulu, September 2007 Pietermaritzburg  
Wife of the Amayenabo (King) of Od, June 2007, Odi  
One anonymous (rape victim), May 2006, Shobashobane  
One anonymous (rape victim), August, 2006, Nongoma  
Two anonymous (rape victims), June 2007, Odi

### **Focus Group Discussions**

10 Women in Igbokoda, Ondo State, Niger-Delta, 2007  
15 Women in Nongoma, Northern area of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006  
10 Women in Odi, Bayelsa State, Niger-Delta, 2007  
15 Women in Shobashobane, Southern area of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006  
10 Women in Uzere, Delta State, Niger-Delta, 2007  
15 male students of Africa in the World, Group II class, Humanities Access Programme, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006  
25 female students of Politics 303 class, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

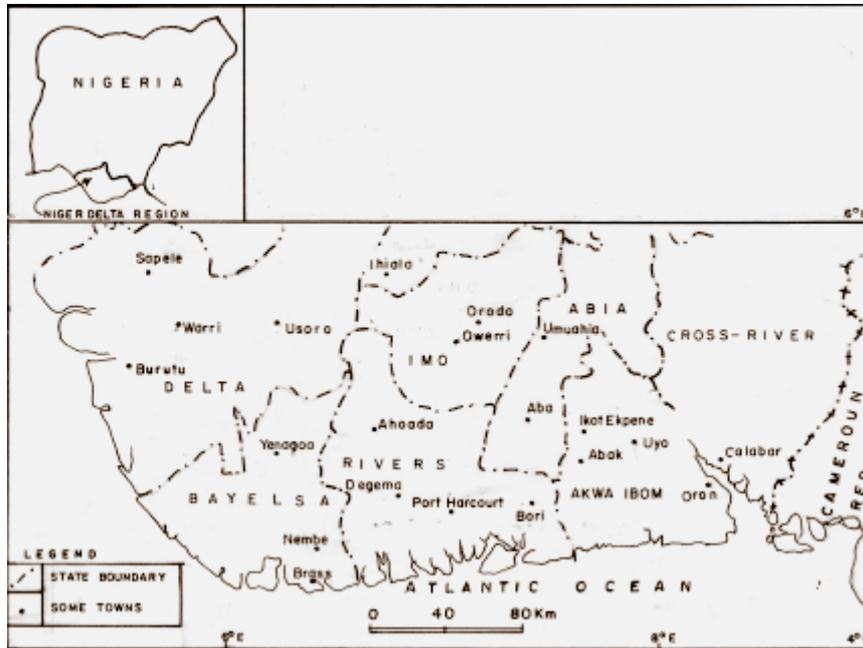
## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of KwaZulu-Natal showing study areas



Source: Taylor (2002: 4)

Appendix 2: Map of the Niger-Delta showing states where study areas are located (Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo)



Source: Ibeanu (2000: 21)