

**Towards a Theology of Peace-building in the Democratic Republic
of Congo (DRC): the Contribution of Christian Women**

ESTHER LUBUNGA KENGE

SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY IN GENDER AND RELIGION

SCHOOL OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND CLASSICS

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

PIETERMARITZBURG

2015

DECLARATION

This thesis, unless specified in the text, is my own original work; I therefore declare that I have not submitted it to any other institution for examination.

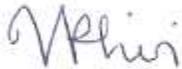


ESTHER LUBUNGA KENGE

10th January 2015

DATE

As a candidate's supervisor I hereby approve this thesis for submission



PROFESSOR ISABEL APAWO PHIRI

6th January 2015

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis,

To the memories of women and children who died in the Democratic Republic of Congo because of the ongoing conflicts and whose blood speaks loud enough to bring peace in the DRC

To the memory of my late father Ngulu Kiama and my late mother Mbuilu Panzu who believed that study is the tool for women's empowerment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The achievement of this project is owed to God who sustained me to write this thesis.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to many people who have in one way or another contributed to make this work possible.

To my supervisor, Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri, for her guidance and for her special advice. I appreciate all the time she took reading my work despite her tight schedule.

To Professor, Sarojini Nadar, Beverly Haddad, Professor Isabel Phiri and all the female Lecturers at the University of KwaZulu Natal, especially in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics for their encouragement. Their teachings and critical thinking inspired me to reflect on issues that oppress women and children and make a contribution toward peace-building by Christian women in the DRC.

To Dr Fulata Moyo, for allowing me to be part of the Movers for Gender Justice and their involvement in struggles for peace, justice and equity worldwide; I say thank you.

To all the lecturers in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, including the late Prof. Steve de Gruchy, Prof. Raymond S Kumalo and Prof. Gerald West, I express my appreciation for their contribution to my training and the realisation of this piece of work. I enjoyed doing theology in African context, as promoted by the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics which is one of the best institutions on the continent.

I am grateful to the leadership of the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics and to the University of KwaZulu-Natal in general, for giving me the opportunity to participate in the exchange programme with the University of Oslo in Norway for one year. My experience there opened up my mind to issues that are faced by people in Europe and the relevance of Contextual Theology beyond the African continent.

My gratitude goes to the administration of the university and to all my fellow students who contributed to my training.

I am thankful to the ScholarLeaders for they supported me during my study for the first three years. I believe that without their support it could have been difficult for me to have completed my studies. May God continue to use them to support more women and men from disadvantaged nations.

I am grateful to Bishop Zwelisha Shembe of the Free Methodist Church of Southern Africa and to members of the Ubunye church for spiritual support and warm fellowship. They have been my extended family all the time during my stay in South Africa.

To my brothers and sisters, to my nephews and nieces, to Charlotte and Bernard Muhanzu, I say thank you very much for your encouragement and every type of support you provided me to make my studies successful.

Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to my husband Lubunga W'Ehusha, for his tremendous love and support.

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to define a theology of peace that can be a driving force behind the motivation of Christian women to be involved in the process of peace-building in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In fact the DRC has been for many years a theatre of conflicts and unprecedented violence against women and children that has affected the fabric of life in every sector. The study aims at answering the following research question: ‘What contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the Kivu region of DRC?’ This study has used two major theories, biblical peace and feminist ecclesiology, which circumscribe the involvement of Christian women in building peace in the DRC.

The study uses a qualitative empirical methodology to address the issue of peace-building in the DRC from a feminist perspective. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, contextual Bible study, written documents and personal observation and experience. A group of five local women’s fellowships, from the most influential denominations affiliated to the *Eglise du Christ au Congo*—ECC (National Council of Churches in the DRC), was selected for group discussion and bible study. Individual interviews were conducted with six leaders of women’s fellowships, eight pastors and three members of independent organizations. In addition, the President of the national office of *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (FPP) and the President of the provincial office of the ECC-North Kivu shared their views on the situation of the conflict and their contribution towards the restoration of peace.

The analysis of data has revealed that Christians could make a difference in addressing the situation of conflict in the DRC, mainly conflicts that involve local communities. However, the majority of the population claiming to be Christians do not display Christian ethics and values in handling conflicts because of tribal and ethnic ties, divisions among Christian denominations and weaknesses in the teaching of God’s principles of peace-building. The story of Abigail encouraged women to be courageous and bold in order to rise up to the challenge of restoring peace in a patriarchal society dominated by violence caused by male arrogance and intolerance. The contextual Bible study of the story of Abigail provided a number of Christian values that are vital for peace building. These include justice, forgiveness, humility, valuing life and avoiding bloodshed and self-avenging.

This study argues that a theology of peace that cuts across all cultures and denominations should be rooted in the above Christian values. To foster such a theology of peace-building among women at the grassroots level, it was suggested to cast the above Christian values in a form of a creed or hymn that women could declare or sing regularly in their meetings as a commitment to live up to their faith and act upon it. By so doing Christian women can contribute to the process of peace-building in the DRC.

ACRONYMS AND ABREVIATION

AIC	African Initiated Churches
AFDL	Alliance de forces Démocratiques de libération
CMLC	Communauté Méthodiste Libre au Congo
CNDP	Congrès national pour la défense du peuple
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECC	Eglise du Christ au Congo
IDC	Inter- Congolese Dialogue
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaise
FDLR	Democratic Forces for liberation of Rwanda
FECCLAHA	Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa
FFP	Fédération des Femmes Protestantes
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MCSA	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
MIB	Mission d'Immigration des Banyarwanda
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontière
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
RFP	Rwanda Patriotic Front
SAUSSC	Southern African Universities Social Sciences Conference
UNDW	United Nations Decade for Women
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
WCC	World Council of Churches

MAP OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



MAP OF THE KIVU REGION



LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1 Sampling, Participants	104
Table 5.2 Church Members Focus Groups	106
Table 5.3 Inventory of Sampling	112
Table 5.4 Data Collection Methods Applied	125
Table 5.5 Comparative processes of qualitative data analysis	127

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	vii
MAP OF THE DRC	viii
MAP OF THE KIVU REGION	ix
LIST OF TABLE	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE STUDY	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Rationale Motivation	2
1.3. Background	3
1.3.1. The History of war in the DRC	3
1.3.2. Women experience of peace	5
1.4. Preliminary Literature Review	8
1.4.1. Literature on women and peace	8
1.4.2. Literature on peace in the African Great Lakes Region	9
1.4.3. Literature on peace and the church	11
1.5. Research Problems and Objectives	13
1.6. Theoretical Framework	14
1.6.1. Biblical peace	14
1.6.2. Feminist ecclesiology	15

1.7. Research Design of Brief Research Methodology	16
1.7.1. Research design	16
1.7.2 Study location and population	16
1.7.3. Brief methodology	17
1.8. Conclusion and Outlines of the Study	18
1. CHAPTER TWO: CONFLICTS IN THE KIVU-REGION	20
2.1. Introduction	20
2.2. War and Political Unrest in the History of the DRC	20
2.2.1. Inherited legacy of colonialism	21
2.2.2. Incompetency of post-colonial government	25
2.2.2.1. Incompetency of the leadership after independence	25
2.2.2.2. The Rise of Mobutu Sese Seko’s dictatorship	29
2.3. Congolese War and its Settlement in the Eastern DRC	31
2.3.1. Spill over from Rwanda Burundi genocide	31
2.3.2. War and illegal enrichment	33
2.3.3. Ethnic rivalry in the eastern DRC	36
2.4. The Situation of Women in the Eastern DRC	40
2.4.1. Congolese women during the Colonial period (1885-1960)	40
2.4.2. Congolese women after independence and under Mobutu’s regime	41
2.4.3. Current situation of women in the eastern DRC	43
2.4.4. Why are atrocities carried out against women?	45
2.5. Conclusion	48
CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGY OF PEACE	50

3.1. Introduction	50
3.2. Defining a Theology of Peace	51
3.2.1. A biblical meaning of peace	51
3.2.2. Peace as relationship with oneself	54
3.2.3. Peace as relationship with God	56
3.2.4. Peace as relationship with nature	57
3.3. Feminist Perspective on Peace	59
3.4. Pacifism and Historic Peace Churches	61
3.4.1. Use of the sword	62
3.4.2. Conscientious objection	64
3.4.3. Moderate Anabaptists	64
3.5. Just War	66
3.6. Just Peace-making	68
3.7. Eschatological Peace	71
3.8. Conclusion	75
CHAPTER FOUR: FEMINIST THEOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY	77
4.1. Introduction	77
4.2. Understanding Feminism	78
4.3. Feminist Theology	82
4.4. African Women's Theologies	87
4.4.1. Narrative theology	88
4.4.2. Feminist cultural hermeneutics	90
4.4.3. Advocacy	91
4.4.4. Communal theology	93

4.5. Feminist Ecclesiology	95
4.5.1. Women being church	95
4.5.2. African women and the mission of the church	98
4.6. Conclusion	100
CHAPTER FIVE: RESARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY	104
5.1. Introduction	104
5.2. Sampling	105
5.2.1. Women from local churches	106
5.2.1.1. Free Methodist Church (Communauté Méthodiste Libre au Congo)	
CMLC	107
5.2.1.2. Mennonite Brethren Church	
(Communauté des Frères Mennonites au Congo) CFMC	107
5.2.1.3. Communauté des Eglises Pentecotistes en Afrique Centrale	
(CEPAC)	108
5.2.1.4. Communauté des Eglises Libre Pentecotistes en Afrique (CELPA)	108
5.2.1.5. Assemblies of God (Communaute des Assemblées de Dieu au Congo)	
(CADC)	108
5.2.2. Leaders of women’s fellowships and the Federation	109
5.2.2.1. National President of FFP	109
5.2.2.2. Regional office of FFP	109
5.2.2.3. Leaders of local women fellowship	110
5.2.3. The gate keepers: heads of denominations or churches	110
5.2.3.1. Regional President of ECC (National Council of Churches)	
in the Province of Northern Kivu	110

5.2.3.2. Ministers and leaders of churches	111
5.2.4. Independent organizations	112
5.3. Data Collection	114
5.3.1. In-depth interview	115
5.3.1.1. Interview with pastors and heads of churches	116
5.3.1.2 Interview with leaders of women fellowships	117
5.3.2. Focus groups	118
5.3. 2.1. The Rape of Tamar	120
5.3.2.2. Abigail and David	121
5.3.3. Questionnaires	122
5.3.4. Documents analysis	123
5.3.4.1. Primary sources	123
5.3.4.2. Secondary sources	124
5.3.5. Personal experience and observation	126
5.4. Data Analysis	127
5.5. Ethical Considerations	129
5.6. Limitations	131
5.7. Conclusion	133
CHAPTER SIX: WOMEN AND PEACE BUILDING IN THE DRC	135
6.1. Introduction	135
6.2. Role of the church in peace-building	136
6.2.1. Role of local churches	137
6.2.2. Role of regional and national office of the <i>Eglise du Christ au Congo</i>	142
6.2.2.1. Demobilisation of children soldiers	144

6.2.2.2. Networking in the African Great Lakes Region	146
6.2.2.3. Prophetic Voice and advocacy of the church	147
6.2.2.4. Reconciliation among members of the ECC	149
6.3. Involvement of Women in Peace-building	150
6.3.1. View point of men	151
6.3.2. View point of women	153
6.3.2.1. National office of FFP	154
6.3.2.2. Regional office of FFP	157
6.3.2.3. Local women’s fellowships	158
6.4. Challenges to Women Intervention	161
6.4.1. Low level of education	161
6.4.2. Divisions in the community	163
6.4.3. Exclusion from decision-making	164
6.4.4. Lack of effective leadership	166
6.5. Conclusion	167
CHAPTER SEVEN: THEOLOGY AND PEACE-BUILDING	169
7.1. Introduction	169
7.2. View of Respondents Regarding Theology and Peace	170
7.2.1. Loyalty to one’s ethnic group	173
7.2.2. Plurality of churches	175
7.2.3. Lack of discipleship	177
7.3. Contextual Bible Study	179
7.4. Major Issues that Emerged from the Story of Abigail	181
7.4.1. Understanding the biblical story	181

7.4.2. Abigail’s endeavour to bring peace	184
7.4.3. Abigail’s strategy	185
7.4.4. Application of the story of Abigail to the situation in the DRC	189
7.4.4.1. Parallels between the story of Abigail and the situation in the DRC	189
7.4.4.2. How this story could empower women in the DRC	191
7.4.4.3. Action plan that may help Women address the situation	193
7.5. Formulating a Theology of Peace	194
7.5.1. Courage	195
7.5.2. Humility	196
7.5.3. Forgiveness	197
7.5.4. Refrain from shedding human blood	200
7.5.5. Refrain from avenging oneself	202
7.6. Defining a Theology of Peace	204
7.7. Conclusion	205
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	207
8.1. Introduction	207
8.2. Summary	207
8.3. Theological Conclusions	210
8.4. Further Research	213
BIBLIOGRAPHY	215
APPENDICES	231
Appendix 1. Research questions for leaders of women’s fellowships (Focus Group)	231

Appendix 2: Research questions for pastors/church leaders	232
Appendix 3: Contextual Bible Study for Women Focus groups	233
Appendix 4: Consent form for church leaders	234
Appendix 5: Consent form for members of women's federation	236
Ethical Clearance letter	238

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The conflict in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as part of the overall instability in the entire African Great Lakes Region—Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC – has appeared in the headlines of newspapers and magazines all over the world more than any other event in Central Africa. The international community has failed thus far to stop the war and the tribal conflicts in the region despite the presence of many peacekeepers and various organizations, and lot of funds poured in by the international community. This failure may be partly attributed to the fact that the focus of the strategies to bring peace to the region is on social, economic and political factors in order to end the war and reconcile various groups, but the theological element, which is significant in shaping the cultures and worldviews of people at the grassroots level, is often disregarded.¹ Many unsuccessful seminars and workshops are often held with various actors in the conflict to curb the consequences of war, such as poverty, murder and life-threatening sexual violence against the vulnerable. Nonetheless, durable peace in the eastern DRC remains a dream since recurrent conflicts and sexual violence dim the hope of the population for a bright future.

‘Ordinary people’ are used to trading their goods with those of other ethnic groups internally and across the borders of neighbouring countries for a living; but when there is political insecurity their business crumbles. It is therefore vital that a climate of respect, mutual acceptance and free communication is maintained among the communities for their well-being. Peace is what villagers lack the most, as various peace agreements signed between the governments and different armed groups have not yet succeeded in stopping violence and conflicts.² People at the grassroots level deplore that all national and international efforts to stop

¹A recent study done by Bernard Noel Rutikanga, “Struggle for Healing at the Grassroots” in Mary Ann Cejka and Thomas Bamat (eds), *Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2003,132-165, shows that though Christianity is the dominating religion in Rwanda, people evoke their faith less in their effort or motivation for making peace.

² In January 2009, a joint operation between Rwanda and the DRC was launched in the Northern Kivu region to stop the offensive of one of the armed groups – CNDP - which caused unrest in the region. The commandant was

conflicts have led thus far to a fragile peace which does not lessen enmity and apprehension among villagers. It is evident that most of these initiatives come from above or outside of the community, to be imposed on those who are at the bottom. This study is designed to address the problem at the bottom, for a number of reasons, given here below.

1.2 Rationale and Motivation

The purpose of this study is to envision, from a woman's perspective, how a theology of peace that cuts across all divisions and cultures can contribute to bringing sustainable and durable peace to the community. What do we mean by a theology of peace?

The theology of peace builds on lessons learned from Liberation Theology's tradition, but departs from its Christocentric focus by asserting principles, values, and ethical commitments across different religions and spiritual traditions that are essential to comprehensive peace-making. It sees peace, theologically, as the constant recreation of the harmony between God and humans, between humans themselves, and with nature.³

Following the above definition, peace should theologically seek among other things, harmony between human beings. This harmony has been missing for years in the Kivu region. I have felt compelled to carry out this study for three main reasons. (1) As a woman from the eastern part of DRC I identify myself with and share the agony of my sisters who have suffered for years from sexual violence, have been mourning family members and have been witnessing hostility toward neighbours because of persistent conflicts. (2) Materials that are abundantly spread on websites all over the world about the war and its consequences in the region are almost exclusively produced by foreign organizations which have funds and expertise to conduct research. I would like in this study to let the voice of indigenous women speak out of their experience and share their knowledge of the phenomenon. I feel well-equipped through my training as an African woman theologian to write and publish our stories. (3) I have noticed that despite the majority of the population claiming to be believers whose core values are based on biblical principles, theology has been overlooked by those who draw up strategies for making peace in the region.

declared to be under arrest in Rwanda and his troops re-integrated into the national army. Yet killing and instability are still present and many villagers are internally displaced.

³ What is the Theology of Peace? In Culture, Spirituality & Theology of Peace <http://fssca.net/peace/project/general/theology.html> accessed 10/02/2010

This study would like to fill the gap and demonstrate that spirituality and pragmatic peace-building should go hand in hand and that the Christian women from different denominations constitute key actors in restoring sustainable peace in the region. One needs to consider the background of the issue in order to understand why women should get involved in bringing change to the current situation.

1.3 Background

The background to this study explores the history of war and conflict in the DRC and what women have been doing to build peace.

1.3.1 The history of war in the DRC

Since the end of colonization in 1960, the DRC has never experienced lasting peace. The country is often the theatre of inter-ethnic conflicts and invasions from foreign armies. In his analysis of the war in the DRC, Herbert Weiss (2000:22) considers the instability in the country from the end of Belgian colonial rule and the struggle for independence as among the historical causes of conflicts in the DRC. He mentions the lack of trained leaders (only 20 secular university graduates in 1960), the assassination of Lumumba in 1961 followed by the exile of his allies e.g. Kabila who would soon become chief rebel and successor to President Mobutu. To the above list of historical causes Michael Nest adds, “The pattern of resource dependence established under Belgian colonial rule, combined with the absence of a democratically accountable regime during the independent era, caused the weakening and fragmentation of the Zairian state” (Nest 2006:17). This is true as one considers the overall situation in the country but it becomes more evident if one considers the eastern part of Congo in particular. This region has been politically unstable since the year of independence and people wonder if long-term peace will ever be possible in the Kivu region. Its location in the Great Lakes Region exposes the province to being affected by any trouble which occurs in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. It also allows easy penetration of foreign soldiers from neighbouring countries.⁴ Furthermore, the abundance of mineral resources in the region has often attracted economic predators to create political

⁴ Prior to the genocide of 1994, groups of refugees from Rwanda settled in the Eastern Congo during the waves of ethnic conflicts and mass killing which took place in 1959, 1960 and 1973, as stated by Bernard Noel Rutikanga in his study on “Struggle for Healing at the Grassroots” in *Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities*. Edited by Mary Ann Cejka and Thomas Bamat. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.

instability in order to plunder the country.⁵ Michael Nest argues, “Various individuals and organizations became cognizant of the profit-making opportunities available to them from their presence in the DRC and their links to foreign militaries deployed there” (2006: 31).

The current political crisis in the Great Lakes region started with the Rwandan and Burundian genocide in 1994, which led thousands of Rwandan and Burundian refugees to find asylum in neighbouring eastern Congo. Weiss acknowledges that, “The genocide in Rwanda has profoundly destabilized the eastern Congo, plunging the area into endless cycles of violence” (Weiss 2000:2). The Tutsi regime which had settled in Rwanda after the genocide, marched into the DRC in 1996 and put an end to the dictatorial regime of the late President Mobutu Sese Seko in May 1997 (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:215). At that time, in order to justify their incursion, a coalition of neighbouring armies with the backing of some Western powers, were pretending to be tracking down Hutu perpetrators of the genocide who were hiding in the DRC.

Later on, the Congolese people realized that the real motivation for the war was bigger than and beyond ending the genocide in Rwanda. This became obvious when the same invading forces launched another attack in 1998, only two years after establishing the late President Laurent Kabila, their Congolese ally, as head of the state in replacement of the Mobutu regime. Nest highlights two discrete factors to the 1998 war:

First, Laurent Kabila sought greater autonomy from the Rwandan and Ugandan patrons who put him in power, a development that displeased Rwandan and Ugandan officials. Second, there was a large number of disgruntled and powerful Congolese who opposed Laurent Kabila and were unhappy with the pace and extent of the government’s economic and political reforms (2006:24).

Ever since, the eastern part of the DRC has been an area of constant conflicts because this second assault opened the door to multiple invasions and armed conflicts that are still operational to date.

⁵ Richard Joseph. “The Reconfiguration of Power in Late Twentieth Century Africa” in Richard Joseph (ed), *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999). In this article Joseph compares the war in the DRC to the struggle for diamonds in Sierra Leone as the country was exposed to foreign exploitation of its immense resources (72-73).

This war has been the most cruel that the country has ever experienced since independence, not only by its high death toll, but also mostly by hideous violations of human rights which have destroyed the lives of many women and girls through gang rape and all kinds of sexual violence. The current situation in the country, especially for women, resembles being under siege. The country counts many widows left by their husbands who were killed during the war as soldiers or civilian victims of massacre. Women and girls who were raped are in many cases discriminated against and rejected by their husbands and families. Therefore, they are forced to live on their own. Even many of those who are married have to find the means to financially support their households because the men are jobless. The situation of many women and girls whose future has been jeopardized by the armed abusers, has rendered women in the region more sensitive to seeking long lasting peace. The situation of women in the eastern DRC is dealt with at length in Chapter Two. However, in the next section I would like to show that women have always worked for peace even when their effort is not noticed or acknowledged.

1.3.2 Women's experience of peace

It is not strange to see women participating actively in seeking peace when they feel that the lives of members of their families are in danger. They draw strength from their experience of life as child-bearers and care-givers to challenge practices, policies and cultures of male-dominated societies. In her article "Women as Peacemakers", Elizabeth Ferris argues:

The role of women in nurturing, building relationships and maintaining the family is central to their identity. This concern with relationships and people often means that women play the role of peacemakers within their families and their communities (in Gnanadason et al. 1996:3).

Ferris' argument does not rule out the fact that some women have participated in bringing conflicts or in nurturing a culture of violence. During the genocide that took place in the Great Lakes Region, especially in Rwanda and Burundi, more than a decade ago, women also participated alongside their male counterparts in mass killings. However, there is not much evidence of cases where the initiative of destroying another ethnic group or clan came from a woman, especially in patriarchal communities such as the one in the Kivu region. In general men are more likely to be violent and to initiate wars than women. Women's predisposition toward peace has been highlighted by the writers of *Images of Women in Peace and War*

(Macdonald, Holder and Ardener, eds, 1987).⁶ This book presents a survey of women from various cultures across several centuries who were involved in promoting peace as they participated in different meetings. More recently the General Assembly of the UN has recognized the role of women in peace-making and declared the years 1975 - 85 as the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (UNDW). The decade ended with a World Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya from 15 - 26 July 1985, called "The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women".⁷ In its resolutions, the involvement of women in all human affairs and their capacity in conflict-solving actions were very much underscored as stated here below:

Universal and durable peace cannot be attained without the full and equal participation of women in international relations, particularly in decision-making concerning peace, including the processes envisaged for the peaceful settlement of disputes under the Charter of the United Nations (The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, para 235).

This declaration adds;

It is evident that women all over the world have manifested their love for peace and their wish to play a greater role in international co-operation, amity and peace among different nations. All obstacles at national and international levels in the way of women's participation in promoting international peace and co-operation should be removed as soon as possible (Para 237).

Hence, the United Nations Decade of Women gave a boost to a movement which had been there for many years among women in various societies, even in Africa. It could be said that this decade marked the recognition of what women have been fighting for, which is: equality, development and peace.

Betty Reardon (1993) in *Women and Peace*, mentions the movement of resistance organized by South African women against the pass laws in 1913 and later on the multi-racial demonstration

⁶ Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden and Shirley Ardener (eds). *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives* (London: MacMillan Education, 1987). A substantial account of women peace movements past and current may be found also in Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro and Lucia Ann McSpadden (eds). *Women, Violence and Non-Violent Change* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996).

⁷ UN Documents Cooperation Circles Gathering a Body of Global Agreements, A/Conf.116/28/Rev. <http://www.un-documents.net/nflsaw.htm> opened on 13/01/2009.

by women in Pretoria on 9 August 1956 against the pass laws, among factors that led to the end of Apartheid in the 1990s. This plea of women for a better life for their children and husbands to live in a peaceful South Africa paved the way for the freedom which was celebrated in 1994 when Nelson Mandela became the first President of a free and democratic South Africa.

My experience with *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (FFP) the Federation of Protestant Women, a department of the Congolese National Council of Churches- in French *Eglise de Christ au Congo* (ECC) - is that when women come together they lay aside divisions and conflicts that prevail in their congregations of origin to participate peacefully in their meetings. It is common that members from denominations in open conflict stop any relationship between themselves, but this remains in most cases an affair of men and the clergy. Whereas, women from those same churches in their meetings are able to transcend their divisions and hostility in order to enjoy the fellowship with women from other denominations and churches as sisters in Christ. Except in cases in which killing has taken place among members of rival groups, the collaboration of women in the FFP has often been sincere, leaving quarrels and rivalries to be handled by the male-dominated leadership of the church.

My observation is that theological factors are often overlooked, even when Christians embark on fighting for peace and human dignity. It seems that all activism is solely motivated by social or humanitarian reasons instead of being rooted in one's core belief which offers a more solid basis for action. I want to pursue this study in faith that there is hope to build sustainable peace at the grassroots level by tapping into women's predisposition to peace as found among Christian women, members of the FFP. They need a firm motivation based on sound theology to encourage those who would like to play a role as agents for durable peace in the community by resisting the genocidal propensity that has characterized the recent history of the region. Christian women in the eastern DRC can learn from the Bible how women thwarted Pharaoh's command to destroy Hebrew infants. The action resulted in the preservation of the life of Moses, the hero of Israel's liberation. It was team work, including midwives who resisted the order to kill all Hebrew baby boys; the mother of Moses who chose to keep her baby boy and hide him from the Egyptian executioners; the sister who watched over the baby on the river and bargained for the nursing of the baby by its own mother; and finally Pharaoh's daughter who adopted the son and offered him a royal upbringing in Egypt despite her knowledge of the decree to kill

Hebrew babies (Ex 1:8 – 2:10). In this study, I have used the story of Abigail (1 Sam 25) as a Contextual Bible Study (CBS) in order to provide a theological basis for the involvement of women in the peace-building process.

1.4 Preliminary Literature Review

This section explores a number of writings which have contributed or are related to the topic of this research. The aim of this review is to locate this study among other research that has been carried out in the area of peace making, with a special focus on women's involvement and Bible-centred approaches.

1.4.1 Literature on women and peace

It is important to indicate beforehand that there is very limited literature combining both a women's perspective on peace-building and a theologically-based approach to peace in Africa. However, the interest in this area is growing, as national and international organizations start recognizing the need to integrate religious approaches in the process of making peace and also to involve women in bringing sustainable peace among ethnic and religious groups in conflict in Africa. Susan Rakoczy (in Phiri and Nadar, eds 2006:187-207) has written an article on "Women and Peace-making" in which she explores the nonviolent character of women toward conflicts from a religious perspective. She highlights the witness of Evelyn Underhill and Dorothy Day, two Christian women who demonstrated remarkable commitment to peace and non-violence in England and United States. She describes pacifism as "an effective means to change minds and hearts, to oppose policies that violate gospel principles, and to actively change situations that make war and violence possible" (Rakoczy 2006:196). In this regard the article mentions heroic anti-violent acts of South African women in the anti-Apartheid movement. In the same article, the writer shares the experience of women from other parts of Africa in a focus group discussion on a non-violent style of life. Rakoczy concludes by saying that, "But the gospel calls Christians to something far different: a non-violent life. The pacifist witness of women such as Evelyn Underhill and Dorothy Day challenges us to examine how much violence there is in our hearts" (2006:205).

In her article on “Peace-making and Reconciliation: The Contribution of African Indigenous Religious Women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa”, Isabel Phiri (2005:84-92) underscores the significant role played by African indigenous religious women in peace-making at the grassroots level using their health knowledge. They seem to be more effective among the rural population than among male leaders and government. This study seeks to demonstrate that the involvement of religious African women is crucial because religion plays a crucial role in the life of Africans. In my opinion, the reason behind the effectiveness of the role of African indigenous religious women among rural populations is because women at the grassroots level are more disposed to living out their faith than either women in urban settings or men.

Aruna Gnanadason, Musimbi Kanyoro and Lucia Ann McSpadden (1996) have edited an inspiring book, *Women, Violence and Nonviolent Change*, offering a wide span of women’s experiences in non-violent responses to conflicts and abuses. The book gives an overview of what women all over the world, including African women, are able to do when they engage in bringing peace to their context. Although the book does not give examples from the African Great Lakes Region, some similarities can be drawn from the experiences of women from other parts of Africa and applied in the DRC.

Betty A. Reardon (1993) and Birgit Brock-Utne (1989) present two complementary views on the feminist perspective on peace. While Reardon demonstrates the importance of empowering women to participate in decision-making, peace and security maintenance at all levels, Brock-Utne paves the way for peace research and peace education using the tools of feminist analysis. These books describe not only the various perspectives among feminists as they deal with different issues, but also the existing efforts done by the UN or women’s groups to bring peace to their contexts.

1.4.2 Literature on peace in the African Great Lakes Region

Mike Benedi Sudi Ammba, a Congolese from the Kivu region, has recently published a book on *How to Build Lasting Peace in the DRC*. In his approach he has mentioned many factors that should be explored to build peace; these include tolerance, forgiveness, discipline, peace, leadership and partnership (2008:63-78). Although in the book he acknowledges that evil comes from the heart, in his predicament he does not stress the fact that only Christianity lived out by

the help of the Holy Spirit can lead to true forgiveness, tolerance and discipline. One could argue that in the eastern part of Congo, Christianity is not the only religion among those striving for sustainable peace. However, Ammba addresses the peace process from a Christian point of view because Christianity is the dominant religion in the area. Therefore, a theology of peace could become a driving force behind mobilizing church members to act as peacemakers and to set an example to be followed by others.

The article of Bernard Noel Rutikanga (in Cejka and Bamat eds, 2003:132-1650), on “Struggle for healing at the grassroots” in Rwanda, is very indicative of the situation on both sides of the Great Lakes Region. In his findings he concludes that when answering questions about the activities of peace-making, respondents’ priority can be ranked as follows: 46% prefer relationship building, visits to and conversations with the opponents; 29% suggest acts of service, sharing resources or sheltering people in danger; 14% propose confronting the perpetrators; 7% recommend avoiding them; and only 5% thought of some Christian activities such as prayer or Bible reading together. The same trend appeared as he asked about motivations for peace-making. 41% opted for practical motivation such as making peace to gain the trust of the opponents or making peace because fighting destroys the economy and keeps the people poor. 32% evoked an ideological motivation i.e. making peace on the basis of equality among different ethnic groups or fighting discrimination and impunity. 14% of the motivations were relational, making peace for the sake of our children or ‘can’t stand seeing other people suffer’. Only 13% would be motivated to make peace because they were good Christians or because it is God’s will to live in peace. These statistics reveal that many Christians participate in conflicts and killing because they are not committed to live out their Christianity based on a theology of peace.

The analysis of the above findings confirms that, in spite of Christianity being the dominant religion in the region, people act less or are less motivated by their religious belief in their effort to bring peace. This can explain why the process of peace-building is fragile as it does not stem or branch from a solid basis such as religious belief or theology. This thesis is designed to propose a scheme of peace-building based on putting theology and its core values at the centre of the effort and motivation for durable peace.

Denis Kadima and Claude Kabemba (2000) edited a book *Whither Regional Peace and Security?: The Democratic Republic of the Congo after the War* in which contributors mention issues such as demilitarization, the electoral system, and relations with neighbouring countries, among those that can bring sustainable peace to the country. People called to deal with the above issues have to be recruited from among the top leaders of the country and the international community, leaving aside people at grassroots level and women who suffer the most from conflicts. Also, elements of theology and religion are left out, though 70% of the Congolese population claim to be Christians. My argument is that it is possible to use theology to lay foundations of sustainable peace among people at the grassroots level because people should use their belief to develop a culture of peace.

1.4.3 Literature on peace and the church

The involvement of the church in peace-making is not a new phenomenon. The pursuit of peace has always been part of the Christian heritage, in spite of a few differences observed among different denominations or different epochs of one denomination. Many churches today work hard for peace, but a group of churches, known as the ‘historic peace churches’ have particularly championed peace-making. This group exists in the DRC but does not exert a great influence in the country. However, the literature concerning the historic peace churches are inspirational to the entire Christianity. According to Roland Bainton, “The Anabaptists (now Mennonites and Hutterites), the Quakers and the Brethren are popularly called the ‘historic peace churches’, not because other churches are not concerned for peace but because these groups have refused to take part in war” (1960:152). According to Donald F. Durnbaugh and Charles W. Brockwell, Jr. (1994), these groups did not originate in the same period or the same country but they have in common pacifism and non-resistance as distinguishing characteristics. “The Anabaptists emerged from the Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) from radical Puritanism of the seventeenth century, and the Brethren from radical Pietism in the eighteenth century” (Durnbaugh and Brockwell 1994:183). These churches perceived the relationship between church and state in a different way that led to their being persecuted by other Churches (the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant state churches and Reformers) and by governments. In his comments on Anabaptism, Walter Klaassen (2001:24) asserts, “Their unhesitating refusal to obey the governments of that day in matters relating to

faith and the church led to their reputation of being rebels”. He also adds, “It was their seriousness about conforming with all their force to the perfect example of Christ as they saw it that brought them into conflict with the prevailing order at so many points. They adopted a radical, uncompromising discipleship” (2001:23).

Leaving aside the insistence of the historic peace churches on the baptism of adults and other doctrinal issues, this study will draw much from their attitude toward war and violence based on Jesus’ love. They taught their disciples that, “Fighting and killing was contrary to the law of love, no matter how much the situation might seem to demand it” (Klaassen 2001:23). In his book, *The Original Revolution*, John Howard Yoder explains that since a non-resistance attitude is clearly the central message of the New Testament and Jesus, it should be adopted by all Christians (men and women) when he asserts:

We must proclaim to every Christian that pacifism is not the prophetic vocation of a few individuals, but that every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance in discipleship and to abandonment of all loyalties which counter that obedience, including the desire to be effective immediately or to make oneself responsible for civil justice (2003:72).

Anabaptists endured persecutions for centuries before earning the respect and recognition they have today. Acts 4:19 “*Judge for yourself whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God*” is often quoted by Anabaptists who preferred non-resistance and persecution and death by torture to betraying their faith in Christ. Duane Ruth-Heffelbower captures the conviction of the Anabaptists well, as follows: “Anabaptists instead saw God as wanting all creatures to live a life of wholeness, shalom, in which the causes of strife were undone in a community of righteousness based on the love shown by Jesus” (1991:67-8). This love of Jesus extended to fallen human beings becomes the driving force behind the historic peace churches’ attitude towards the death of other people. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) was used to draw the basic principles of life among Anabaptists and to foster the conviction that Christians could not bear arms nor be involved in killing other human beings created in the image of God.⁸

⁸ For more details on Anabaptists read John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogue Between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchner, ON: Pandora Press, 2004).

“The Church must be prepared to suffer. It could never be a party to inflict suffering on any person for any reason” (Estep 1996:254).

The legacy of pacifism set by the historic peace churches could be a useful tool for the church in the DRC in the midst of current divisions and hatred. It is true that violence should not be found in the church of Christ as it has been experienced in the eastern Congo and during the genocide in the whole African Great Lakes Region. The literature on the historic peace churches becomes a challenge to this study. ‘Can Christian women in the Kivu region follow the footsteps of the Anabaptists to cultivate a culture of peace?’ Women in the eastern Congo can learn from the determination of the historic peace churches to stand firm in their faith in order to challenge political and religious authorities who call people to genocide and conflicts in the region. I will develop this idea in the course of this study but I need to define first this research and its objectives.

1.5 Research Problems and Objectives

In this section I would like to introduce the problem of this research and explain why it is important to undertake this study. I have described at the beginning of this chapter the crisis in the eastern part of the DRC brought in by on-going conflicts. This situation has caused the death of millions of civilians and a massive violation of human rights, especially against women and girls who have increasingly been raped by armed and non-armed people. In spite of multiple peace talks organized at national and international levels, there is no lasting agreement of peace. Nevertheless, several actors on the ground continue to believe in and work towards making peace and put an end to the current crisis.

The main question of this research is: What contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the Kivu region of the DRC?

In order to unravel the above question, this study should provide answers to the following sub-questions:

1. What is the theology of peace?
2. What does peace-building in the context of the eastern region of the DRC entail?

3. Why should women be involved in peace-building?
4. What kind of influence do Christian women have in the church and society of the DRC?
5. What strategies should women use to instil a theology of peace in their community?
6. What lesson can the church in the DRC learn from the results of this study?

In addition to these questions, this study will also consider broader issues such as how women perceive violence and peace in the context of this study and what role the ecumenical federation of Christian women plays in mobilizing women for action.

The response to the above questions will allow this study to attain its main objectives which are:

1. To explore how the ecumenical federation of Christian women is dealing with the issue of peace-building at local and national levels in the DRC;
2. To analyse the theologies and doctrines of peace from different denominations in the Federation and their implementation in the current situation of rape and conflict in the DRC;
3. To bring together experiences from these groups in an integrated approach to the involvement of women in peace-building;
4. To investigate and propose appropriate theological approaches to relevant and effective participation of women in peace-building;
5. To define a theology of peace that can be a motivating factor for women to engage in peace-building in the DRC.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study has used two major theories, biblical peace and feminist ecclesiology, which circumscribe the involvement of Christian women in building peace in the DRC.

1.6.1 Biblical peace

The first theory guiding this study is that of biblical peace. While many humanitarian and political organizations are involved in bringing peace to the region, this study suggests an approach which is based on biblical principles. The gospel of love requires Christians to live in

peace with one another and with God. The use of violence is contrary to the clear teachings of Christ. Biblical peace, *shalom* or *eirene* is an encompassing concept which includes human welfare in all aspects of life. In the context of this study shalom would mean to live in peace with people of other ethnic groups and to stop violence against women and girls. I have elaborated the concept of biblical peace in Chapter Three of this study. In my analysis, I have shown that if biblical principles of peace are put into practice by all believers, the conflicts and sexual violence against women could easily be averted because most of the perpetrators claim that they are Christians.

1.6.2 Feminist ecclesiology

I have used this theory to envisage the involvement of Congolese women in the process of building sustainable peace in a country plagued by wars and ethnic conflicts. The feminist ecclesiology, as perceived by African Women Theologians, is a way women in Africa define their role in the church and their participation in building the body of Christ. Susan Rakoczy observes, “In western countries women have been leaving in appreciable numbers in the last generation but African women generally stay within the church” (2004:214). African women remain in the Church because without their presence there will be no church in Africa. Although they do not often occupy leadership positions or participate in decision-making, their great number and the services they render to the Church are crucial. Natalie Watson defines feminist ecclesiology as “one way among others for women to speak about their being the church and their embodying the divine in the world” (2002:2). Most African women theologians advocate remaining in the church and working from within for transformation and the creation of spaces where men and women experience justice. In Chapter Four of this study, I have developed in detail the theory of feminist ecclesiology.

In the DRC, the Federation of Protestant Women (FFP) has gained status in the church nationally in such a way that it has become a reliable partner in all Christian activities run by ECC. Therefore, they constitute an asset for building lasting peace in Congo. Hence, this study is an encouragement to women in the eastern region of DRC to portray a life-giving community able to resist the propensity for hatred and genocide that prevails among members of different ethnic groups.

1.7 Research Design and Brief Research Methodology

After introducing the theories that have guided this study, I now briefly describe in this section the design and methodology that I have used to collect and analyse the data. A more elaborate explanation of my research methodology is developed in Chapter Five.

1.7.1 Research design

This study is built on women's experiences of peace making, literature, group participation and interviews, all within the contour designed by the Methodology of 'Vital Theology' of the School of Religion and Theology of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (de Gruchy 2009). According to this methodology theology engages "an aspect of social reality that is experienced as oppressive, abusive, or unsustainable, in service of an emancipator agenda" (2009:1). Steve de Gruchy mentions in his article, "what make us angry and drives our theological agenda are... the denial of ARV treatment to people living with HIV...the rape of women, xenophobic attacks on refugees, homophobic violence" (2009:1), to name a few. The subject of this study has everything to make one angry because it deals with even more horrible and widespread acts of violence that have not only killed millions of people in the African Great Lakes Region, but have also robbed thousands of women and girls of their dignity and right to life. It is all about life, abundant life and life in the name of Jesus Christ. The mobilization of women to strive for life as advocated in this study is in tune with the Vital Theology which is in "opposition to life-denying" (de Gruchy 2009:1) as it is observed in the area of this research. Applying Vital Theology in this context would then mean to engage women to live out their faith and challenge the cause or promoters of conflicts in the Kivu region with theological insights in order to bring long-lasting and sustainable peace.

1.7.2 Study location and population

The study has been generally conducted in the cities of Bukavu and Goma in the eastern part of the DRC. These are the major cities of the southern and northern provinces of Kivu, the area which is at the heart of the current conflicts. The churches in these cities receive most of the displaced people who cannot live in their villages because of the violence and killing in rural areas. It is there also that the few medical centres and hospitals equipped to provide care for women and children, survivors of rape and other assaults, are located. Also, it is important to

note that Bukavu, the main city of southern Kivu, has the only hospital (Panzi) in the DRC which is specialized in treating severe cases of women with fistula and other malformations due to brutal rapes. The city was the primary focus of this study because it is also the headquarters of most of the Protestant churches found in the eastern region of the DRC. I have also collected some data from Kinshasa, the capital city, at the head office of the National Council of Churches (ECC) and its Department of Women (FFP).

1.7.3 Brief methodology

This study is primarily qualitative research which “collects its data in the form of written or spoken language, or in the form of observation...” (Durrheim 2006:47). One major benefit of this methodology is that qualitative research allows certain flexibility for the researcher to “engage with research participants in an open and empathic manner” (Blanche et al. 2006:287). I have used this flexibility to combine several methods to collect data in order to get a full understanding of the process of peace-building in the context of the DRC and to propose a sustainable approach. Therefore, I have used as a research instruments semi-structured and open interviews involving leaders of churches, leaders of women’s fellowships and other ‘ordinary’ women, members of the Federation. For these interviews I have chosen to have face-to-face contact with participants instead of sending questionnaires. The reason is that a number of participants either do not have much education or are not used to answering written questionnaires. This leads to keeping questionnaires unfilled for a long time or their being not returned at all. I also conducted Contextual Bible Studies in five sampled churches that are representatives of the National Council of Churches (ECC). They acted as focus groups for this study and I was able to draw valuable data from them.

Written materials consisted of official documents and minutes of *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (FFP); reports from commissions and organizations dealing with peace-building in the region; and relevant books, articles, journals, magazines from libraries and internet material. Everything was done in strict respect of the ethics of research and with the complete confidentiality of participants as required by research in social science and according to the agreement signed with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Details on this methodology are found in Chapter Five and the results of my findings in Chapter Seven.

1.8. Conclusion and outlines of the study

This chapter serves as a general introduction to a study on the contribution of Christian women toward peace-building, which is covered in eight chapters. In this chapter I have revealed my personal and academic motivation for undertaking this research in an area where women do not feel secure to engage with the situation. As one of the Congolese women and a trained theologian, I felt the responsibility to side with my sisters in the faith and in the flesh, in order to provide the means that Christian women need to contribute towards peace, as we are all longing for durable peace in the region. I briefly gave the background of the conflicts in the region and the experience of women. I also clearly indicated my objective which is an attempt at defining a theology of peace that could be the driving force behind the involvement of women in peace-building.

I also, in this chapter, explained why feminist ecclesiology and biblical peace were appropriate theoretical frameworks to guide this study. Finally I gave a brief explanation of the methodology that I have used to collect and analyse the data of the participants in the study and of the ethical principles that I had to respect.

Each of the above points is expanded and critically dealt with in the following chapters. In Chapter Two I explore the cause of the conflicts and how they have affected people in the region, especially women and children in the history of the country. Chapter Three discusses the theologies of peace and how people are divided on the practice of peace. This varies from the theory of pacifism to just war and just peace-making, with a special look at the feminist perspective for making peace. Chapter Four is a review of women's theologies and ecclesiology as a framework to this study but also as a tool which is used to answer the main research question. Chapter Five explains in detail the methodology followed to collect data through a number of research instruments, such as in-depth interviews, Contextual Bible Study, written documents and internet references. Chapters Six and Seven examine the major themes under which my findings obtained during the fieldwork, were grouped. At the end of the Chapter Seven an attempt is made toward developing a definition of a theology of peace that would motivate Christian women to engage in the peace process in the region. Chapter Eight brings the study to

an end by considering how these different chapters have, step by step, led to answering the research question. The chapter gives a hint on areas that need further investigation.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFLICTS IN THE KIVU REGION

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One I introduced the topic of my research and provided the reader with an overall scope of this study. This includes the motivation of the study, its objectives, the theological framework, research methodology and limitations. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the situation that prevails in the Kivu region because it provides the social and political background to this study. I will first locate the conflict in the Kivu region in its wider context of political unrest and violence that has ravaged the DRC before and after its independence on 30 June 1960. However, the focus of this chapter is on the current conflicts in the eastern DRC, known as the Congolese War, by highlighting the major causes of the conflict and its consequences on the lives of the population. The chapter pays particular attention to the situation of women as they face unmatched acts of sexual violence. It is important to understand the nature and effects of the current conflict in the Kivu region since they constitute the main motivation for the undertaking of this study and the urgency for the involvement of women in the process of building sustainable peace in the DRC.

2.2 War and Political Unrest in the History of the DRC

The history of the DRC is fraught with civil wars, secessions, violence and political unrest. There are multiple causes that have led to that situation but in this study I discuss only two that are more crucial in my view, namely the inherited legacy of colonialism and the incompetence of post-colonial governments. I think the current destruction of the social, political and economic fabric of Congolese society is the result of the shaky foundation of its history. That is why I need to draw attention to that past, in order to give understanding of the root causes of the Congolese War.

2.2.1 Inherited legacy of colonialism

It is well documented that the colonial regime was more interested in plundering the resources of the country rather than preparing the indigenous people to take up the leadership of the country. From the start, when news broke in Europe that Henry Morton Stanley had visited the Congo in the heart of Africa (1874-1877), a country with immense natural resources, the King of Belgium, Leopold II, showed his interest in the country by entering into a partnership with the explorer while the British government was in great debate about Stanley's adventure (Ascherson 1999).⁹ The motive behind this interest in the Congo was clearly stated in a letter sent by King Leopold II to Baron Solvyns, the Belgian Ambassador in London, declaring, "We should be at once prudent, skilful and rapid in the way we set about this. I do not want to risk either offending the English or losing a fine chance to secure for us **a slice of this magnificent African cake.**" (Ascherson 1999:104, bold mine). It was therefore clear that for King Leopold II of Belgium, Congo was just a cake and his intention was to have a share of African resources which were coveted by many European powers. With dexterity, he convinced the Berlin Conference in 1885 to grant him the 'Congo Free State' as his personal property.¹⁰ It was then agreed that, "The State would be ruled by the King of the Belgians, as 'owner' and 'treasurer', aided by a council composed of members of the Royal Family and a few nominees" (Young 1994:132). To achieve his goal the King had to use the indigenous population as forced labour in order to produce what his country needed. The intention of King Leopold II in the Congo is clearly stated in the following comments from Ascherson:

The *Domaine de la Couronne*—the Crown Estate—was exploited directly and with ruthless haste to provide the King with funds of his own. The *Domaine de la Couronne* was designed to be at once the instrument of personal power, providing Leopold with the money needed for his programme of public works in Belgium, and the main source of the great endowment which he intended to leave to his successors (1999:200).

⁹ In this book, *The King Incorporated: Leopold the Second and the Congo* (London: Granta Books, 1999), Neal Ascherson gives in detail the plot set up by King Leopold II to hire the British explorer Stanley for his benefit and to have a share on a continent that the great European nations of the time (British, French and Portuguese) were eager to divide between themselves.

¹⁰ The history of the Belgium Congo is divided into two parts. From 1885-1908, upon the division of Africa done by the Conference in Berlin, Congo became a private property of the King Leopold II, known as Congo Free State (CFS) and then in 1908 the Belgian Parliament took control of the country and it became the Belgian Colony until 1960, the year of independence.

In the sight of King Leopold II, the Congolese people were as good as productive machines, without dignity. Leopold imposed high quotas for wild rubber and cobalt on villagers who had to work hard sometimes at the expense of their own lives. All this was done for the enrichment of the king who had found a way to provide rubber for tyres that the booming automobile industry in Europe needed. In his introduction to one of the heart-breaking books written about the atrocities committed by King Leopold II in Congo, Adam Hochschild, after reading a quotation of Mark Twain's that five to eight million Congolese were killed, argues, "I thought the Congo would have been one of the major killing grounds of modern times. Why were these deaths not mentioned in the standard litany of our century's horrors?" (1999:3)¹¹ The number of those who died because of the atrocities perpetrated by Leopold II is estimated to be even higher by other writers. Nzongola-Ntalaja notes:

Villages unwilling or unable to meet the assigned daily quotas of production were subject to rape, arson, bodily mutilation and murder. Although this violence did not meet the definition of genocide in international law... it resulted in a death toll of holocaust proportions that is estimated to be as high as 10 million people (2002:22).

I would like to underscore that women had to bear the heavier load of the atrocities inflicted on the Congolese people by King Leopold II as explained later in this chapter. The following quote from Louis Frank, a Belgian colonial minister from 1918 to 1924, expresses a bitter reality about the plans of the colonizers,

We wish to form... not a Black Belgian, but a better Congolese, that is, a robust, vigorously healthy, and hard-working Negro, proud of a task conscientiously accomplished, respectful of the collectivity to which he belongs (Young 1994:165-66).

In order to maintain these hard-working Negroes submissive to their masters, the Belgians avoided providing high level education to the Congolese people. Although the Roman Catholic Church in Belgian Congo and other Christian missions realized that evangelism should go hand in hand with health and education, they could not depart from the rules established by the colonial government to provide only basic education. Thus, missions in Congo become partners in perpetuating the hegemony of the colonizers. Crawford Young argues, "More broadly, the

¹¹ Adam Hochschild's book, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London: MacMillan, 1999) inspired Emmanuel Katongole in his book *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). See "On Facing King Leopold's Ghost" in the introduction.

cultural project of the colonial state – bringing ‘civilization’ to a subject society – could be largely delegated to the Christian missions, outside the Islamic zones” (Young 1995:156). In other words Young notes that missionaries and colonizers pursued the same goal. “The government agents are not working alone in the task of civilization. The religious missions participate to at least equal degree. Governments agents, whatever their own opinions, have the strict obligation to aid the Christian missionaries” (Young 1994:156). No wonder when the country got its political independence on 30 June 1960 only a few people had earned a university degree. Peter Schwab explains this lapse as:

Paternalism, the concept that Africans were unprepared for “civilized” life and had to be readied for it over a never-ending period of time, allowed Belgium to treat its colonized as little more than toddlers. Education was, for example largely ignored. When Rwanda won its independence, it had one African high school graduate while the Congo had merely five college graduates (2001:20).¹²

This is confirmed by Gérard Prunier as he notes, “By the time of independence in 1960 there were only seventeen university graduates out of a population of over twenty million. The Belgian paternalistic system needed disciplined, semi-qualified drones; it did not need people who could take responsibility; the whites were there for that” (2009:76). What is not underscored here is that the first university graduates were all men. No woman had access to higher education during colonization. It is under these conditions that the Belgians were prompted by the winds of decolonization that had already swept through British and French colonies, to hand over the sovereignty of the country prematurely to less educated indigenous politicians in 1960. Independent Congo will have to suffer from this lapse for many years to come.

The lack of highly educated personnel was not the only legacy inherited by the Congolese people from their ‘Masters’. Taking advantage of the great number of tribes in the country, the colonizers encouraged tribal divisions in order to weaken the cohesion among indigenous people and hinder them from standing together against oppression. Peter Schwab captures the spirit of the colonizers well in these words, “‘Divide the land, divide the people’ became the all-but-stated imperial policies of the European colonizers” (2001:16). In many instances they would displace people from their tribes and cultures to work in mining, industry, plantations and the construction of major infrastructures away from their homelands. The host communities of such

¹² Schwab mentions High School as at secondary school level while College represents tertiary education.

places were often disregarded, while the immigrants would enjoy protection and free land. Many people of Rwandan origin living in North Kivu, especially in the Rutshuru and Masisi territories, were brought into Congo to help Belgian planters as a cheap labour force and were settled on the territory of the Hunde tribe. Today most of these territories have become a Banyarwanda chiefdom expelling the Hunde from what used to be their homeland to the outskirts of the territory (Lemarchand 2009:14). This practice set the stage for current ethnic or tribal conflicts because the immigrants experienced hatred from the local peasant communities in areas where they had settled. However, the colonial government had the power to stop any conflict that would occur in the region.

The resentment generated by the expropriation of native lands by immigrants has caused explosions of tribal clashes in North Kivu and other corners of the DRC after independence when the colonial power could not assure their protection. In his comments Peter Schwab notes that, “The colonial policy of Belgium in the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi was openly based on racism. It was also deadly, as in the Congo millions died under genocidal schemes” (Schwab 2001:16). He continues his remarks by saying, “Often European states selected one tribe to serve the colonial bureaucracy, creating a dependence on the colonizing nation, while other cultures were politically marginalized” (2001:16).

This politics of favouring one tribe by the colonizers was a common Belgian practice in the region. In neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi, Belgians used favouritism to put in opposition the two major ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi, as they took turns to serve the interests of the colonizers. One of the disastrous consequences of the colonial legacy which culminated with the genocide in 1994 and has destabilised the African Great Lakes Region to date, remains the theory of Tutsi superiority over other groups in the region, Hutu, Twa and Congolese. It is recorded that:

Europeans simplified Rwandan stratification by eliminating Hutu chiefs, and crystallized it by distributing identity cards bearing the label ‘Tutsi’, ‘Hutu’ or ‘Twa’. Opportunities for post-primary education were largely restricted to Tutsi males. Hutu attended Catholic seminaries, then found they were unable to compete for jobs in the colonial state, virtually the only major employer in Rwanda (Turner 2007:61).

The Belgians used the same strategy in the DRC to raise one tribe against another. In their search for allies and subordinates, they opposed the Baluba in the province of Kasai and divided them between the Lulua and the Luba-Kasai people. Later on the Luba-Kasai were labelled as the ‘Jews of Africa’ like the Tutsi in Rwanda and the Igbo in Nigeria (Turner 2007:57). The result has been the creation of ethnic and tribal conflicts and genocides that have occurred time and again in the former Belgian colonies, the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. The first government after independence had to confront the legacy of less educated leadership and ethnic and tribal divisions.

2.2.2 Incompetency of post-colonial governments

One would have expected to have seen more development in the Congo because of its immense resources now that its own citizens have ruled the country since 1960. In fact, the Belgian Congo, despite the plunder of its resources by the colonizers, was far ahead of other African colonies by the time of independence. Prunier argues:

Apart from South Africa, the Belgian Congo was the most industrialised and ‘developed’ territory on the continent. By 1958, on the eve of independence, 35 per cent of all adults were in salaried employment, a proportion unknown elsewhere in Africa (Prunier 2009:76).

Who is to blame if more than sixty years after independence, ethnic conflicts continue and the economic situation is worse¹³ than most of the African countries? One major handicap for the development and peace in the DRC has to do with its leadership.

2.2.2.1 Incompetence of the leadership after independence

The incompetence of post-colonial governments was predictable if one considers the level of education of leaders who succeeded the colonizers to power and also the mind-set of the politicians who fought for independence. Few politicians who fought for independence were moved by nationalistic interests. The majority had one dream: to inherit the wealth and good life of the colonizers without any vision for the society in mind for the benefit of the poor and the development of the country. One of the key actors in the negotiation of the independence with

¹³ According to data gathered by the International Monetary Fund and CIA World Factbook in 2010, the DRC is the second poorest country in the world after Zimbabwe, because of the deterioration of its economy caused by years of civil wars and ethnic conflicts. <http://www.financialjesus.com/interesting-economics/top-10-poorest-countries-in-the-world-2010/> accessed 14/04/2013.

the Belgians, Thomas Kanza, has the right words to describe the kind of political class that sat with him at the 'Round Table'¹⁴ to ask for independence: "Whereas the Belgian delegates were a homogenous group, skilled at concealing their internal political disagreements for the sake of Belgian prestige and advantage, the Congolese constituted a disparate delegation, disunited, and little aware, even perhaps at times totally unaware, of the real problems at issue" (Kanza 1972:84).

The disunity and unawareness of real issues at stake have been the striking characteristics of the politicians who have ruled the Congo in the post-colonial period. From the start the president Joseph Kasa-Vubu and his Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba had different political orientations. Kasa-Vubu was a federalist¹⁵, moderate, whole heartedly pro-West and pro-clerical; whereas Lumumba was a nationalist¹⁶, socialist, pan-Africanist and anti-colonialist (Kanza 1972:49-50). Federalists constituted a moderate wing led by the first president Joseph Kasa-Vubu. However, the majority of Congolese politicians were enflamed by the discourse of Patrice Lumumba in his extremism, requiring immediate independence and the departure of all Belgians. Slogans such as "immediate independence" and "the Congo for Congolese people" were turned into popular songs that fuelled massive protests that led the Belgians to leave the country in a hurry. With the precipitous grant of independence to the Congo the country was heading for a quick collapse as stated in the following:

The new state was left with its colonial structures, legacies, and independencies exposed to all the vicissitudes imaginable when the economic and administrative management was removed...Neither of the two possible means for the Congolese leadership to control the breakdown of order saved the situation. The Force Publique (National Army), rather than offering a reserve of security, in fact served as a principal source of insecurity. Nor was the Congolese leadership capable of cohesion in the face of stress (House 1978:53).

¹⁴ In French "Table Ronde" was a meeting convened by the Belgians to discuss the independence of Congo. It opened officially on 20 January 1960 in Brussels. The representatives of all Congolese political parties met the members of the Belgian parliament and government for talks which lasted over a month. For further details read Thomas Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo: Rise and Fall of Lumumba* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972).

¹⁵ The Federalist wing of Congolese politics was made up of parties that accepted the idea of having a decentralized country in which every province would be autonomous. This idea was supported by the Belgians who wanted to continue ruling over a country which was divided. Some provinces like the Katanga and Lower Congo with the political movement of KasaVubu, the ABAKO, were ready to work hand in hand with the Belgian administration.

¹⁶ The Nationalist wing led by Lumumba grouped together all the political parties that wanted a unified Congo which was to take power without any Belgian interference.

It took only a few days in the decolonized Congo for weaknesses to administer the country to become manifest. In his memories, Thomas Kanza narrates how fragile the structures were that the Congo put in place upon independence. In fact Independence Day was celebrated on 30 June 1960 and in less than a week, on 5 July 1960, a revolt broke out in the national army which was still under the command of Belgian officers. It caused massive mutinies among the soldiers which spread quickly from the capital city, Leopoldville, to the rest of the country. The trigger of the revolt was the speech of General Janssens, who was the Belgian commander of the army, telling the soldiers in a form of an equation: “before independence = after independence” (1972:187); meaning that the colonizers would continue ruling over the country and controlling its army as in the past. `

This mutiny had far-reaching consequences for the future of the newly-born state. It led to the breakdown of many accords signed between the Congo and Belgium during the independence talks and it weakened the administration of the country. Nzongola-Ntalaja argues:

If Janssens’s intention in instigating the mutiny was to discredit Lumumba’s leadership and to eventually push him out of power, the immediate results were the panic and flight of European civil servants and settlers, which deprived the economy and the state of most of their professional and technical cadres (2002:98).

More events took place to demonstrate the incompetency of the new leaders of the DRC to control the affairs of the nation. The Belgian army invaded the Congo only ten days after independence (on 10 July 1960) justifying their intervention as a means to protect the lives and properties of Belgians and settlers who had become the target of the mutineers as the revolt spread all over the country. But a day later on 11 July, the Belgian army disarmed the Congolese soldiers who were posted in the Katanga province and used local politicians to declare the secession of Katanga. Unfortunately, the autonomy of the Katanga Province was not approved by any other country. Furthermore, Lumumba and KasaVubu worked quickly to call upon the UN troops to help protect the integrity of the territory against what was considered as Belgian aggression. Kanza notes that, “Not a single sovereign foreign country accorded the secessionist province the expected official recognition – not even Belgium, in the cruelest blow of all” (1972:200).

After the departure of the Belgians, Lumumba started to Africanize the army by promoting soldiers of lower ranks to high positions. In this process, Victor Lundula, a former medical practitioner who served in the army was appointed as General and Commander in Chief of the

armed forces. Mobutu who was a secretary in the office of Lumumba became a Colonel and Chief of Staff of the national army. Nzongola-Ntalaja is right as he observes that, “Lundula did not have the necessary qualification to manage a modern army. As for Mobutu, Lumumba made a serious blunder based on his...political naivety. In appointing Mobutu to this sensitive position, he had unwittingly chosen his own Judas” (2002:98).

The country had neither a strong army to protect the territory against external attacks nor a competent leadership to handle strife and internal conflicts. These weaknesses observed during the two first weeks of independence had compounded a chaotic state as civil wars and secessions started occurring all over the country. After the attempted secession of the Katanga Province, it was the turn of another mining province, the Kasai to declare its secession in August 1960. The national army which was sent to prevent the secession, turned the action into a massive massacre of civilians in Mbuji-Mayi. The president, KasaVubu, took advantage of that action to illegally dismiss his Prime Minister Lumumba, accusing him of having ordered the genocide. The dismissal of Lumumba created a new crisis in the country because of his majority in the Parliament which refused to endorse the president’s decision. With the backing of the West, Lumumba was put under arrest organized by Colonel Joseph Mobutu on 14 September 1960. He was captured in Port Franqui on 1 December 1960 as he was trying to flee to Stanleyville. Lumumba was clandestinely killed on 17 January 1961 by the army. The death of Lumumba only exacerbated a situation which was already out of control, by provoking more rebellions, massacres and splits that plunged the Congo into chaos.¹⁷

The death of Lumumba put on fire a country which had neither a strong army nor an efficient government. Nzongola-Ntalaja notes:

The fact that the national army was incapable of effectively executing its counterinsurgency role made it necessary to retain white mercenaries whose presence in the Congo revealed the weakness of a neo-colonial state and its inability to stand on its own, without imperialist support (2002:146).

¹⁷ Nzongola-Ntalaja has in the appendix of his book inserted a chronology of major events that took place in the Congo from the period of the Kongo Kingdom to the death of the president Laurent Kabila: a useful record of the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

2.2.2.2 The rise of Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorship

The saga of Congolese misery was set into motion from the chaos that started after independence. The West was looking for a strongman who could protect their interests while the Congolese were longing for peace. When on 24 November 1965, Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu launched a military coup, people thought he was the right man to lead the country. He quickly got the support of the USA and other Western countries which sent mercenaries to stop the rebellion that was spreading all over the country. "Mobutu was deemed to possess all of these prized qualities, and his Western protectors groomed him as the perfect candidate for the role of Congo's strongman" (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:143). However, the reign of the so called strongman, who was an ally of the USA to curb the rise of Communism in Angola and other neighbouring countries, turned to be a disaster for the DRC. The following statement portrays accurately how President Mobutu and his team behaved toward the people of the DRC.

The whites were gone, but the blacks who had replaced them as rulers and administrators were just as bad, oppressive and at times cruel. They lived in the big colonial mansions or villas; drove nice cars and sometimes bigger and better cars than the colonialists; looked down on the people; and were quick to use the army and police to repress any dissent or questioning of their authority (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:123).

Nzongola-Ntalaja has examined the five instruments of power (2002:152-168) that Mobutu used to ruin the country as follows:

- a) The security force: Throughout his tenure Mobutu relied heavily on the paramilitary forces to repress dissent and to intimidate the population. These forces ranged from heavily armed military units to more or less civilian intelligence and immigration services. The security forces under the Mobutu regime were basically a praetorian guard. Their basic goal was to protect the regime and its chief. They feared the disappearance of a system that had allowed them to enrich themselves.
- b) Money: Mobutu believed that all the nation's abundant resources belonged to him. He did not shy away from using money from the public treasury as an instrument of power. The state served as the major source of wealth for the national élite and the means of preserving power. The main beneficiaries of the country's money were the politico-administrative elite, the senior military officers and a group of Lebanese merchants in the

expatriate business community. Money being their only religion, members of the state bourgeoisie had no strong political convictions and were willing to play any game so long as it ensured for them or their close associates access to lucrative cabinet, parastatal or ambassadorial positions. The Congolese state bourgeoisie had done so well for itself under Mobutu's kleptocratic rule that it could not be too excited about the prospects for democracy and the rule of the law.

- c) External sources of support: Mobutu enjoyed strong support from United States of America, Europe and from other nations on the premise that he was the strongman able to keep the vast and multi-ethnic country such as the Congo together and prevent chaos, and therefore communist subversion and/or takeover in the logic of the Cold War. Secondly, in the same logic of the Cold War there was a moral commitment to support loyal friends, regardless of their behaviour towards their own people. Finally, external powers needed to use the Congo to promote Western interests in Central and Southern Africa.
- d) The party-state *Movement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR) was created in 1967 and was progressively integrated within the administrative branch of the state apparatus to become a party-state. Later on the entire country became a one-party system and Mobutu became the head of all the country's political institutions, therefore head of the state indefinitely. The MPR became an auxiliary instrument of state propaganda, coercion and political control.
- e) Popular aspirations and loyalties: To win popular legitimacy and support, the Mobutu regime combined repression by paramilitary forces and inculcating ideologies of the party-state the MPR, which consisted of strengthening a personality cult of President Mobutu. As part of the ideology of authenticity, Mobutu was to be worshipped as 'Father of the nation', 'Father of the revolution', 'the helmsman', and the 'enlightened guide'.

A combination of the above instruments maintained President Mobutu Sese Seko in power for thirty two years in spite of the misery of his people and the ruin of the economy of the country. There was such widespread discontent over Mobutu's dictatorship that in the end people were ready to welcome whoever was able to topple his regime. Therefore the way was paved for Kabila and his allies to invade the DRC.

2.3 Congolese War and its Settlement in the Eastern DRC

As discussed earlier, the Congolese people were impatient to be liberated from years of dictatorship. Therefore, when the war broke in the Kivu region in 1996, the entire population, including the national army¹⁸, showed little resistance to the invasion. This explains the quick progression of the war which took less than a year to cover the whole country and force the President and his dignitaries to seek asylum abroad. Nevertheless, many observers wonder why this Congolese civil war has continued since 1996 and has settled in the eastern DRC where it is causing ravage. In the following sections I would like to give a few reasons for that situation.

2.3.1 Spill over from the Rwanda-Burundi genocide

There is strong evidence linking the current Congolese with the Rwandan genocide. On 6 April 1994, the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were both killed when their plane was shot down near Kigali and it resulted in acts of genocide in both countries, which was in the headlines of the media for many years. An estimated 500,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the thirteen weeks from April 6, 1994 when the plane of President Habyarimana was shot down (Human Right Watch Report 1999). However, the killing in Burundi has had little media coverage to date. Shortly after the outbreak of the genocide in July 1994 in Rwanda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), an armed group of the minority Tutsis, took power in Kigali forcing over two million Hutus to flee into neighbouring countries for fear of retaliation. A few of them found asylum in Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania but most of them settled on the borders of Northern and Southern Kivu regions in the DRC. According to a UN report, the government officials, soldiers and militia who fled after the Rwandan genocide to the DRC (then known as Zaire) took with them 1.4 million civilians, most of them Hutus. An estimated 1.2 million lived in camps in DRC.¹⁹

Against all policies and laws governing refugees, soldiers of the Rwandan army, *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) and the militias of Interhamwe accused of leading the genocide, were allowed to enter the DRC with their guns. According to *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF),

¹⁸ Toward the end of the dictatorship, the strong army of President Mobutu Sese Seko was divided and many of them were demotivated, earning a meagre salary that could not sustain their families. During the war most of them surrendered their weapons to the enemies or ran away, incapable of defending the territory.

¹⁹ For more information on this report see UN: "Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations" <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/education/rwandagenocide.shtml> [accessed on 31 October 2014]. This report gives an estimate of 1 million people killed during the genocide in 1994.

members of the Hutu government took vehicles, money, radios and any official asset in their possession. That is why they got organized very quickly and from their camps near the border they joined forces to form the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and started launching attacks inside Rwanda to destabilize the newly formed Tutsi government. In its report of July 1995, MSF notes, “Following the mass exodus into Zaire, the ousted Rwandan Government, armed forces and militia have started to regroup and rebuild their military infrastructure” (MSF July 20, 1995). The operation of destabilizing the Tutsi government by Rwandan refugees was somehow tolerated, even supported, by the Mobutu regime.

As a result, the presence of both the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide and the Ugandan rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony on the eastern borders of the DRC with Rwanda and Uganda, was used as a pretext for the military invasion of the DRC by a coalition led by Rwanda and Uganda. Burundi, “which was also run by a Tutsi-controlled army, joined the coalition to neutralize a Burundian Hutu rebel force operating for two years out of Zaire, near Uvira.”²⁰ Since the Mobutu regime had made many enemies both inside and outside the DRC, a number African countries²¹ and international organizations joined forces with the invaders to get rid of a regime which had become unpopular. The decisive step in this war was accomplished when Joseph Kabila, a Congolese rebel, with a faction of his armed group, made an alliance with the coalition and formed *l’Alliance de Forces Démocratiques de Libération* (AFDL) in order to topple the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko. The military invasion of the DRC was therefore considered as a way of protecting Rwanda from a repeat of the genocide and also of restoring peace in the region. The following report by Human Right Watch attests to the reason behind the war as established by many observers:

In November 1996, the new Rwandan army formed by the RPF, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), backed by Uganda, invaded Congo to destroy the refugee camps, and, together with a hastily constituted Congolese rebel group, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (*Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire*, AFDL), overthrew the

²⁰ Stephen Bucklet, “Rwandan Involvement Seen in Zaire Refugee Camp.” Washington Post, October 29, 1996. <http://tech.mit.edu/V116/N54/rwandan.54w.html>

²¹ It should be noted that the war in the DRC involved 9 African nations, so that some observers named it the African War. I prefer to keep the name Congolese War because it is exclusively located on the DRC territory and it is the population of the DRC which is primarily affected by it.

country's president, Mobutu Sese Seko, who had backed the Rwandan Hutu extremists.²²

Rwanda's attack on Zaire in 1996 was initially aimed at clearing the vast UN refugee camps around Goma and Bukavu, which were being used as cover by Hutu armed forces to continue the war against the new Tutsi-led government in Kigali.²³

However, once the war was set in motion, people realized that, besides the hunt for the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide in the DRC, there were also economic factors behind this on-going conflict.

2.3.2 War and illegal enrichment

The DRC is endowed with a wide variety of natural resources ranging from rich flora and fauna to waters and minerals. The control of these resources has brought more harm than benefit to the country. From the epoch of colonization until today, the Congolese people, especially the women and children, have always paid with their blood for the control over the immense resources. Remembering the story of King Leopold II, Katongole observes, "Reading 'King Leopold's Ghost' also led me to see that the real story that drives modern Africa is one of personal ambition and greed, which in the case of King Leopold II expressed itself in the plunder of the Congo" (2011:15). Katongole pursues his analysis of plundering Africa's resources and finds that, "the Congo still operates by the same law of plunder and greed. The actors change, but the script seems to be unchanged" (2011:15). The script of plundering the country remains unchanged as various actors are drawn by the control of what Turner describes as:

The Congo Free State became soon known as a 'geological scandal' on the basis of the vast mineral wealth discovered there, including copper, cobalt, tin, uranium, manganese, gold and diamonds. The presence of coltan and petroleum became known more recently (2007:26).

President Mobutu Sese Seko and his team did not do better either. They looted the country and ruined its economy for their personal enrichment. Although the country had relative peace, the oppression of the poor was as overwhelming as a state of war. According to Pius Ngandu

²² Read more in Human Rights Watch, "[Rwanda: Justice After Genocide—20 Years On](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/rwanda-justice-after-genocide-20-years)", March 28, 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/rwanda-justice-after-genocide-20-years> [accessed 31 October 2014].

²³ Leaked UN report accuses Rwanda of possible genocide in Congo <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/26/un-report-rwanda-congo-hutus> retrieved 15/04/2013.

Nkashama, the impoverishment of Congolese people by its leaders became a trigger for violence and conflict as happened in 1991 when soldiers and poor people took to the streets to plunder shops and luxurious mansions in Kinshasa (1995:69). Many people died during the pillaging.

I concur with Peter Schwab in his description of how several African leaders have destroyed their countries, because it reflects what Congolese people experienced during the Mobutu regime:

Rare is the head of state who acts on behalf of the entire nation. The people are not so much governed as ruled. It is as if they live in a criminally mismanaged corporation where the bosses are armed and have barricaded themselves inside the company safe... They siphoned billions of dollars into Swiss banks” (2001:162).

Many reports have demonstrated a close link that exists between wealth and bloodshed in various conflicts on the African continent. Most of the warlords have a craving for illegal enrichment which has led many African mineral-rich countries to experience bloody conflicts, e.g. Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Ivory Coast and recently the Central Africa Republic. Katongole has the right words as he describes the connection between many African countries:

For whether it is Uganda, Zimbabwe, Liberia (as the recent movie *Blood Diamonds* so clearly depicts), one confronts the same story of the politics of greed, dispossession, and state brutality, with perhaps the only difference being the degree of sophistication (2011:15).

There is a popular saying in Africa that ‘crocodiles are always hungry,’ which is true for those who profit from blood minerals. The Congolese War falls in that same category of conflicts over the control of mineral resources. It may be that at the beginning of the war in 1996 the economic motivation was not a prominent factor but, once Rwanda and its allies took control of the country, it is attested that the control of the immense resources of the DRC came to the top of their agenda. This is confirmed by the mutiny which took place in Kisangani between soldiers from Rwanda and Uganda as reported by Timothy Reid, “Uganda and Rwanda then fought over control of the diamond trade in Kisangani, a city in northern DRC, in August 1999 and their mutual relations have been strained ever since” (2006:75).

In spite of massive violations of human rights, as women and children are enslaved, raped and used by militias in the mining of blood minerals, the number of predators of mineral resources in the DRC is increasing. Besides Rwanda and Uganda, many countries and international corporations are supporting conflicts in the DRC for the exploitation of minerals such as gold, diamond, cobalt and especially coltan, a mineral which is a key component in the electronic industry of cell phones, computers and other e-gadgets (Ware 2001; and Shure 2010). Turner speaks of a United Nations Panel that in 2002,

has identified ‘elite networks’ within the Congo, centring on the Rwandan and Ugandan occupation zones and on the Kinshasa government. Eighty-five foreign companies were cited as participating in the illegal exploitation of Congo’s resources (2007:163).

The products which the network collects from illegal mining in the DRC are smuggled through neighbouring countries and contribute to the improvement of their economy; and also fund their military expeditions in the country. It is evident on the world market that Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda are all competing equally for the exportation of mineral wealth from the DRC. In this regard Lemarchand²⁴ argues, “Though both Rwanda and Uganda are bereft of diamond deposits, over the last few years Rwanda and Uganda have exported diamonds worth millions of dollars” (2009:54). He adds, “It is from the extraction of coltan, however, that Kigali derives much of the financial wealth needed to prosecute its military operation in eastern Congo” (2009:254).

Nonetheless, this massive pillage of Congolese resources cannot be carried out by foreigners alone, without national accomplices. Among them are politicians, military officers, heads of rebel groups and other business persons. Nzongola-Ntalaja has the right words to describe the situation as he notes that this crisis would not continue “without the willing complicity of Congolese nationals and the rulers of neighbouring African states, who together have allowed mercenaries, merchants of death and adventurers of all kinds to continue plundering our land and plunging our people into deeper poverty and destitution” (2002:236).

The two factors discussed above - the pursuit of the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide and the covetousness for mineral resources - should be considered as immediate causes of the

²⁴ In a section entitled ‘War and Plunder’ (2009: 254-57) Lemarchand gives many details on how the war in the eastern Congo has been linked to the massive exploitation of mineral resources and their trade overseas.

conflicts in the eastern DRC. This is attested by Jason Zaski in an article in which he reports the answer of the journalist Peter Eichstaedt²⁵ to the question, “What triggered the violence in eastern Congo?”

It coincided with two major events. One was the invasion by Rwanda and Uganda in 1996, which ultimately toppled Mobutu Sese Seko’s regime. The second [factor] was the explosion in cell phone and computer technology in the mid-1990s.²⁶

However, besides the fact that Rwanda and Uganda wanted to fight their own rebels who had taken refuge in the DRC and their greed for mineral resources, the war in the eastern DRC is also maintained by a profound and historical record of ethnic rivalry that needs to be underscored among the major causes of the conflict as I shall demonstrate it in the next section.²⁷

2.3.3 Ethnic rivalry in the eastern DRC

The population in the DRC is diverse, composed of an estimated 250 different ethnic groups speaking more than 400 dialects. Cohesion is often observed within members of small units, such as a clan, a lineage or a local community but ethnic and regional identities are sometimes claimed when people are confronted with political or ideological alignment.²⁸ Although tensions among neighbouring clans or local communities have from time to time occurred in the country, nothing has ever matched the magnitude of the current violent rivalry and killing in the eastern DRC. This situation in the eastern Congo has been exacerbated by the presence of a great number of Hutus, Tutsis in the Kivu region and to some extent the Hema in Ituri whose status has always been a bone of contention among people in the eastern DRC.

²⁵ Peter Eichstaedt has written a book entitled, *Consuming the Congo: War and Conflict Minerals in the World’s Deadliest Place*. Read more: http://failuremag.com/feature/article/conflict_minerals_and_war_in_eastern_congo/#ixzz2RI61zm1Z

²⁶ Jason Zaski, “Conflict Minerals and War in Eastern Congo,” http://failuremag.com/feature/article/conflict_minerals_and_war_in_eastern_congo/ retrieved 22/04/2013.

²⁷ While mentioning Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC, it is important to note that these countries are among those mentioned in the following statement of the WCC on the responsibility to protect people in suffering and peril, during the meeting held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14-23 February 2006: “To be faithful to that responsibility to protect people means above all, prevention of the kinds of catastrophic assaults on individuals and communities that the world has witnessed in Burundi, Cambodia, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other instances and locations of human-made crises. WCC studies showed that although churches have different views on the use of force for human protection purposes, they agree on the essential role of preventive efforts to avoid and, if possible, tackle the crisis before it reaches serious stages. Protection becomes necessary when prevention has failed.” http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/1-statements-documents-adopted/international-affairs/report-from-the-public-issues-committee/responsibility-to-protect?set_language=en [accessed 24/07/2014]

²⁸ Congo (DRC) <http://www.winne.com/congo/bf08.html>

Focusing on Hutus and Tutsis, it is important to note that the rivalry between these two ethnic groups seems to have been created by the Belgian administration in the African Great Lakes Region. In fact the Belgians who were ruling over Rwanda, Burundi and Congo used existing ethnic divisions in the colony to assert their power. According to Lemarchand, the Belgians believed in the ethnic superiority of the Tutsi over the Hutus, therefore many Hutus were sent to Congo as migrant workers, keeping the Tutsi in Rwanda as rulers and administrators. This migration of Hutu workers was done in the 1930s and 1940s. “The aim was two-fold: provide Belgian planters with a cheap labour force and offer an outlet for the growing population pressure in Rwanda” (2009:208). Prunier confirms the two-fold motive of Hutus migration to Congo as he argues:

Mission d’Immigration des Banyarwanda (MIB) was created by the Belgians in 1937 to bring agricultural workers from an already over-populated Rwanda into what was seen as an under-populated Kivu. During its eighteen years of existence the MIB imported about eighty-five thousand Banyarwanda from Rwanda, mostly into North Kivu, although some were sent down to Katanga to work in the mines (2009:48).

Although many Hutus have lived in the DRC ever since, the inhabitants continued to call these immigrants Banyarwanda and the Belgians did not try to solve the problem of their citizenship. Therefore their integration as Congolese citizens has always been disputed.

When the movement of independence swept the continent, things changed in Rwanda and the majority Hutus took power causing the Tutsis to have to find refuge in the DRC. Instead of settling in the Northern Kivu where Hutus were occupying the Masisi and Rutsuru territory, the Tutsis moved to the Southern Kivu. Lemarchand depicts that, “1959 marks the outbreak of the Hutu revolution in Rwanda, and with the arrival of some 60,000 Tutsi refugees from Rwanda in the early 1960s and 1970s, yet another complicating factor was introduced into an already tense situation” (2009:209). The presence of the new wave of political refugees from Rwanda, mostly Tutsis, created more tension in the eastern DRC, including Northern Kivu and the region of Itombwe in the Southern Kivu. The independence movement became an awakening of blind nationalism with a strong focus on identity and land inheritance. Not only were the Belgians colonizers threatened with having to leave the country, but also all the so-called ‘foreigners’ had to return to their homelands, including the Banyarwanda. Hence, many dormant conflicts under

the rule of the colonizers surfaced between foreigners and those who felt deprived of their land, in many instances fuelled by the propaganda of local politicians.

During the reign of President Mobutu Sese Seko the issue of the nationality of Banyarwanda, which was not settled during colonization nor in the early days of independence, became a major concern because of contradicting laws signed by Mobutu in this regard. At the beginning President Mobutu was very amicable to the immigrants from Rwanda and Barthélémy Bisengimana Rwema, one of the Tutsi immigrants, became Mobutu's powerful adviser and chief of staff by 1970. He succeeded in making Mobutu sign an ordinance-law in 1971 followed by a law of 5 January 1972 granting Congolese nationality to all Burundians and Banyarwanda who were present in Congo when the country became independent in 1960 (Turner 2007:87-88). During that time the Tutsis who had lived in South Kivu for many years before independence decided to adopt the name Banyamulenge in line with the 1972 Law on nationality but also as a way of distinguishing themselves from the Banyarwanda, Tutsi refugees of 1959 - 62.²⁹ The adoption of this name was contested by the Bafuliro of Uvira who consider the hill of 'Mulenge' from which the name Banyamulenge is derived, as their heritage.

As the Director of Mobutu's office, Bisengima has used this law on the citizenship of Banyarwanda and also the Bakajika Law of 1966, which gives the government the ownership of all the lands and minerals, to allow massive land sales to Banyarwanda to legalize their occupation, thus creating great tension among indigenous farmers evicted from their homeland. This was the start of the animosity that has characterized the relationship between Rwandan immigrants and other ethnic groups in the eastern DRC. Lemarchand notes one of the causes of the crisis centered on land issues in the Kivu as:

The crucial role played by Tutsi refugees from the Rwandan revolution (1959-62) in appropriating large tracts of land at the expense of the "indigenous" communities. This is where Bisengimana—himself, like many of his kinsmen, one of the largest landowners in the Kivu—bears considerable responsibility in heightening the tensions between the Banyarwanda and the native Congolese (2009:229).

²⁹ Thomas Turner has extensively developed the problem of the Banyamulenge in his book: *Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*; especially in chapter 4 entitled "War in South Kivu."

Bisengimana also played a key role behind the law on 'Zairianisation' which nationalized many enterprises and big farms owned by the Whites and gave them to political leaders, beneficiaries of Mobutu's dictatorship (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:148). In the Kivu region prominent Tutsi leaders grabbed most of the farms left by Belgian planters creating more tension. To confirm what he labels as 'insolent agrarian success by the Banyarwanda in 'Zairianization' 'Prunier (2009:49) cites a Rwandan businessman, Cyprien Rwakabuba, who was assigned 230,000 hectares (575,000 acres) of land whilst the average amount of land per person in Kivu was 0.81 hectare (2 acres).

When Bisengimana was removed from his post in 1977, politicians from the Kivu region, close to Mobutu, initiated a law in 1981 which challenged the nationality given earlier to Rwandan immigrants. In his comments on this law Lemarchand argues:

The nationality law of 1981, in effect, withdrew citizenship rights from all Banyarwanda, including those whose roots in the Kivu went back to pre-colonial times. From then on, citizenship only applied to "those persons who could show that one of their ancestors was a member of a tribe, or part of a tribe, established in the Congo prior to 1908," when the Congo ceased to be a "Free State" and became a Belgian colony (2009:228).

Since none of the Rwandans, both in the North and South Kivu, was able to demonstrate that his/her ancestors had lived in the DRC that long, the Rwandans found themselves excluded from being Congolese.

Contradicting laws on the status of Rwandan immigrants have opened the door to the xenophobic violence that has prevailed in the Kivu region to date. Although the enforcement of such a law was difficult to implement, its effects in the years that followed were visible as demonstrated by the following events: The election of 1987 was not held in North Kivu because of the inability to separate Rwandans from other Congolese. Turner (2009: 88) confirms that delegates from the Banyamulenge and Rwandans from North Kivu were refused participation in the 1991 *Conference Nationale Souveraine* - CNS (lit: Sovereign National Conference). In the period after CNS many acts of violence against the people of Rwandan origin were perpetrated in the Southern and Northern Kivu region creating the political unrest that prevailed until the outbreak of the 1996 war.

The frustration experienced by the Banyamulenge and other Banyarwanda in the region on the issue of nationality and land ownership, can explain their prompt adherence to the movement of liberation launched by the Tutsis of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) which toppled the Hutu regime in Rwanda in 1994 and later on invaded the DRC in 1996. Subsequent governments since the invasion of the DRC have not been able to solve the Banyamulenge problem. Many observers attest that the tensions between Tutsis in the DRC and other Congolese ethnic groups provided the perfect opportunity for Rwanda and its allies to solve their own crisis by invading the country. The combination of the three causes discussed above set the stage for a conflict which has become disastrous for women in the DRC.

2.4 The Situation of Women in the Eastern DRC

The history of the DRC, as described above, has been one of instability and violation of human rights since the colonial period. However, the fate of women who have borne the brunt of all conflicts has often been overlooked. Women can rightly picture themselves as victims and survivors of conflicts in the different epochs of the history of Congo. In the following sections, I give a brief overview of the suffering of Congolese women in history, but dwell on the contemporary plight of women in the eastern DRC.

2.4.1 Congolese women during in colonial period (1885-1960)

Congolese women along with men suffered a lot under the private state of King Leopold II (1885-1908) and during the Belgian colonization (1908-1960). The production of wild rubber imposed by the colonizers weighed heavily on women. Furthermore, women suffered from carrying heavy loads of wild rubber to the place of delivery because they were culturally considered as carriers. In addition, when a village failed to reach its quota, women and children became easy prey for punitive expeditions. According to Ascherson (1999:252), eye-witnesses of the atrocities reported that in some villages “women and children were hanged on the palisades in the form of a cross”. Horrible practices as soldiers chopped off human hands and brought them to Belgian officials as proof of successful punitive expeditions are noted by Ascherson:

American and Swedish missionaries described to the Press the revolting results of the ‘rubber system’ as it operated in the districts around their stations, and spoke of

the practice of bringing in severed human hands to testify that a punitive raid against a village slow to deliver its rubber quota had been thoroughly carried out (1999:243).

Although the work of producing wild rubber was done by men, most of the victims were women and children because they could not run as quickly as men when they had to flee from the punishers. Therefore many of them had their hands chopped off or were killed in the operation. King Leopold II was so interested in gathering his wealth that he became indifferent to the fate of the Congolese women. In his book *Le Soliloque du Roi Léopold* (2004) a French version of “King Leopold’s Soliloquy”. Mark Twain describes the cruelty of the King as he reacted to the report of atrocities committed by his agents upon women and children. Upon reading that a widow was obliged to sell her daughter into slavery as a fine for the failure to reach the quota, the King retorted (2004:40), “*Je n’ai rien contre les veuves, en tant que telles mais les affaires sont les affaires, et il faut bien que je vive, n’est-ce pas, même si cela doit causer quelque désagrément à l’un ou à l’autre par-ci, par-là*” (lit: I have nothing against widows but business is business, I need to live even if it may cause some discomfort here and there).

Unfortunately, the women’s misfortune in the DRC did not end with colonization but has been carried out from one epoch to another. In his comment on the DRC, Katongole depicts that the wanton sacrificing of African lives did not end with King Leopold II but continued and it “seemed to have reached a certain degree of acceptability as part of the official, normal way of nation-state politics” (2011:17). He concludes that:

Thus, we see the same wasting of lives in the fighting in eastern Congo as with the LRA in northern Uganda. Similarly, a Mobutu or a Mugabe will never voluntarily step down from office in the national interest. Instead, he will readily sacrifice, waste, starve, and kill “his people” for his own political ambition” (2011:17).

This is true of Congolese women as I discuss below.

2.4.2 Congolese women after independence and under Mobutu’s regime

Although the independence of Congo was not obtained by war, the period that followed independence was characterized by rebellions and armed conflicts all over the country, as demonstrated in section 2.2.2 on the incompetency of post-colonial governments. Men including young boys were enrolled by militias and many of them died during the war, leading to the

increase of young widows. Since the government was unable to secure jobs for them or provide social grants, most of these widows turned to prostitution for sheer survival. Nevertheless, one had to wait for the 'Mobutu regime' to see prostitution being institutionalized (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:167).

During the long dictatorship of the late President Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-1997), which was deemed to be a period of relative peace, women faced another threat. At the start of the Mobutu regime, the government proclaimed that it would work for women's emancipation. However, the emancipation turned out to be a men's initiative for their own interest. Women were used by the ruling class for their propaganda and pleasure. A country in which, as Nzongola rightly notes, "the degree of 'militantism' or commitment to the party could be judged by how well one sang and danced" (2002:167), women were organized into troupes of dancers at each level of administration (including schools) to entertain Mobutu and his administrators during public events and when foreign dignitaries visited the country. Those who distinguished themselves in dancing gained access to wealth and higher positions in their careers. It became common that beautiful women who knew how to surrender body and soul to the party acquired fortunes and careers (2002:167). This is in line with the "Phoebe Tradition" that Fulata Moyo describes as a practice that requires women of a certain church in Malawi 'to offer costly hospitality that involves the giving of their bodies in the name of service to the Church' (Fulata in Phiri and Nadar (eds.) 2005:184-200).

However, dancing was not the only price women had to pay for their 'emancipation' during the reign of President Mobutu. Women and young girls who surrendered their bodies to dignitaries of the party became their '*deuxièmes bureaux*', meaning second offices: a very degrading name that deprives women of their dignity as human beings created in God's image. They became things - 'offices' - to be used by politicians and dignitaries. Although few women took pleasure in this practice which became a source of income and connection with the ruling elite, for many it was a humiliating experience that they had to endure in silence and resignation for fear of their lives. This echoes what Musimbi Kanyoro wrote in her article that, "In our situation, where democracy is thought to be a luxury, speaking up involves foremost risking the wrath of the powerful" (2001:176). It is true that to speak up and denounce the abuse of women during the regime of terror instituted by President Mobutu Sese Seko was a very risky endeavour. As a

result, a number of married women were snatched from their beloved husbands and many school girls were obliged to quit their studies and become *deuxièmes bureaux*. Nonetheless, this may be considered a lesser vice compared to the current situation of women in the region.

2.4.3 Current situation of women in the eastern DRC

The worst for Congolese women was still to come if one compares the condition of women before and during the reign of President Mobutu Sese Seko to the atrocities of rape that have been committed in the country since the outbreak of the war in 1996.³⁰ Unlike in the past when rape and gender-based violence were hidden, the atrocities against women in the Kivu region have received increasing media coverage, more than any other phenomenon in the DRC to date. The reason is that rape in the DRC is perpetrated with such unprecedented brutality that it is regarded today as sexual terrorism.³¹ Acts of gender-based violence include gross sexual abuse, individual and gang rape, female genital mutilation and rape-shooting or rape-stabbing.³²

The perpetrators of these crimes which include members of local militias, the national army and the police, Mai-Mai, foreign soldiers and even UN peace-making force members, use anything at hand, including, guns, knives and sticks to destroy women's bodies. Their victims range from babies to elderly women. There have also been reports of men and boys who have been raped or sexually abused but women and girls remain by and large the vast majority of people targeted by armed groups.³³ Testimonies from survivors are so touching that one can hardly hold back tears, like the following collected by a panel of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR):

The panel spoke with a young woman who had been abducted in an attack by the FDLR in 2002 and became pregnant as a result of rape. Stigmatized by all and

³⁰ I have explained earlier the two waves of what is known as the Congo War or the African War. The first in 1996, followed by another in 1998. A number of rebel factions that stemmed from the second wave are waging war to date in spite of UN and AU's calls for peace.

³¹ Cf. Marion Pratt, Leah Werchick, Anaia Bewa, Marie-Louise Eagleton, Claudine Lumumba, Katherine Nichols and Lina Piripiri, "Sexual Terrorism: Rape as a Weapon of War in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: An Assessment of Programmatic Responses to Sexual Violence in North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Orientale Provinces." USAID/DCHA Assessment Report (9-16 January 2004). Available at: <http://m.idasa.org/media/uploads/outputs/files/Rape%20in%20DRC%20Report.pdf> [Accessed 18 February 2013]; Stefan Kirchner, *Wartime Rape: Sexual Terrorism in the Eastern Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo: International Law and Human Rights*, (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2008).

³² Mario Pratt, Leah Werchick, "Sexual Terrorism", 6.

³³ United Nations, "http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2011/07/men-and-boys-among-rape-victims-in-dr-congo/ accessed 5 April 2013.

fleeing a second attack on her village, she went into labor in the forest. Her baby died, delivered by some unskilled women who burst her bladder, which caused her to develop fistula. She knows that she will never get married - no one will even sit next to her - and this is what she described as the wound she has inside.³⁴

The statistics of such crimes are alarming. In an article provocatively entitled “In Congo, a Dead Rat is Worth More than the Body of a Woman”, John Cookson reports that in 2009 alone there were more than 15,000 recorded rapes, with an average of forty women being raped daily in the province of South Kivu alone.³⁵ The situation is so shocking that the United Nations special representative for sexual violence in conflict, Margot Wallstrom, described the DRC as “the rape capital of the world.”³⁶ According to Jo Adetunji, a recent study has revised these figures and found that “1,152 women are raped every day – a rate equal to 48 per hour. That rate is 26 times more than the previous estimate of 16,000 rapes reported in one year by the United Nations.”³⁷ The reality behind these figures is that the practice may be wider than what is reported.

I know as a Congolese woman and following my study in the field that accurate statistics on rape are difficult to get. Firstly, because women’s sexuality is culturally taboo, it is not supposed to be disclosed in public, especially to strangers. Also survivors avoid disclosing cases of rape because of the stigmatization and rejection they face in the community. Therefore, many cases will never be reported at all. Secondly, because the fact that rape in Congo has been widely publicized and has been attracting lots of donations from international organizations, some women are falsely claiming to be survivors of rape in order to receive medical attention and benefit from funds and relief that are distributed in that regard. Figures close to reality could be obtained if members of each community were able to do their own survey because they would be able to discover falsehoods and give accurate records; but they are not equipped for that exercise.

³⁴UNHCHR 2010, “Report of the Panel on Remedies and Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo to the High Commissioner for Human Rights,” p13. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_Reparations_Report_en.pdf accessed 12/04/2013.

³⁵ John Cookson. “In Congo, A dead Rat Is Worth More Than the Body of a Woman” *Big Think* October 27, 2010. <http://bigthink.com/women-and-power/in-congo-a-dead-rat-is-worth-than-the-body-of-a-woman> accessed on 15 August 2012.

³⁶ Malokele Nanivazo. “Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” United Nations University <http://unu.edu/publications/articles/sexual-violence-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo> accessed 2012-05-24

³⁷ Jo Adetunji, “Forty-eight women raped every hour in Congo, study finds.” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/12/48-women-raped-hour-congo> accessed 10 April 2013.

The effects of sexual violence in the region are overwhelming. It has led to the disintegration of moral and social values in various communities. In many instances perpetrators have decided to commit their vice publicly or in the presence of family members of the survivors. Therefore, women survivors of public rape live in shame since rape is considered culturally taboo. Men also feel humiliated because they were not able to protect their wives and girls from their attackers.³⁸ Many survivors live with severe physical and psychological impairment. Those who have been submitted to brutal sexual assault, described as rape with extreme violence (REV) by *Plos*³⁹ and whose genitals were torn in the process often develop fistula and experience trauma as well as other health problems. It is sad to know that thousands are living with fistula but only a few can access the two health centres that are equipped for rape-related surgery, Panzi Hospital in Bukavu and one centre in Goma.⁴⁰ In an interview with Lamia Gritli of the Voice of America, French Service, Doctor Denis Mukwege of Panzi Hospital said that they treat 3600 women survivors of rape per year.⁴¹

In some remote areas, e.g. Shabunda, where armed groups operate with apparent impunity, people live in abject poverty and hunger because women cannot go into the fields or to the markets for fear of being assaulted by the militias. The aftermath of violence in the region is enormous. Stigmatization causes the rejection by their communities of many women survivors of rape and children born of rape. For this reason, a number of those who have been infected by HIV hide from testing or receiving medical attention. Stories of assaulted women by ruthless armed groups and civilians in the eastern DRC are appalling and there seems to be no place to hide.

2.4.4 Why are atrocities carried out against women?

The question that many observers frequently ask is: why target women? There is no single answer to this question since the causes of rape and sexual violence in the region are complex. The responses received from participants to this study may be summarized as follows:

³⁸ Malokele Nanivazo. "Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

³⁹ Plos Medecine, "Rape with Extreme Violence: The New Pathology in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo" <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2791171/> accessed 11/04/2013.

⁴⁰ Conversations for a Better World, "Rape epidemic fuels fistula cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo" <http://www.conversationsforabetterworld.com/2010/01/rape-epidemic-fuels-fistula-cases-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/> accessed 11/04/2013.

⁴¹ VOA Congo Story: Interview with Dr. Denis Mukwege, Panzi Hospital, Bukavu, DRC https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0skN_g4Veo, Uploaded on Jul 15, 2011.

- i. Public and collective rapes have been used by foreign armies to punish and totally humiliate local Congolese communities. One should remember that the Congolese War was partly waged because Rwanda and Uganda wanted to punish a country which hid those who had committed genocide in Rwanda (Interhamwe) and the Ugandan rebel groups (LRA), as noted by Kathryn Farr:

With the sudden arrival in 1994 - 95 of over a million Rwandan Hutu refugees – a number of whom were part of the Interhamwe militia who led the Rwandan genocide – tensions began to escalate. A revitalized Hutu Interhamwe force began to terrorize local populations and organized cross-border combat incursions into Rwanda. In fact, the war zone has expanded due to invasions by and spill over wars from several neighbouring countries. Among the most ruthless of the emergent combatant groups has been the National Congress for the Defence of the Congolese People (CNDP), led by Tutsi rebel Laurent Nkunda. In the north, cross-border incursions by the very violent Ugandan rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), have included abuses against DRC civilians.⁴²

All these groups, Interhamwe, LRA and the armies that fought them, have been involved in sexual assaults against Congolese women and girls.

- ii. Female genital mutilation (FGM) has also been practised to completely destroy the foundation of the family in the DRC. The brutal way FGM has been conducted by perpetrators has left many survivors unable to bear children in the future. Along with genocide, destroying women's bodies is carried out with the intent of wiping out the rival group.
- iii. By way of reprisal, the Congolese army and militia has perpetrated sexual violence and rape against entire communities and families accused of supporting their enemies. Those acting in this way do not feel guilty because they claim their act of retaliation against the enemy is justifiable, without realising that they are opening the door to a

⁴² Kathryn Farr 2010, "No Escape: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Central and Eastern African Armed Conflicts", 91. http://www.unive.it/media/allegato/dep/n13-14-2010/Ricerche/casi/5_Farr.pdf accessed 13/04/2013.

cycle of revenge in which women and girls from both sides become victims as is rampant now in the region.

- iv. The use of fetishism has often been accused of encouraging rape for the rejuvenation and strength of some of the perpetrators of sexual violence against women. Many rebel groups use fetish and witchcraft to enhance their military aptitude. In an interview with Bahati Valérie, a child soldier of Mai-Mai confirmed that, “Witch doctors told them to rape many women; old, young and children, so as to get extra power for killing more enemies.”⁴³
- v. Rape is also used to force local communities to leave their lands for the exploitation of mineral resources and the cutting of timber for the benefit of international corporations and national warlords. The link between the Congolese War and the exploitation of mineral resources has been documented in various reports about the conflicts in the eastern DRC. It has become obvious as most of militias and armed groups are located in remote mineral-rich areas.

The weapon of sexual violence is used universally as a means for men to assert their male superiority over women who are generally considered as weak and as people of low status. That is why rape in the DRC is practised even in areas that are not at war, like in Kinshasa and other provinces in the West. As Isabel Apawo Phiri has rightly noted, the reason why men rape is because “ultimately rape is about power, it is used as a weapon of domination” (Phiri 2006a:113-130). The expression of male power through rape has become another scourge as many countries, including South Africa and India, are struggling to control sexual assaults and crimes against women.

This is briefly the socio-political context that prompted me to undertake this investigation. In the next chapter I discuss the theology of peace as one of the frameworks of this study.

⁴³ Mugisho Theophile, “Why They Rape: A Former Child Soldier Speaks Out” <http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/partners-in-africa/partners-in-drc/cofapri/cofapri-blogs/3031-former-child-soldier.html> accessed 13/04/2013. Mugisho Theophile and Bahati Valérie are members of an NGO called Congolese Females Action for Promoting Rights and Development (COFAPRI) based in Bukavu, Southern Kivu Province.

2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe the socio-political background of this study. In this chapter I have discussed the situation of conflicts in the Kivu region and its consequences on the population. I have demonstrated that conflicts and mass killings in the DRC have their origin in the era of the Congo Free State of King Leopold II of Belgium followed by the Belgian colonization. People during the Belgian rule were subjected to forced labour with punishment by death in case of failure.

I have also shown that after independence, the incompetent government that led the country was unable to provide peace and security to the nation which plunged the DRC into civil wars, secessions and rebellions. The coming of President Mobutu did not rise to the expectation that people had in his military coup. Very quickly, he took advantage of the situation to plunder the resources of the country for personal enrichment and established a long and horrible dictatorship that has ruined the DRC to date.

To put an end to Mobutu's regime, Rwanda and its allies with the help of national militias waged war against the national army but it turned out to be the deadliest war since World War I with huge casualties among civilians estimated at 5 million or more dead and a massive violation of human rights. I have underlined three major causes of these ongoing conflicts: (1) the pursuit of rebels from neighbouring countries who have found refuge in the DRC; (2) the greed for the exploitation of the immense mineral resources of the DRC for illegal enrichment and for funding the war; and (3) the defence of the population of Rwandan origin who have always been victims of xenophobic violence from various Congolese ethnic groups and of political exclusion.

In this chapter I also discussed the misfortune of women in the different epochs of the history of the country but mostly during the current Congolese War. Women were easy prey for punishment by death by the colonizers; they became the objects of sexual pleasure for the dignitaries of the Mobutu's regime. I have particularly drawn the attention of the readers to sexual atrocities and the violation of human rights that women are facing now from all armed groups currently operating in Congo, including from civilians. Acts of assaults range from gang rape, to gun rape and genital mutilation. The country has such a record of war rape that it is known as the world capital of rape. Reasons behind targeting women are complex. I have

highlighted five. (1) Public and collective rapes have been used by foreign armies to punish and totally humiliate local Congolese communities. (2) Female genital mutilation (FGM) was also practiced to completely destroy the foundation of the family in the DRC. (3) By way of reprisal, the Congolese army and militia perpetrated sexual violence and rape against entire communities and families accused of supporting their enemies. (4) The use of fetishism has often been accused of encouraging rape for the rejuvenation and strength of some of the perpetrators of sexual violence against women. (5) Rape is also used to force local communities to leave their lands for the exploitation of mineral resources and the cutting of timber for the benefit of international corporations and national warlords.

This situation constitutes the reason why I have undertaken this study of involving women in making peace in order to alleviate the misery and fear in which women in the Kivu region live.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGY OF PEACE

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two I have circumscribed the general context of this study by analysing the situation of conflicts during the history of the DRC, especially in the Kivu region. The emphasis was put on the major causes of the conflicts and its consequences on the social, economic and political development of the country; but particularly on how this situation has impacted negatively on the lives of women for many years. I have argued that since 1996 more than 5 million people have died from the Congolese War and I have shown that the presence of a huge number of peacekeepers in the country has not yet borne any positive result. Peace remains a dream for the rural population, especially for women, in the Kivu region.

This chapter seeks to understand God's perspective on peace by discussing various theological discourses on peace. The survey of various theories of peace is an important step in this study which aims at casting a theology of peace that may appropriately address the prevailing situation of conflict in the region. It was discussed earlier that Christian women need to ground their involvement in the process of peace-building on solid theological principles of peace in order to be effective in their engagement. The chapter is solely a compilation of data collected from existing written resources.

In the first section of this chapter I discuss the definition of a theology of peace and a number of meanings attached to the concept. In section two I explore the feminist perspective on peace. In the last section I consider the pacifism theory as championed by historic peace churches, and include other alternative theories such as just war and just peace-making.

The recent war which started in 1996 has set the stage for a tragedy with a higher death toll than any other conflict before and with a massive violation of human rights as unpunished rape is perpetrated daily against women and girls. Consequently, this situation due to its wide coverage in national and international media has drawn to the country a huge number of UN peacekeepers, humanitarian organizations and peacemakers to stop the calamity. However, the presence of

peacekeepers has not yet borne any positive result; peace remains a dream for the rural population in the Kivu region.

3.2 Defining a Theology of Peace

Theology of peace in this study refers to God's perspective and discourse about peace. In an insightful statement, John Dear has captured well the significance of defining a theology of peace in a context of conflict as he states:

From the perspective of the world's violence, theology refers to and reflects upon God's relationship and transformation of the violence and our participation in God's transforming nonviolence. Our theology seeks to pinpoint God's way out of violence and enter into that struggle (1994:15).

According to Dear, a theology of peace consists in firstly, understanding God's intention to transform violence into peace and secondly, being involved in bringing about that peace. It is a dynamic process that should lead to the establishment of peace. In what follows I want to discuss a biblical meaning of peace.

3.2.1 A biblical meaning of peace

In the Hebrew Bible, the word *shalom* is used for peace, while the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament use the word *eirene*. These words include a wide range of meaning which goes beyond the absence of war. In his study of the concept of shalom in the Hebrew Bible, Claus Westermann (Westermann 1992:16-48) has defined three areas of application for *shalom*. In the first and the most common, "Shalom means wholeness or wellness in a comprehensive sense—that is, the well-being or welfare of the person in community, including all areas of human existence, a healthy human existence in all its possibility" (1992:21). This initial area of the application of shalom includes greetings and could be the equivalent of the English "OK". In the second area Westermann sees peace in its political sense when the community is threatened by war. He declares, "A contrast between war and peace as alternative conditions was unknown by the ancient Hebrew. Hence the word "peace" (*shalom*) could not be understood as a conceptual alternative to war" (1992:32) This declaration has raised criticism among scholars because it contradicts other studies that confirm that the Hebrew root 'shalom' bears the sense of peace in

opposition to war (Yoder 1992:3-15).⁴⁴ The third aspect refers to shalom as something in the future, making allusion to the saving or salvation by Yahweh (Westermann 1992:35-36). All these three areas defined by Westermann, namely, wellbeing, end of war and a bright future, have an application in the Kivu region as people are struggling to cope with recurrent conflicts and violence.

Also in the above mentioned book, Willard M. Swartley summarizes four essays in German on *eirene*⁴⁵ to capture the use of peace in the New Testament. Firstly, Luise Schottroff sets up a contrast between the oppressive ‘Pax Romana’ guaranteed by military might as portrayed by current militarism and the ‘Pax Christi’ that Jesus announced as a sign of the kingdom of God, which is “life in its comprehensive sense, including eating, health, fellowship, and hope” (1992:158). She sees the scripture as a source of empowerment of the oppressed for peace action. The early Christian community expressed peace by providing aid to the poor and oppressed to give them hope and identity. Secondly, Erich Dinkler’s essay attests, “The primary focus of the New Testament peace teaching concerns the divine - human relationship which in turn unites people in the salvation reality of Jesus Christ. Thus peace in its biblical meaning cannot be reduced to a political agenda. It is embedded in the gospel’s message of salvation and reconciliation” (1992:152). Thirdly, Hubert Frankmölle observes that though in general Jesus and the early Christian teachings advocate peace and nonviolence, Luke’s gospel seems to support both, nonviolence and the use of the sword in accordance with “the early Christian reality of experiencing persecution and the brutality of the ‘sword’” (1992:153). Fourthly, Ulrich Luz reflects on the biblical moral priorities of justice and peace and calls the church to become a significant force to challenge oppression, poverty and violence. These essays portray different aspects of peace in its composite form. It is about maintaining good relationships between humans and God and also between humans themselves by taking care of and uplifting the vulnerable, especially the poor and oppressed.

⁴⁴ Perry B. Yoder. “Introductory Essay to the Old Testament Chapters: *Shalom* Revisited” in Yoder and Swartley (eds). *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 3-15. Yoder mentions significant studies on ‘Shalom’ by Gerhard von Rad, Walter Eisenbeis and Jacob Kremers which, unlike Westermann, establish the relationship between shalom and war.

⁴⁵ Westermann. “Introducing the New Testament Essays on *Eirene*,” 151-155. The four articles are compiled in Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley (eds). *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992): Luise Schottroff. “The Dual Concept of Peace,” 156-163; Erich Dinkler. “*Eirene*—The Early Christian Concept of Peace,” 164-212; Hubert Frankemölle. “Peace and the Sword in the New Testament,” 213-233 and Ulrich Luz. “The Significance of Biblical Witness for Church Peace Action,” 234-253.

Michel Desjardins elaborates on the concept of *eirene* as he underscores the composite image of peace portrayed by various New Testament's writers. He notices that there is a tension in the message of the New Testament since it promotes both peace and violence. On the one hand, the peace-promoting side is well featured in Jesus' life and teachings. The overall message of the Gospels is that:

Faced with the threat of physical violence, Christians must not reciprocate, even to the point of death. Moreover, Christians are encouraged to avoid instigating violence, and to do all they can to defuse potentially violent situations (1994:18).

This non-violent message is reinforced by Paul's perspective of peace which is to promote equality among all Christians, between slaves and their masters, men and women, and Jews and non-Jews. Dear argues that often Paul used the term peace to mean "the absence of violence — physical or otherwise, getting along harmoniously with others or to refer to an inner state of tranquillity that anticipates eternal life" (1997:18).

On the other hand, violence-promoting stances are present throughout the New Testament. In his analysis Desjardins has examined four forms in which violence manifests itself in the New Testament (1997:110): the first is the acceptance of soldiers and war; the second concerns the extreme violence that is expected to occur at the very end of this age; the third is the male dominion over women; and the fourth is the tendency to group humanity into camps of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (1997:62).

However, the co-existence of peace and violence in the New Testament, according to Desjardins, is not a contradicting issue. Instead he argues:

I would hope that an appreciation of the New Testament's dual nature by Christians and non-Christians alike might contribute to our society's movement toward a more peaceful world, particularly given the freedom we now fortunately have, to arrive at our own views on these matters (1997:121).

The above statement advocates that it is important to integrate both peace and violence when dealing with biblical peace in order to formulate a balanced theology that can address a world torn by conflicts. The dual nature of biblical peace is also highlighted in the feminist perspective on peace.

In his book, *A Time for Peace*, Herman Hendricks (1986:4) reflects on the various shades of the term peace (*shalom* and *eirene*), and notices that, “If people live in shalom, they enjoy health, wholeness, soundness and integrity. Living harmoniously with one’s family adds to shalom. The wider the covenant of peace extends, the more inclusive is shalom.” Hendricks insists on the inclusivity of the term ‘peace’ because it touches all aspects of human life: social, economic, physical and environmental. More explicit on the inclusivity of *shalom* is the statement by Nicholas Wolterstorff (1987:71) as he argues, “But the right relationships that lie at the basis of shalom involve more than right relationships to other human beings, they involve right relationships to God, to nature, and to oneself as well”. Peace should bring healing in all aspects of our relationships. I would like in the following sections to elaborate on the three areas of relationship mentioned by Wolterstorff by modifying his order. I will start with peace with oneself, peace with God and finally peace with nature.

3.2.2 Peace as relationship with oneself

Shalom should start with inner peace so that a person may feel secure and able to lead a healthy relationship with others and with the creation. The inner peace is also known as peace of mind. Neil Anderson and Rich Miller (2000) have depicted feelings such as fear, anxiety and panic to be responsible for the lack of inner peace. In their attempt to define the three feelings, Anderson and Miller note that, though there might be a healthy rational fear, irrational fears turn into phobias which compel people to do irresponsible things or inhibit them from doing what they should. The objects of human fear/phobia include high places, bridges, blood, animals, strangers and enclosed places (2000:15). They pursue their enumeration by showing that unlike fear or phobia, anxiety does not have a specific object or cause. Besides a temporary anxiety which may be normal and helpful when a person is concerned about things that he/she values, or before an event, a persisting trait of anxiety over a long period of time leads to a stressful life with a number of worries over issues such as finances, relationships, health and ability to perform (2000:18). The idea of anxiety causing persisting worry is underscored by Chris Williams as he observes that, “Worrying thoughts are common in anxiety. In worry, the person goes over things again and again in their mind in a way that is unhelpful because it does not actually help to resolve the difficulty that is worried about.” The statement continues by observing that, “In

anxiety, the person often overestimates the threat or danger they are facing, and at the same time usually underestimates their own capacity to cope with the problem” (2002:31).

Fear and anxiety can evolve into panic attacks. Williams sees them as being a “feeling of acute fear, dread or terror. During panic, the person can experience catastrophic fears that a sudden and threatening physical illness or terrible event will occur right now” (2002:32). Though panic attacks can be quick and short-lived, “the result is often an increasingly restricted lifestyle, reduced confidence and additional long-term distress” (2002:32). In some instances panic attacks occur spontaneously and unexpectedly without any apparent cause (Anderson and Miller 2000:20). This is a serious issue in the context of this study because many women traumatized by the war seem to suffer from this disorder. In a report published by *Psychiatric Times*, researchers have found that “panic disorder is 2.5 times more prevalent among women than men.”⁴⁶ Evidently, even if the war had to end today in the DRC, the effects of conflict-induced trauma will continue to affect people for years.

Chris Williams and his colleagues trace back the ultimate cause of the lack of inner peace to the fall of Adam and Eve as the whole creation became disconnected from God and from one another (2002:15). They therefore suggest that the cure to this disorder resides in renewing one’s relationship with God and with others (2002:18). The mending of our relationship with God is underscored by Anderson and Miller as they argue, “A true knowledge of our heavenly Father and a deep understanding of what it means to be a child of God are essential keys to overcoming the shackles of fear and anxiety” (2000:30). They add, “The peace of God is internal, not external. God is shaking the foundations of this world, but if our foundation is in Christ, we have nothing to fear” (2000:260).

One should, however, be aware that all problems with inner peace do not come from human sins or the presence of the devil. There are many cases of fear, anxiety and panic attacks that are caused by the incapacity to cope with problems, as well as a variety of other psychological disorders. The reality is that many Christians today and God’s servants in the Bible have at times experienced a loss of inner peace and have developed the feelings described in this section, even

⁴⁶ Gregory A Leskin and Javaid I Sheikh, “Gender Differences in Panic Disorder” *Psychiatric Times*. <<http://www.psychiatrytimes.com/articles/gender-differences-panic-disorder#sthash.X9bKZmEP.dpuf>> [accessed 20 July 2013]

when they have not sinned against God. Nonetheless, a broken relationship with God can affect personal peace as discussed in the following section.

3.2.3 Peace as relationship with God

Peace is here considered as a result of a good relationship with God. This stands as a consequence of what is stated earlier in this study that one cannot dissociate God from peace because peace is imbedded in God's nature and essence. In his letter to the Romans, Paul underscores the source of believers' peace as he states, "*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Rom. 5:1). In another text Paul insists on peace as being a free gift from God mediated by Jesus or through his redemptive death. "*They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 3:24). Jacob Kremer suggests that people should be made aware of their sinful nature and the redemption in Christ in order to enjoy this peace with God.

The human contribution to the possibility of such times of peace, according to the biblical perspective, is to become conscious of one's own sin and, through faith in Jesus Christ, receive as a gift redemption for this guilt. For peace with God is the prerequisite of peace among the people (Kremer 1992:144).

Taking into consideration what Kremer declares, that peace with God is the prerequisite for peace among people, one should assume that human beings forfeit their peace as long as they live in rebellion against God. The biblical assertion "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom 3:23), points to the fact that the whole world is lacking and needs to be reconciled with God. The question is how should people who are not of Christian faith come to find the way to peace with God and consequently with others.

Kremer puts the challenge of mediating the peace with God upon Christians who should live by example:

The most important contribution to peace in this world is that each individual tries to live as a Christian, whether in the private sphere or in the political one. In that way such a person can contribute so that humanity withdraws from the power of evil and opens itself up in faith to the gift of peace (1992:146).

Whether what Kremer suggests is able to bring peace on a large scale remains disputable. However, in the context of this study, as I shall demonstrate in Chapters Six and Seven, Christian

women's fellowships have become a space of refuge and relief for many women survivors of rape and violence. In their meetings, women share their stories, meditate on the Word of God and pray together for comfort and mutual support. Though the situation of conflicts and violence against women continues in the DRC, members of women's fellowships can testify to a certain level of peace with God which sustains their lives and gives them hope for the future. Not only are women waiting for peace which can liberate them, but so is nature in the DRC.

3.2.4 Peace as relationship with nature

Wolterstorff (1987) speaks of peace with nature as part of shalom. More than ever before, the entire humanity is now aware of the interconnection that exists between human beings and their environment. One cannot touch forests, animals, atmosphere, rivers and seas without bringing consequences upon human life. Steven Bouma-Prediger gives an alarming account of the state of our planet as he argues:

Exploding population growth, hunger and malnutrition, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, water scarcity and impurity, land degradation, waste production, energy misuse, air pollution and acid rain, global climate change—such is the litany of ecological woe. The state of our planet is not good. The earth is groaning (2001:65).

Because of this groaning state of the planet, Bouma-Prediger calls people to take better care of the earth and evokes many reasons to do so, but the most crucial is that we ourselves are in danger. “So why care for the earth? For many reasons—many good reasons. Because our own existence is imperiled” (2001:179). People need to be aware that they are destroying their own environment by handling carelessly and irresponsibly, their habitat, the earth.

Peace with nature is at the heart of women because there is a strong link between women and nature. Not only does their daily routine connect them to nature, especially for women in rural areas, but also women and nature are equally victims of extreme abuse and exploitation by patriarchal dominion. Anna Case-Winters argues:

The links between gender and ecology are especially strong in rural areas of developing countries where women often experience more immediately the effects of environmental degradation. They also have more limited access to resources and decision-making regarding how they are used (2007:68).

Women understand that seeking peace for nature would entail peace for all those who are oppressed including women. They are therefore calling for ‘ecojustice’ because they know that a just world should promote fair relationships between humans and nature and also between men and women. Approaches to bringing about ecojustice may differ⁴⁷ but the overall outcome should be a social transformation. Case-Winters affirms that ecojustice shall lead to “a new relation with nature that is cooperative rather than controlling, respectful rather than rapacious, and intrinsic” (2007:64).

The involvement of African women in seeking peace with nature is important because conflicts on this continent are often associated with the abuse of women and nature. Multiple expeditions of militiamen are characterized by a serious threat to the ecology as they engage in all kinds of evildoing; for example, the destruction of crops, forests and human lives, and especially violence against women and children. This is what is taking place in the current situation of conflict in the DRC. While the humanitarian tragedy of mass killing and violation of human rights are widely broadcast, many people ignore the ecological disaster caused by the war in the DRC. Timbers in the rainforest of the Congo basin are being cut massively⁴⁸ by various rebel groups and foreign companies to support the expenses of the war. Since deforestation affects the cycle of rainfall, many springs of waters are drying up and a threat of desertification is felt in a number of localities. Armed groups are also involved in anarchic mining causing the degradation of vast arable lands previously used for agriculture to sustain lives in many villages; and causing the pollution of streams which are the only source of water in most of the rural areas in the DRC (UN Report 2006). The proliferation of firearms in the hands of immature and irresponsible militiamen is causing the decimation of wild animals, including protected species such as okapi and mountain gorillas. Therefore, one cannot envisage bringing peace to the Kivu region without paying attention to the groaning of nature which is also in need of enjoying shalom.

The destruction of nature is not only confined to regions facing civil wars and conflicts: every African nation faces its own challenges with the environment. Writing from his experience of ecological problems in Zimbabwe, M L Daneel notes that, “In Africa the few remaining black

⁴⁷ Ecofeminists envisage various ways of establishing social justice towards women and ecology.

⁴⁸ According to a report by Daniel Cooney, the annual rates of gross deforestation in the Congo Basin have doubled since 1990. <http://blog.cifor.org/8019/deforestation-rates-double-in-the-congo-basin-report/> accessed 03/05/2013.

rhinos are still being threatened by ruthless profiteers, wilderness areas dwindle as ever growing numbers of people crowd out wildlife, and the processes of deforestation and desertification continue unabated” (1999:312). As far as rhino poaching is concerned South Africa had a record of 668 Rhinos killed in 2012, 1004 in 2013 and 1020 in 2014.⁴⁹ The reason behind the destruction of nature is that the human stewardship of God’s creation has failed because of “the sinful pride and greed, and carelessness that refuse responsibility for understanding and serving God’s world” (Meyer and Meyer 1991:35). This is true for all the troubles and conflicts that have deprived people of the peace they need. Women are not only concerned about nature but as life-bearers they want peace for all as I shall discuss it in the following section.

3.3 Feminist Perspective on Peace

The feminist perspective on biblical peace is informed by women’s experience of subjection and oppression by patriarchal cultures in both the society and the Church. In spite of the existence of several strands among feminists worldwide⁵⁰ due to the different experiences of life which they all face in their communities, there is a unifying thread running through all feminist approaches to peace, which is to challenge patriarchal cultures of violence by promoting equality and life-sustaining initiatives. Women have established that a culture of war, violence and exploitation has a close link with the hierarchical and dualistic structures of patriarchal societies which allow the dominion over and abuse of the weak by the strong. This is stated clearly in the following:

To recognize that violence is an integral part of patriarchy is to know that women can and must develop alternatives to violence, and continue to be nurturers, healers, listeners, and educators (Bikmore in McAllister 1982:163).

Though women participate in acts of violence together with men, for example during the genocide in Rwanda and the DRC, the instigators remain mostly men from rival ethnic groups. However, women pay the price of taking care of victims of conflicts as nurturers and healers. It takes courage and determination for women to resist oppressive cultures and develop alternatives

⁴⁹ See South Africa: Rhino poaching statistics update (23 November 2014), published by the Department of Environmental Affairs..< <http://wessa.org.za/get-involved/rhino-initiative/current-rhino-poaching-stats.html>> accessed on 4 January 2015.

⁵⁰ The different movements of feminists are discussed in Chapter Four of this study.

to violence, as suggested in the above statement. Speaking from her African experience, Mercy Oduyoye argues:

African women draw empowerment from a spirituality that urges them to think through what it means to be partners with women struggling for a world free from violence and for human communities that honor humanity and the environment that sustains us (Oduyoye 1996:163).

This empowerment from spirituality is not an easy task for Christian women since the manual of their spirituality, the Bible, is accused of being an instrument of patriarchal and androcentric Judeo-Christian cultures that have caused the exploitation of and dominion over women and nature. Biblical texts have often been interpreted in a way that has aggravated the violence against women and nature. Though no text in the New Testament allows woman-beating and other forms of discrimination and molestation that they face, passages concerning male headship and women's submission have been used as a whip to maintain women under bondage in the name of the Bible. This violence based on a negative interpretation of the Bible is being challenged by women theologians⁵¹ who are now proposing a freeing interpretation of texts of violence. Madipoane Masenya urges, "Women need to equip themselves accordingly in order to be able to teach the Bible in a responsible, God-fearing way. As women church they ought to use the Bible as a sword to destroy the many dangerous forces that elevate the male over the female" (Masenya 2005:55). Christian women who have decided not to dismiss the Bible but to re-read and re-interpret it for liberation have to adopt more creative ways of handling biblical texts, as expressed by Elsa Tamez in this statement:

With respect to Christian women theologians, we must continue to seek new gender theories which help us break down the Christian theological discourse which discriminates against women...A new anthropological and theological praxis will generate a different type of society with transformed relationships between women and men (Tamez 1996:18).

Tamez is right that change in the society requires the transformation of relationships because conflicts are often associated with issues of gender, power, sexuality and ideologies. In her assessment of conflicts in Sri Lanka, Marlene Perera describes the fate of women which has

⁵¹ The Circle of African Women Theologians has been for many year encouraging women to read the Bible and write scholarly articles and books that engage the prevalent patriarchal interpretation of the Bible in order to liberate women from the oppressive use of the Bible.

many similarities with the situation in the eastern DRC as she observes that, “women caught in a war situation become easy prey to rape, sexual slavery, torture, genocide, and other forms of gender-specific violence” (Perera, 1996:111). The experience of Sri Lanka can be extended elsewhere: women living in societies undergoing conflicts bear in their bodies the effects of war more than their male counterparts. They are therefore more likely to be inclined to bring peace in spite of being usually excluded from decision-making. More important is Perera’s call to constructive peace that this study will explore further in order to formulate a perspective that women in the DRC can adopt for building lasting peace in the region.

People yearn for a positive and more humane vision and thrust of society. We need to use our powers of imagination to the maximum in developing and expanding such a vision. Let us come together as concerned women and men, sharing leadership and taking the initiative to be in tune with the fundamental and deep human and religious spirit in creating alternative images of power, order, and leadership and move away from hierarchical, patriarchal, and bureaucratic structures. Let us strive to network and establish a supportive and fostering climate for innovative ventures for revisioning and rebuilding society and World Order (1996:117).

Perera envisages bringing peace as a corporate endeavour in which men and women come together drawing their strength from a fundamental religious spirit. As it happens with historic peace churches, they constitute a network of religious communities sharing the same concern towards nonviolence.

3.4 Pacifism and Historic Peace Churches

As stated in chapter one, Mennonites and other groups belonging to historic peace churches are present in the DRC but do not have a great influence, especially in the Kivu region where most of them are still at the church planting level. However, the literature on peace concerning the group constitutes a valuable resource for many Christian peace-makers. It is important to remember that historic peace churches, also known as Anabaptists,⁵² are constituted by three major groups—Mennonites, Church of the Brethren and Society of Friends (Quakers).

⁵² More about historic peace churches is found in J.C. Wenger, *What Mennonites Believe* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991) and John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogue Between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchner, ON: Pandora Press, 2004).

Anabaptists developed as a radical wing of the Reformation with many small groups led by lay preachers. Though they were not a unified group at the beginning, they shared the same urge to bring deep and quick reforms in the church, which separated them from the founders of the Reformation in Europe: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others.⁵³

Besides the rejection of infant baptism, these churches are commonly characterized today by their stand for nonviolence. Nonviolence seems to be at the core of the Anabaptists' theology from the start, as stipulated in article 4 of the Schleitheim document,⁵⁴ considered to be the foundational statement of the movement. "Thereby shall also fall away from us the diabolic weapons of violence—such as sword, armor, and the like, and all their use to protect friends or against enemies—by virtue of the word of Christ: 'you shall not resist evil'" (Yoder 2009:177). Article 6 of the same document underscores the principle about the use of sword as follows:

We have been united as follows concerning the sword: The sword is an ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and kills the wicked, and guards and protects good. In the law the sword is established over the wicked for punishment and for death, and the secular rulers are established to wield the same...But within the perfection of Christ only the ban is used for the admonition and exclusion of the one who sinned, without the death of the flesh, simply the warning and the command to sin no more (Yoder 2009:177-178).

In the light of this statement, Anabaptists have adopted a different attitude toward the use of the sword which is explained below.

3.4.1 Use of the sword

The sword as a symbol of violence and bloodshed is considered by Anabaptists as a weapon of the flesh and not a weapon of the spirit. Article 6 mentioned above encourages the Anabaptists to

⁵³ Read Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation* (Nashville: Abington, 1960), Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach (eds). *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contribution to International Peacebuilding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Marlin E. Miller and Barbara Nelson Gingerich (eds). *The Church's Peace Witness* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994).

⁵⁴ According to John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 175-6. Schleitheim in Switzerland was the place of meeting in February 1527 of various groups of the radical movement of the Reformation to come together and form a community which would soon be known as "Anabaptists". All the doctrinal beliefs and values agreed upon were recorded in one document, *Schleitheim document*, which is considered the foundational manifesto of the movement.

practice what was termed by the Swiss Brethren as *the rule of Christ* in Matthew 18:15-20 (Yoder 2009:171). This text requires that whenever there is conflict or offence among the believers, the matter should be settled through dialogue which might result in forgiveness and reconciliation. In case of failure, the guilty party is banned or excommunicated from the community without coercion or killing. Christians are therefore called not to use the weapons of the flesh which are diabolic. The rejection of the sword stands for a nonviolent and nonresistant attitude that members of the Anabaptist movements were called to adopt. A number of scriptural passages are evoked in support of the principle of non-violence:

Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). His kingdom is ‘not of this world’ (John 18:36). His servants do not fight (John 18:36). ‘The weapons of our warfare are not carnal’ (2 Cor. 10:4). We are to love [our] enemies’ (Matt. 5:44). We are to ‘overcome evil with good’ (Rom. 12:21). We are to ‘pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]’ (Matt. 5:44)” (Culver 1985:39-40).

Though some would accept the use of the sword for self-defense, most of the Anabaptists exclude the use of the sword even when one is the victim of violence and in a position to defend one’s life. In a letter sent to Thomas Müntzer, Grebel wrote, “True believing Christians are sheep among wolves, sheep for slaughter. They must be baptized in anguish and tribulation, persecution, suffering, and death, tried in fire, and must reach the fatherland of eternal rest not by slaying the physical but the spiritual.”⁵⁵ What Grebel underscores is the readiness to suffer and die instead of retaliating. Jesus, the sheep for slaughter, is set up as an example because he offered himself to those who crucified him and yet he had the power to escape or to fight back.

The Sermon on the Mount of Matthew chapter 5 has been extensively referred to by the Anabaptists to foster a culture of nonviolence or nonresistance. This attitude of the Anabaptists towards the use of the sword was quickly turned into a theology of martyrdom which is a controversial topic today. The founder of the Mennonites, Menno Simons, established the comparison of the two kingdoms, the kingdom of the Prince of Peace and that of the prince of Strife and Darkness (Menno 1975:185-189). He locates true Christians in the kingdom of the Prince of Peace as he argues, “They do not know vengeance, no matter how they are mistreated. In patience they possess their souls (Luke 21:18)” (Simons 1975:186). He adds, “They do not cry

⁵⁵ Quoted by John Howard Yoder, 2009:171, the extract of a letter written by Grebel, one of the founders of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland was sent to another dissenter of Luther’s Reformation in Germany, Thomas Müntzer, who encouraged violence as a means to solve conflicts.

vengeance, vengeance as does the world; but with Christ they supplicate and pray: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)” (1975:187). This radical separation of the two kingdoms has led many Anabaptists to refuse any participation in military or police services in what is known as conscientious objection.

3.4.2 Conscientious objection

Christians belonging to historic peace churches know that they belong to the kingdom of the Prince of Peace and not to the worldly kingdom of darkness; therefore they feel that their conscience as Christians would be offended if they participated in war of any kind. In so doing, they became the initiators of conscientious objection. Before the outbreak of World War II, the leaders of the historic peace churches in North America obtained from the government the creation of Civilian Public Service (CPS), as a better service for conscientious objectors rather than enrolment in the army (Durnbaugh and Brockwell 1994:191). They wondered, “How could one take the sword to kill and still follow Christ, whose teachings on the sword were so clear?” (Yoder 2009:255). They were convinced that their members should not participate in war even when it was required by the government (Gwyn et al., 1991:107).

Not everybody shares Menno’s radical separation of the two kingdoms since Christians are citizens of both this world as well as of the kingdom of Christ. This has led to a certain moderation among Anabaptists.

3.4.3 Moderate Anabaptists

Culver objects to the radical separation of the two kingdoms and the non-involvement in civil services in these terms: “God specifically forbids us personal, coercive power over our violence-prone neighbours (Rom. 12), but he provides us protection from the violent neighbour and restraint of the outlaw through public law and government agencies such as police and courts (Rom. 13)” (1985:17). Culver, unlike other Anabaptists, seems to acknowledge the merit of government agencies to enforce the law.

In addition, the theology of martyrdom taught by the early Anabaptists as a way to conform to Christ’s model has been interpreted by some modern critics as passive and irrelevant to our current society which is violent by nature. Yoder acknowledges the legacy of Reinhold Niebuhr as a theologian who influenced a change of attitude toward the passivity of liberal pacifism when

leaders like Hitler and other tyrants oppress people. He cites Niebuhr's criticism that, "liberal pacifism collapsed because it did not have an ethical answer to Hitler" (Yoder 2009:296). To passivity Niebuhr preferred "a mix of nonviolent activism with partisanship for labour" (2009:286). His attitude to violence is:

We still ought to get in there and do the right thing. That right thing is not a liberal pacifist right thing, but it is still much more important than staying home. It is sinful, it is finite, and we are self-righteous when we do it, but it is still better than not doing it" (2009:292).

Niebuhr's suggestion is that peace will not come by itself nor will people who are inclined to violence, change overnight and become peacemakers. In the process some kind of vehemence may be required, which Niebuhr acknowledges is still sinful but better than not doing it. One has to make up one's mind as to whether it is better to stop people like Hitler even though it may entail a modest use of violence or to be passive until the whole world is caught up in a bloody fight.

More explicit on this matter is Luise Schottroff in her study of 'peace' in the New Testament. She argues that nonviolence is not passivity:

The word "nonviolence" is often linked with the command to love the enemy or with the Beatitudes. That is correct, as long as one understands nonviolence in the sense of a nonviolent strategy, that is, an active movement of struggle. But it would be false if with "nonviolence" one means a passivity that tolerates everything, that even advises the oppressed to accept their suffering as their fate (Schottroff 1992:160).

To illustrate her argument Schottroff recounts how Caesar Gaius Caligula's decision on hanging his portrait in the temple of Jerusalem, in A.D 40, was aborted by a nonviolent action. While the Jewish upper class would not oppose the decision because they collaborated with the Romans for political and economic reasons, people at the grassroots initiated a nonviolent resistance. They left their homes and moved to the coastal region, and decided not to return home to prepare their fields if the portrait were to be put up. Fearing that he would not be able to export the harvest and pay his tribute to Rome, the Roman governor had no other solution than to appeal to Caesar to stop the project (2000:160-161).

This is what Schottroff means by active nonviolence. People would not use weapons and would rather die than accept oppressive action or behavior. Walter Wink in his study of the text of the Sermon on the Mount reaches the same view about what Jesus meant by nonviolence in the following conclusion: “Jesus, in short, abhors both passivity and violence. He articulates, out of the history of his own people’s struggles, a way by which evil can be opposed without being mirrored, the oppressor resisted without being emulated, the enemy neutralized without being destroyed” (Wink 1992:117).

This moderate attitude toward violence creates a dilemma as people realize that both violence and passivity are bad. The question is how can one be active in addressing violence and remain non-violent? As discussed above, tyrants like Hitler are found in every society and people have to find a way of stopping their evil minds before they set the world on fire. This has led some to propose a ‘just war theory’.

3.5 Just War

The idea of violence in the Bible as the reflection of the violence that is present in the world has led many people to think of some measure of violence that is positive. Some people started doubting the assertion that all wars are evil and unjust as they read the Bible. God inflicted punishment on Egypt in order to deliver God’s people from slavery (Exodus 7-12). Through the entire Bible God is portrayed as using some kind of violence, the warrior God, to defend the cause of the weak and oppressed. This is not unique to the Hebrew Bible: even in the New Testament Jesus uses violence to purify the temple. He is also portrayed as the warrior riding a white horse to combat the devil and his army before the eschatological reign of justice and peace (Rev.19:11-21). Feminist scholars are reformulating the gendered character of just war, as Laura Sjoberg argues, “A feminist approach could sharpen the just war tradition, combat just war’s complicity in war-making and confront just war’s gendered implications fight” (2006:12).

The theory of just war was at some point approved by the church, but even then the problem of distinguishing between just war and evil war was not an easy task. Dear traces the justification of a war only as a last resort to solving a conflict, from the fathers of the church; the theory was

outlined by Augustine and later refined by Aquinas (2005:127). However this approval was done under a certain number of conditions as shown in the following list given by Dear:

Conditions to be met before a decision to go to war is considered justified:

1. The war must be a just cause
2. It must be waged by a legitimate authority
3. It must be formally declared
4. It must be fought within a peaceful intention
5. There must be a reasonable hope of success
6. The damage inflicted and the costs incurred by war must be proportionate to the good expected by taking up arms

Dear adds onto the above list the following three conditions:

1. Non-combatants must be given immunity
2. Prisoners must be treated humanely
3. International treaties and conventions must be honoured (Dear 2005:127; and Yoder 2009:333-367).

While the first list deals mostly with the conditions under which a just war could be conducted, the additional list addresses the life of the survivors. It is understandable that the above conditions were defined in a context different from the contemporary one. The absence of a clause which protects women and children would be a serious oversight today when one considers sexual assaults against women and their daughters that have become a common practice wherever conflicts occur. The case of the Kivu may be extremely harsh but rape has been reported in current wars almost everywhere (Kosovo, Vietnam, Bosnia, Liberia, Rwanda, Kuwait, Syria...).

Not only is the list lacking as far as the fate of women is concerned, but it also seems to be an idealistic list applicable in a kind of conventional war when the two parties have agreed on a set of standards. At no time has it been the case in conflicts taking place in eastern Congo as different ethnic groups wage war to punish and humiliate their enemies or to retaliate. There has never been time for belligerent ethnic groups to sit and set standards before engaging in war.

Militiamen in the DRC operate in total impunity as they are free to perpetrate atrocities even against non-combatant citizens. Few warlords have thus far been accused of crimes against humanity by the International Court of Justice, but the majority of the armed people and their commanders are not accountable for their criminal mischief. Yoder acknowledges that the condemnation of the crimes of World War II at Nuremberg was a sign that the world was ready to punish any offence against the standards of war (2009:339).

Nevertheless, the standards set for just war have never been obeyed fully in any war that has taken place after World War I and with the rise of nuclear weapons people have changed their position from just war to nonviolence. Dear declares:

A theology of nonviolence based on the gospel necessarily rejects killing, warfare and the very existence of nuclear weapons. It calls us to reject the just war theory once and for always and to embrace gospel nonviolence in all areas of life, including international conflict resolution (2005:132).

The idea of just war becomes hard to admit because the concept is misused by those who would like to justify their wrongdoings. From the crusades to the current war against terrorism and many military coups in Africa, people have always tried to legitimize the atrocities of war as they pretend to be fighting for a just cause. Many people wonder how one can justify war while the end result is often unjust to one group, especially to women and children as it is in the context of this study. Instead of speaking about just war a number of researchers advocate 'just peace-making'.

3.6 Just Peace-making

The main idea behind this concept is a shift from trying to justify some acts of violence to promoting ways that lead to avoiding violence. An interesting book on this topic has been written by Glen Stassen (1992). In his book Stassen has defined seven steps that lead to just peacemaking:

1. Affirm common security
2. Take independent initiatives
3. Talk with your enemy

4. Seek human rights and justice
5. Acknowledge vicious cycles: participate in peace-making process
6. End judgmental propaganda, make amends
7. Work with citizens 'groups' for the truth (1992: chap. 4)

With details Stassen has shown this approach as a new way of looking into nonviolence, which stands between liberal pacifism and just war. Here also a specific allusion to women in this process is missing and yet, in my opinion, just peace should start at home since the domestic violence that women face constitutes the foundation of wider conflicts. However, the implementation of what is implied by some steps cannot be fulfilled by ignoring women, though their agency or involvement is not clearly mentioned in the above steps. For example, step four is a call to seeking human rights and justice, which implies the condemnation of any form of violence and discrimination against women as practised in current patriarchal societies. Moreover, participation in a peace-making process should include men and women if it is to succeed. Another inclusive step would be the last one: 'work with groups for the truth'. There is no way one can get to the bottom of a conflict and know the truth when women are not consulted. They are custodians of all the affairs that take place in the community in spite of being overlooked in the time of decision-making. The steps of just peace described by Stassen are portrayed in the life and actions of Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement and a champion of total pacifism. The world will always remember her for her commitment to the cause of the innocent and defenceless wherever they are found in the world.⁵⁶

Dorothy's commitment is well expressed in the vow of non-violence, also known as the *Pax Christi*, which every follower of the non-violent Christian should take for a peaceful world. It reads as follows:

RECOGNIZING THE VIOLENCE IN MY OWN HEART, yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God, I vow for one year to practice the nonviolence of Jesus who taught us in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God... You have learned how it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy'; but I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. In this way, you will be daughters and sons of your Creator in heaven."

⁵⁶ Read, "Servant of God Dorothy Day" by Jim Forest in *Encyclopaedia of American Catholic History*. <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/ddbiographytext.cfm?Number=72>. Accessed 12/03/2015

Before God the Creator and the Sanctifying Spirit, I vow to carry out in my life the love and example of Jesus

by striving for peace within myself and seeking to be a peacemaker in my daily life;

by accepting suffering rather than inflicting it;

by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;

by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;

by living conscientiously and simply so that I do not deprive others of the means to live;

by actively resisting evil and working non violently to abolish war and the causes of war from my own heart and from the face of the earth.

God, I trust in Your sustaining love and believe that just as You gave me the grace and desire to offer this, so You will also bestow abundant grace to fulfill it.⁵⁷

In a book edited by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite entitled *Interfaith Just Peace-making: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War*, the authors promote just peace-making through the means of the religious traditions of Christians, Jews and Muslims. Just peace-making proceeds from the acknowledgment of a situation of war which include the enemies instead of rejecting them, as outlined in Stassen's seven steps. The World Council of Churches after a wider consultation has compiled an important document⁵⁸ that I find more comprehensive on just peace. This document is morally and ethically grounded in the teachings of the Bible and represents the voices of Christians worldwide. What I like the most in its approach is the appeal to inclusivity. In one of its subtitles, *Just Peace and the Household of God*, the compilers argue:

In the perspective of the kingdom of God, peace-building and reconciliation become important dimensions of life together in the household of God. If all members of the community are to experience wellbeing as the fruit of living in truth, justice and peace in the household, then all are called to participate in the process of peace-building, spiritual strengthening and edification (*oikodome*) (WCC 2001:20).

The idea of a household and all members working together for the wellbeing of their house is very attractive to many African cultures as people live with relatives and other members of the extended family. In this context women and men work hand in hand, though a number of duties are culturally gender assigned. Women play a significant role in the sustainability of any

⁵⁷ Pax Christi, <http://paxchristiusa.org/resources/vow-of-nonviolence/>

⁵⁸ World Council of Churches, *Just Peace Companion* (Geneva: WCC, 2001). This document accompanies and elaborates on the text of *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* with theological and biblical considerations. The document and its ecumenical call were presented at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in Kingston, Jamaica in May 2011.

household. It is common in regions that have experienced war, like the eastern Congo, to find households run by widows or single mothers. The experience shows that women are able to manage their households even after the death of their husbands, while single men find it burdensome to maintain a viable household. Should decision makers see this world as a household, they would appreciate the huge potential that women would bring to the table of peace-building for the welfare of the community.

Another aspect of just peace that has attracted my attention in this document is the appeal of “Men and Women Together against Gender-based Violence” (WCC 2001:120). Under this topic the document urges:

But in modern times, women have to find the chance to speak up as they are often the forgotten voices yet they usually bear the brunt of any conflicts simply because they are women, or because they are daughters, mothers and wives of the men who are involved in the violent conflict (2001:123).

The above statement is very revealing of the situation in the eastern Congo as the use of rape has become not only a weapon of war but a culture that makes women the prey of neighbours, teachers and even relatives at home. There is no peace or reconciliation that can be envisaged without the participation of women in the process and without their vindication. Every effort should be done to stop the perpetrators of rape and reinstate women in their dignity as equal partners of men in peace-building. This is the just peace-making that may make a contribution to this study.

Nevertheless, just peace is a foretaste of the eternal peace that should be established on earth once the reign of God is established. This is the reign Christians call upon in the Lord’s Prayer hoping that it will become reality one day, as I discuss the last point of this chapter, eschatological peace.

3.7 Eschatological Peace

In spite of the violence linked with apocalyptic times in the book of Revelation, there is no doubt that several biblical discourses point to an everlasting peace which will take place at the end. The

Bible portrays a real state of peace that will prevail at the end of everything. John Dear has the right words to express the eschatological era of peace:

Since the world overflows with systemic violence and brutal injustice, the vision of a nonviolent reign of God's justice on earth indeed marks the end of the world as we know it, the transformation into an entirely different world, a new realm of justice and peace (1994:83-4).

The idea of waiting for the last days to enjoy peace has been interpreted differently by many scholars. Some have read the apocalyptic hope of Israel and the church with anticipation. The reign of the Messiah, King of Israel, is described as a time of total peace for the entire creation. "In non-priestly circles the so-called apocalyptic literature developed. In it was concentrated Israel's hope in the coming of God's kingdom" (Duchrow and Liedke 1989:87). Here are some scriptures supporting the Israelite hope:

Isaiah 2:4

*He shall judge between the nations
And shall decide disputes for many peoples;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.⁵⁹(cfr. Micah 4:3)*

Isaiah 11:5-9

*Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist
And faithfulness the belt of his loins
The wolf shall dwell with the lamb
And the leopard shall lie down with the young goat
And the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
And a little child shall lead them
The cow and the bear shall gaze;
Their young shall lie together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
...
They shall not hurt or destroy
In all my holy mountain;
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*

⁵⁹ The idea of a Davidic king who should come and establish a peaceful kingdom and put an end to violence as people transform their weapons into instruments of agriculture, is found also in Micah 4:3 and numerous references to the same Israelite apocalyptic hope are found in other prophecies of the Old Testament.

*As the waters cover the sea.*⁶⁰

Isaiah's description of an apocalyptic era is not only a kingdom of peace but a renewal of the entire creation that will change the face of the world. In their comments on Isaiah 11 and 65, Duchrow and Liedke observe, "The coming creation is portrayed from two angles. First, justice will prevail and be meted out above all to the oppressed and the disadvantaged. Second, there will be peace between human beings and animals: peace is defined as peaceful coexistence between animal and animal, and humans and animals" (1989:58).

This hope has never been fulfilled at any time; the people of Israel are still waiting for the Day of the Lord and the new creation as expressed by Isaiah. The hope of Israel has become the hope of the church. The writers of the Gospels as well as other New Testament writers see the coming of Jesus as the introduction of the long-awaited era of peace. In his comment on the song (*Magnificat*)⁶¹ of Mary and the one of Zechariah, in the book of Luke, John Howard Yoder states that,

In the present testimony of the gospel we are being told that one whose birth is now being announced is to be an agent of radical social change. The preoccupation of those who await the "consolation of Israel" with which he comes to deal, are not cultic nor doctrinal, and thus in the narrow sense they are not "religious" preoccupations; he comes to break the bondage of his people (Yoder 1972:22).

The reading of the New Testament shows that people who lived in the time of Jesus had many expectations of the destiny of Israel under his guidance. All his miracles and healings were followed with attention as people were waiting to see the outbreak of his might in overthrowing the Romans and establishing the kingdom of Israel. His death on the cross had thrown a doubt into the hearts of many and had even brought disappointment among those who had lived closely with him as expressed in this passage: *Chief Priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel* (Luke 24:20-21). According to Yoder this statement "is not just one more testimony to the disciples' obtuse failure to get Jesus' real point; it is an eyewitness report of the way Jesus had

⁶⁰ In this passage as well as in Isaiah 65:17-25, the scope of the kingdom of peace is stretched beyond cessation of war and violence but the entire universe, including nature, experiences the apocalyptic peace. Paul wrote to Romans (8:22-23) that creation is groaning waiting for this time of peace.

⁶¹ The song of Mary is found in Luke 1: 46-55 followed by the song of Zachariah in Luke 1:68-79. *Magnificat*, a Latin word, is drawn from the introduction of the song of Mary as her soul 'magnifies' the Lord.

been heard” (1972:51). Nevertheless, the New Testament does not end on that discouraging note; the book of Revelation recasts the hope of Israel by promising that the new earth and new heavens are still to come. The Kingdom of Peace which was at hand by the time of Jesus would be brought to its completion soon. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. .. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away* (Rev. 21:1, 4).

This peace that will come in the last days is approached with mixed feelings by many readers of the Bible. Some think maybe it is not worth working for peace since it is an impossible task before the last days. Questions are raised whether Christians should wait passively upon God to bring his Kingdom of Peace or to be involved in doing something, even though lasting peace remains an eschatological dream. Why should people try to reform the world while God is going to do it one day anyhow? The answer to these questions will determine the way one would like to approach the issue of peace-making in a violent world.

It is beyond the scope of this study to answer the above questions about eschatological peace. Nevertheless, one cannot deny the power that hope gives to people facing suffering and trials. Many women, survivors of rape and other violence, I met during my fieldwork sustain their lives by believing that they will one day enjoy peace on earth or after death. Dear expresses this expectation well as he argues, “As we live into that hope and en flesh it with our very lives through an ongoing, active nonviolence, we will discover that our hope has become real” (2005:07).

The anticipation of eschatological peace has fuelled acts of courage and self-denial among Jews and Christians over the years as they endured persecutions and killing. They were not discouraged but felt that they were fulfilling their mission of preparing the way for eschatological peace. Yoder observes that, “The unforeseeable future is farther along in the same direction as the foreseeable future for which we are responsible”. In other words, “What we are now doing is what leads to where we are going.” (1972: 249). This optimistic attitude of Yoder concerning preparing the lasting peace of tomorrow by what people do today brings this chapter to its conclusion.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined various theological discourses on peace since biblical peace is one of the theoretical frameworks that guides this study. Biblical peace constitutes the basis upon which women should place their actions in order to prevent violence and cultivate a culture of sustainable peace in the DRC. I have shown that peace, by definition, goes beyond the cessation of war because it encompasses wholeness and the well-being of the entire creation. The inclusivity of the concept of peace requires that a person should be at peace with his/herself, with God and with nature in order to experience wholeness. Only people who feel complete and secure can live in peace with their neighbours.

I have also in this chapter discussed the feminist perspective on peace which stems from their experience of oppression and subjection by patriarchal cultures. They are striving to transform dualistic and patriarchal societies in order to establish fair relationships based on mutual respect and collaboration between men and women in order to protect human lives and nature. I have shown that working together against violence as a unified community that shares core spiritual values is what the historic peace churches stand for. The Anabaptists draw principles from the teaching of Jesus to advocate nonviolence no matter the circumstance. Should this lead to martyrdom, a Christian should be prepared to suffer following the example of Christ on the cross. The realism inspired by the critiques of Niebuhr and moderate Anabaptists have led to the revision of the stand of those who would push nonviolence to the extreme of becoming passive. The idea of active nonviolence is presented as a more balanced attitude face to the violence present in the world.

Exploring further the difficulty of making peace in a world full of violence, I have presented the view of those who have adopted the concept of just war in order to prove that in some cases violence exerted to bring peace may be justifiable. The problem with this theory is that it is not easy to distinguish between just war and unjust war because of evil people who misuse the concept to cover up the atrocities of war. As an alternative to just war, a number of scholars have turned to what they call just peace-making. There are a number of steps based on biblical principles that one should follow in order to solve a conflict in just peace-making. Lastly, since none of the above approaches to bringing peace has borne full success, some people think of waiting for the eschatological peace that Christ will establish on earth at the end of time. In this

study I have presented the arguments of scholars who think that one should not remain idle while waiting for the eschatological peace. They say that working towards bringing peace in the world today is the better way of anticipating the eternal kingdom of peace to come. The mission of the church is to continue striving for peace in spite of the existence of violence and evil. Since this is the mission of the church, it is important to examine the role women in church should play, as I explore in the next chapter on feminist ecclesiology.

CHAPTER FOUR

FEMINIST THEOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

I have explored in Chapter Three various theories of biblical peace. I have shown that biblical peace is not only what people in the Kivu region are striving for, but it also constitutes one of the two frameworks set to guide this study. The current chapter deals with the second framework which is feminist theology and ecclesiology. The importance of this framework in the context of this study is paramount as it is part of the ongoing debates among African Women Theologians on issues that affect the lives of their families and society. In the case of the Kivu region the population struggles to stop the dramatic situation of mass killing and violence against women in the eastern DRC. It is significant to note that there is an increasing awareness of the mission of the church, in such a time, to establish the kingdom of *shalom* or peace through the witness of justice and truth. Ironically, cultural practices and patriarchal traditions in the church serve to inhibit women from participating actively in bringing change; yet women form the majority of its members. Therefore, one may wonder, is it possible to break these cultural and religious barriers in order to mobilize Christian women for action?

This chapter is designed to discuss various strands of feminist theology, especially African Women Theologies and feminist ecclesiology. Feminist theology and ecclesiology are important to this study because they empower women with tools to challenge the status quo and to participate actively in the social transformation of the society. The transformation that this study seeks to achieve, as far as the situation in the Kivu region is concerned, is to encourage Christian women to participate actively in bringing peace, not only because they suffer the most but above all because they are the church. This chapter is therefore a major step in answering the guiding research question: what contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the Kivu region of DRC? In the discussion which follows, I will examine points under the following headings: Understanding Feminism, Feminist Theology, African Women Theologies and Feminist Ecclesiology.

4.2 Understanding Feminism

In her response to the question ‘why feminism?’ Anne Clifford states that, “The major reason for any feminist movement is to end oppression, discrimination, and violence directed to women and to acquire full equality and human dignity for every woman” (2005:13). Through this statement Clifford brings to the surface the question that many people ask as they observe that the feminist movement has intensified and has spread widely all over the world. Regardless of the differences in the way the oppression of women is experienced across various cultures, races and status, the unifying factor for any feminist movement remains male domination over and oppression against women as a universal reality. The question ‘why feminism’ finds its true meaning in the context of this study dealing with the abject atrocities that have been committed against women and girls in the eastern DRC. Hence, it becomes evident that women should nurture unity in protest against the mistreatment they receive from men of all categories: soldiers, militiamen, peacekeepers, employers and relatives at home. Feminism in this case becomes women’s mode of expression.

Ann Loades is right as she considers feminism as “a movement that seeks change for the better for women, for justice for them” (1990:1). ‘Justice’ is the keyword in the feminist movement because women are appealing for the restoration or reinstatement of their political, social and religious rights as well as their dignity as equal human beings. Considering a broader understanding of the issue, Clifford defines feminism as “a worldwide phenomenon, ...a social vision, rooted in women’s experience of sexually based discrimination and oppression, a movement seeking the liberation of women from all forms of sexism” (2005:16). The above definitions open the door to both men and woman who would like to champion breaking away from oppressing women, to join the feminist movement. It is important here to underscore that, despite the fact that the majority of feminists are female, “not every feminist is a female by sex, and not every female is a feminist” (Loades 1990:2).

The current striving for the liberation of women and for gender justice should not be considered to be a new phenomenon of history since in every society voices have always been raised against oppression and discrimination. Though many scholars believe that the term “feminism” was used for the first time by Hubertine Auclert in 1882, characteristics common to contemporary feminism have been observed long before the term was coined (Clifford 2005:10-11). For

example, in the time of Moses a biblical narrative mentions the daughters of Zelophehad who claimed the inheritance of their father's land in the time when the law gave the right of land inheritance only to sons in Israel (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12). Not only did these daughters win the case, but they also succeeded in having the law modified for future generations. In today's society these girls could be called feminists because of their struggle for justice and gender equality. From the ancient world to contemporary societies, feminism has taken different forms according to the ways in which women have experienced oppression and exclusion in their cultures.

Clifford (2005:11-28) distinguishes three waves in the contemporary feminism movement. She locates the first wave of feminism in the 19th and early 20th centuries which was led by women in Europe and North America fighting for their political rights. The focus of this first wave was on "the right to vote and to own property in one's own name" (Rakoczy 2004:12). Clifford continues to argue that women made a big contribution to the abolition of slavery as active participants in the 'abolitionist movement'. They formed the Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 (2005:11). Under this society the women's movement fought for the restoration of the human dignity of the slave women brought from Africa to America, as well as for the abolition of slavery in general. Women of the first wave struggled also for temperance and prison reform, for better conditions for the mentally ill and for educational reform. The production of the *Women's Bible* commentary by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her colleagues, and the acceptance of the right of women to vote after their contribution to World War I, may be considered as some major achievements of the first wave. It was noted that first wave feminism declined "in the United States after voting rights were acquired by women" (Clifford 2005:12).

The second wave of feminism described by Clifford (2005:21-25) arose in the 1960s. The movement not only pursued the fight for civil rights started earlier by women in Europe and North America, but also engendered feminist studies as a new academic discipline. This wave became much broader and more complex than the first one as it included the struggle of African Americans. Four different perspectives of feminism have been distinguished within the second wave. 1. **Liberal feminism** emphasises the restoration of civil rights including the right of women to decide on their sexual and reproductive health. It seeks the full equality of women and men in all facets of social life. 2. **Cultural feminism** emphasises the moral superiority of women

over men. It seeks the betterment of the society by stressing the contributions and values traditionally associated with women, like compassion, nurturing and peace-making. 3. **Radical feminism** believes that male dominion is the root of all societal problems. It seeks to eradicate every form of male dominion. 4. **Socialist feminism** focuses on economic class struggles, the control of the means of production by white males and the devaluing of women's work in childbearing and childrearing. It seeks to liberate women from economic dependence and from class divisions by major social reform (2005:23). On the other hand, Loades has only three major types: liberal feminist, Marxist feminism and cultural/romantic which includes the radicals as opposed to those who want mutuality between men and women (1990:1). In addition, Rakoczy underscores the fact that this second wave of feminism infiltrated the religious institutions as women started claiming their rights for their vocation to ordained ministries to be recognized. In many churches such as Episcopalian, Anglican and Roman Catholic, the issue of women's ordination began to be raised and discussed during this second wave (Rakoczy 2004:13). The result today is that some churches have revised their position on this issue and are now ordaining women, while for many others women's ordination remains a stumbling block. According to Olga Thobile Dlamini (1999:4), the ordination of women in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) was accepted in 1976.

Unlike what Dlamini says about the women's ordination in the MCSA, the Free Methodist Church, which broke from the Episcopalian Methodist Church of North America in 1860, has always claimed its Wesleyan inheritance by opposing oppression and discrimination based on sex, race or social status. The doctrine of the church laid out in the Book of Discipline⁶² reads:

Free Methodists recognize that God gives spiritual gifts of service and leadership to both men and women. Since male and female are both created in the image of God, that image is most fully reflected when both women and men work in concert at all levels of the church. Therefore, all positions in the church are accessible to any whom God has called (Par. D: Distinctive Principles, Book of Discipline of Free Methodist Church, 1999:5).

⁶² The Book of Discipline is a manual that provides doctrinal, ecclesiastical and organizational guidance to any Free Methodist Church in the World. Although each book accommodate some peculiarities of a given nation or General Conference, articles which constitute the constitution and doctrine of Free Methodism can be amended only "by concurrent approval of two-thirds of the aggregate votes cast thereon in all general conferences of Free Methodism" (Par. A/225, Book of Discipline of FMC).

Conversely, there is a wide gap between the egalitarian doctrine in the book and its implementation in the field as the church continues holding on to its patriarchal traditions. In the DRC, for example, the statistics of the recent General Conference (November 2012) show that the Free Methodist Church has almost 140.000 members and 900 ordained ministers, of which less than 20 are females (about 2% of the total). Some of these ordained women in the DRC are appointed to other ministries instead of pastoring a parish. The overall ratio of ordained women in the Free Methodist Church worldwide is not higher than 10% but none of them holds the position of a bishop. The discrepancy between what the church believes and what it practises, especially with regard to women's ordination, is a controversial issue in many denominations across the globe. Molly Longwe (2013), in her study on *Pastors' Wives in the Baptist Convention of Malawi* (BACOMA) has demonstrated how the problem of women's leadership is extensively contested by the clergy of her church as depicted by many feminist writers.

The third wave described by Clifford (2005:25-28) is the new development of feminism which started towards the end of the 1970s. It is a widespread movement which denounces the oppression and all kinds of injustice that women are facing worldwide. The call for the civil rights of women that started in Europe and North America has been amplified and elaborated to cover a wide spectrum of injustice as the voices of women from developing countries, African, Asian, Latin America and women of indigenous cultures, united with others to condemn discrimination based on sex, race and economic status.

This study would logically fall under the third wave of feminism on the continuum of a wider movement of protest which embraces various cultures. Feminism in this study is concerned with the atrocious experiences of women in one corner of the African continent—the eastern DRC. The context of this study also portrays some characteristics of the cultural feminism of the second wave, especially by acknowledging that the ordination of women is still problematic in many churches and also that women are more likely than men to be peacemakers. So it is this inclination of women towards peace-making that prompts this study to advocate involving women in the peace process taking place in the DRC. However, unlike the second wave which upholds the superiority of women over men, this study advocates partnership and mutuality between women and men in order to stop the war and alleviate its consequences. As this study deals with Christian women, one would wonder what difference it makes when a feminist

movement is carried out by Christian women. To answer this question I will now discuss the contribution of feminism to Christian theology.

4.3 Feminist Theology

It is not by accident that the feminist movement has found fertile ground in theological debate. The major reason is that God and the Bible have often been quoted to justify the discrimination against women. Assertions such as: ‘God created man first and later on woman,’ ‘God is our father not mother,’ ‘Jesus was a man and his twelve apostles were all men’, ‘women are weak vessels and ought to submit to their husbands in all matters’– are some theological statements used to subdue women, exclude them from ordained ministries and from any leadership position in several churches and organizations.

In reaction to this blatant disregard of God’s image, a number of women in the Church have decided to theologize by re-reading the Bible in order to unearth the hidden message of liberation for all. They are using the same weapon (scriptures) that men have used to bind women, as a tool to free themselves. Louise Kretzschmar underscores that “feminist theology is opposed to sexism, that is, discrimination against women (whether by men or other women) on the basis of their sex or gender” (1991:108). It should be noted that, although all feminist theologians strive for liberation, they do not share the same view on the role of the Bible as discussed below. Rakoczy is right as she argues that, “Because feminist theology is part of the family of liberation theologies, it begins with the experience of oppression of women, and the way in which gender has been constructed in society” (2004:15). This experience differs from one culture to another and within one culture from one epoch to another.

According to Clifford (2005) there are three major types of feminist theology. The first one is the *Revolutionary feminist theology*, which advocates breaking away from Christianity because of its being oppressive to women. This radical position is championed by Mary Daly as she writes,

We have been locked in this Eden of his far too long. If we stay much longer, life will depart from this planet. The freedom to fall out of Eden will cost a mirror-shattering experience. The freedom-becoming-survival of our species will require a continual, communal striving in being-in (1996:192).

Mary Daly has assumed that there is no remedy to patriarchy since it is embedded at the core of Christian teaching with a God who is a male, therefore women should walk out of the prison of patriarchy. Many women in this category used to be Christians but have abandoned Christianity and turned to worshipping the Ancient Goddess whom they find to empower women and to restore their dignity (Clifford 2005:32-33). But not all feminist theologians share the same view. Women dealt with in this study, like the majority of African Christian women, do not fit in this category because they do believe in the Christian faith and in the power of the Bible to bring social change to society, but only if it is used and interpreted responsibly.

The second type is called *Reformist Christian feminist theology*. It is characterized by those who have chosen to remain in Christianity and find in their faith enough resources that can be used for change. They reject worshipping the Ancient Goddess as an alternative to the patriarchal Christianity that oppresses women. There are a number of similarities between the characteristics of this category and what most African women theologians believe. As I shall discuss later in this chapter, many African theologians have decided not to deny their Christian faith but to implement change in the patriarchal structures and behaviours, from within. Speaking about the fight against male domination in the South African context, Brigalia Bam argues, “I think it is an important strategy that we need to cultivate within the family itself, within the church that is still a divided church, those forces within that divided church that are prepared to be in solidarity with us and work with us” (1991:365). To count on solidarity within the church for change, from both women and men, is a significant stand in this type of Christian feminist theology. However, some women find the approach of reformist Christian feminist theology too soft to challenge the patriarchal structures so that they prefer a third option.

The third type, according to Clifford (2004:33-38), is *Reconstructionist Christian feminist theology*. It appears as a combination of revolutionary and reformist feminist theologies. This is a movement of those who would like to see deep transformation, true liberation and reconstruction taking place not only in the Church but also in society. This stance is articulated by Letty Russell in the following statement:

This is the survival skill for anyone who wishes to participate in God's housekeeping chores. By knowing the social structures and psychological dynamics of the old house of bondage, we can work to subvert those structures and to limit their power in our lives and institutions. Subversion is most certainly one way of standing against the powers in this time before the full realization of God's eschatological household (1996:232).

What Russell means in this statement is that, without breaking away from the Church, feminist theology seeks to bring a real subversion in current traditions and cultures in order to liberate women from oppression. In fact, what the third wave pursues is a deep transformation of the society by refuting the claim that patriarchy is God's ordained state of things. Rosemary Radford Ruether argues, "Thus feminism expresses the explicit application of the new egalitarian theology of creation to gender, and hence a judgment on patriarchy as unjust and evil, rather than as the order of nature and the will of God." (1996:146).

However, the three major waves defined above are just an umbrella under which significant differences are observed among feminist theologies across the globe, according to the form of oppression that women experience in their cultures or societies. Ursula King acknowledges that "Feminism is not a unitary, but diverse, movement, not without its internal contradictions and tensions" (1994:275). The diversity in the movement is not only reflected by the experiences but also by the terminologies used to articulate those experiences. Though the word 'feminist' or 'feminist theology' is still used to describe the general fight of women for liberation from male domination, some women or groupings prefer not to use the term 'feminist' because of its origin among the white women whose emphasis was to challenge gender based discrimination. The battle of white women focused primarily on gaining the civil rights that men had deprived them of.

The case is different among American black women who decided to express their plight by using the word 'womanist'. I would like to elaborate on this group because of the significant similarities that exist between the experience of African-American women and that of African women, to whom I belong. Moreover, the African-American women's fight has had a great influence on the feminist movement in Africa. They claim that their experience of being black and being women is quite different from that of the white feminists in America. In her article,

Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices, Dolores Williams (1994:77-87), summarizes the main ideas behind the concept of 'womanist'. Williams' article is inspired by ideas and writings of another feminist activist Alice Walker, whom she quotes several times. In this article a 'womanist' is defined as somebody whose,

origins are in the black folk expression "You acting womanish" [sic]. She is responsible, in charge, serious... She loves, she is committed, she is a universalist by temperament. Her universality includes loving men and women, sexually or non-sexually. She loves music, dance, the spirit, food and roundness, struggle and loves herself. "Regardless." A womanist is also committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. She is no separatist, except for health. A womanist is a black feminist or a feminist of color (1994:77-78).

The reason why African-American woman have chosen to be described as womanist is because they feel that their suffering is beyond sexism. Apart from gender based oppression that women are generally submitted to by men, they have experienced racial discrimination from both male and female whites, and also the fact that they have been used as slaves. Williams suggests that "The womanist theologian must search for voices, actions, opinions, experiences, and faith of women whose names sometimes slip into the male-centred rendering of black history, but whose actual stories remain remote" (1994:80).

In order to include the above mentioned items in their search, African-American womanists have adopted a certain methodology of doing theology. Williams (1994:83-84) underlines four elements that should inform womanist theology:

- (1) A multi-dialogical intent which allows womanist theologians to advocate and participate in dialogue and action with many diverse social, political, and religious communities concerned about human survival and the productive quality of life for the oppressed.
- (2) A liturgical intent in order to reflect and be relevant to the thought, worship and action of the black Church.
- (3) A didactic intent: womanist theology should teach Christians new insights about moral life based on ethics supporting justice for women, survival, and a productive quality of life for poor women, children and men.
- (4) A commitment both to reason and to the validity of female imagery and metaphorical language in the construction of theological statements.

The significance of this methodology is that it is not limited to African-American womanists alone. Women doing theology in various parts of the world have used all or parts of these elements in their struggle for liberation. Likewise, this study will draw much on this womanist methodology to address both the predicament of women in the eastern DRC and ways to stop the conflict.

Furthermore, African-American women are not the only group to depict some differences in their experience of oppression and exploitation from that of others. Hispanic women claim that their case is also specific and complex. Living in America like the African-American women, the Hispanic women describe themselves as a 'remnant' which lives in exile, oppressed and marginalized by the majority and by the dominant white society. Therefore they have decided to use the term '*mujerista*' for their movement. Ada María Isasi-Díaz gives a comprehensive explanation about the *mujerista* theology in her article entitled "The Task of Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology – *Mujeristas*: Who We Are and What We Are About" (1994:88-102). To portray the *mujeristas*, Isasi-Díaz observes that, "Like the biblical remnant we are not an integral part of society. Our mission is to challenge oppressive structures that refuse to allow us to be fully members of society while preserving our distinctiveness as Hispanic women" (1994:88 and Isasi-Díaz and Tarango 1992).

The theology of liberation for the Hispanic women deals not only with sexism in a society controlled by Hispanic men but also with their oppression in the Church – mainly the Roman Catholic Church - and with discrimination as immigrants in America in search of self-identity. One major characteristic is that the Hispanic women's liberation is done by the community, each contributing to the process of doing theology according to her own gifts (Isasi-Díaz and Tarango 1992; and Isasi-Díaz 1994). According to Isasi-Díaz, this theology of liberation shall subvert the society and have an impact on those Hispanic women. "We must come to understand the reality of structural sin and find ways of combating it because it effectively hides God's ongoing revelation from us and from society at large" (1994:101).

Apart from the Hispanic *mujeristas* many voices are raised by women all over the world to speak out and seek liberation. Ivone Gebara (1994) speaks of the way women in Latin America do

theology and highlights an experience which has both similarities and differences from that of Hispanic women and other groups. Kwok Pui-lan (1994) expands on how the Asian cultural diversity with its plurality of religions and interfaith dialogue influences the feminist theology in the area. Feminist theology in India meets with many challenges because of the complexity of the feminine experience of oppression and exclusion. This overview has shown that the diversity of feminist theologies can be stretched to different cultures but as I am writing in the African context I would like to turn to the development of feminist theology in Africa.

4.4 African Women's Theologies

It is evident that when describing Africa one deals with such a mosaic of cultures and religions that the experiences of women in one country may not be the same as in another or from one tribe or ethnic group to another within one country. Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar acknowledge that "In Africa it is impossible to universalize African women's experiences" (2006b:9). Considering the case of South Africa, they affirm that the experiences of white women have been quite different from those of black women. Therefore it was not easy to reach an agreement concerning the naming of the liberation theology that would reflect the experience of all women in Africa. However, the term 'African women's theology or theologies, as used by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (2001), in her book *Introducing African Women's Theology* seems to have been accepted by the majority as the expression of their way of theologizing from an African women's perspective. In her position as the founder of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle)⁶³, Oduyoye has drawn insights from the views of women members of The Circle to define the context and uniqueness of their theology as compared to other feminist theologies. She argues that, "What we attempt to study here is African Christian theology in the women-centered key" (2001:10). By 'women-centered', she means women as actors, agents and thinkers.

The distinctive feature of African women's theology resides in the context of Africa which is different from Asia, Europe and America. It is Oduyoye who once again sheds light on the focus

⁶³ The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians is a pan-African multireligious and multiracial network of women which started in 1989. Its main objective is to facilitate research, writing and publishing on issues affecting African women and also to empower women for critical thinking on their social, religious and cultural experiences.

of this theology as she affirms that, “They are theologies that reflect women’s heritage of participation in Africa’s colonial and missionary history. They reflect the antecedent religion and culture which continue as Africa’s religio-culture” (2001:9) What Oduyoye underscores in the above statement is that these four elements, colonialism, missionary activity, religion (both foreign and indigenous forms of religions) and culture are part of typical experiences in Africa. Expanding on the idea of religion Musimbi Kanyoro, another founding member of The Circle, observes that,

Women in Africa face challenges which are peculiar to us. For example, in addition to seeking to understand more deeply how Christianity, Islam and Africa Traditional Religions impact upon our lives, we often find that texts from both the written and oral scriptures are blended and mixed to marginalise women even further (1996:5).

Although women in Africa are aware of accounts of hurt in the scriptures, they still feel that religion or theology is part of their life. Kanyoro is adamant as she acknowledges that, “Theology for us is life; it is life as we live it, life as we experience it, when we eat, when we sing, when we dance, when we greet one another” (1996:6). What women in Africa seek is a liberating theology that can sustain their daily lives. Phiri and Nadar (2006b:10-20) have distinguished seven key features of African Women’s Theology, namely: Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics, Narrative Theology, Theological and Social Advocacy, Communal Theology, The Bible and African women’s Theologies, Race Class and Gender in African Women’s Theologies and Inter-disciplinary and the Multi-faith Nature of African Women’s Theologies. However, in this study I have retained four that I find pertinent to my search for peace-building in the Kivu region. These are: narrative theology, feminist cultural hermeneutics, advocacy and communal theology.

4.4.1 Narrative theology

Storytelling is an important feature of the African Women’s Theology that is able to bring to the same table those who have less education and those who are highly educated. Culturally, African societies value oral tradition as a means of education and for the communication of moral and ethical virtues from one generation to another. Oduyoye affirms that, “African women accept story as a source of theology and so tell their own stories as well as study the experience of other women including those outside their own continent” (2001:10). Narrative theology should not be

seen as being exclusive to Africa; women from other parts of the world enjoy telling stories and discussing them. However, Phiri and Nadar acknowledge that though narrative theology may be used by feminist theologians across the world, in Africa it is characteristic because women “use already existing forms of storytelling, proverbs, myths and sayings which are plentiful in African cultures” (2006b:14). In using this methodology women operate in a familiar context and they have confidence to argue and share insights from their own experiences. Oduyoye asserts that:

The normative role of stories in Africa’s oral corpus and the role of story in biblical theology, give women the paradigm for their theological reflection. Story was a traditional source of theology, which seems to have been superseded by analytical and deductive forms. It has taken the feminist movement to bring back the personal into academic studies and thereby revive the importance of the story. The approach to theology, that characterised women, is to tell a story and to reflect upon it (2001:11).

This statement of Oduyoye is a true picture of how women do their reflection in the Kivu region today. Because of the situation of war and the atrocities that women have experienced and still are experiencing in the region, churches are reviving storytelling during women’s gatherings. It is more than a way of theologizing: it is a therapy against the trauma they live in, caused by all kinds of violations of human rights perpetrated mostly by armed men. Most of these women have lost dear ones in the wars and are themselves or their daughters survivors of brutal rape. When they come together for prayer and Bible study, they all have stories to tell and encourage one another in their struggle. Narratives in the Bible that relate to their situation have more meaning in their context and the appropriation of those texts is made easier as they echo a real life situation instead of the abstract or neutral hermeneutics of some scholars. Phyllis Tribble shares the same feeling when she speaks of the power of stories in the introduction of *Texts of Terror*:

Stories are the style and substance of life. They fashion and fill existence. From primeval to eschatological vistas, from youthful dreams to seasoned experience, from resounding disclosures to whispered intimacies, the narrative mode of speech prevails (1984:1).

The reading of the narratives about violence and discrimination loosens the tongues of many women, including those who are not theologians, because they share from their own experiences. Oduyoye is right as she observes that African women do not necessarily theologize from

documents written by others but “the impulse to theologize is generated by experience or praxis... This makes women seek a theology characterized by a struggle to make religion relevant to the challenge of contemporary Africa” (2001:18). The search for the relevance of scripture to the women’s context constitutes the second feature of their theology, which is cultural hermeneutics.

4.4.2 Feminist cultural hermeneutics

African theologians, both male and female, acknowledge the centrality of culture in doing theology in Africa. In her article, *Engendered Communal Theology: African Women’s Contribution to Theology in the 21st Century*, Musimbi Kanyoro (2001) has made an in-depth discussion on the issue of culture in African theologies. She states at the beginning that, “In African indigenous thought systems, culture and religion are not distinct from each other. Therefore, culture and religion embrace all areas of one’s total life” (2001:158). The fact that religion and culture are intertwined has led most Christians in Africa to live in symbiosis with the two worlds. The result is that the culture of one community has a great influence on how they interpret and apply biblical texts. Kanyoro notes that many African theologians, such as Maimela, Mugambi, Parratt and Pobe, have advocated a theology of inculturation as a means to get rid of the colonial mentality of the church in its interpretation of Christianity to Africans. She criticizes the inculturation theology because “it attempts to Africanize in the sense of affirming African culture and positing it as the basis for developing African liberation theology” (2001: 167), forgetting the negative effect of culture on women.

In fact, women are challenging this single-sided view of uplifting African cultures because most of the cultural practices in Africa are oppressive and help undermine the dignity of women. Kanyoro speaks of a dilemma because on the one hand women are considered as the custodians of cultural practices that they have to preserve under the fear of breaking taboos, while on the other hand some traditional practices considered as cultural values for African identity, are harmful to women. She mentions issues such as “female circumcision (genital mutilation), *lobola* (the payment of bride price), polygamy, the dominantly male right to inheritance of land” (2001:161), among those on which women do not agree. The way women approach cultures critically is reflected in Oduyoye’s comments on cultural hermeneutics, as she argues, “Creative writings by African women highlight much of what need re-imagining in African culture.

Through their poems, novels and drama they have offered analyses and criticisms of African cultural practices” (2001:14).

Feminist cultural hermeneutics is a useful tool for this study because it helps women to address the situation that prevails in the Kivu region. Women using this hermeneutics are able to challenge cultural practices behind the perpetuation of conflicts in the region. In their role of custodians of traditions, women are called to perpetuate the tribal and ethnic prejudices, considering one tribe or ethnic group superior to another, which has created perennial hatred between Hutus and Tutsi and among different tribes and clans in the region. Politicians who set genocide in motion, take advantage of the existing chauvinism to incite people to kill one another, often using women to mobilize their boys and husbands to fight for the pride of one’s ethnic group or tribe. Ethnocentrism in the Kivu region has had disastrous effects on women’s lives. Oduyoye is right as she depicts that “Stories of poverty, exploitation, violence and racism are constants in the contexts of theologizing. A close analysis of these stories reveals how religio-cultural ideas, that foment ethnocentrism, brew the evil and sin with which theology struggles” (2001:24). The end result is disastrous for women. They become the biggest losers in this game because, more than their male counterparts, they fall prey to rape and massacre. Today the region counts a great number of women who are heading households full of orphans and the handicapped because of war. Chauvinism and ethnocentrism take us beyond the issue of challenging culture alone, to another feature of feminist theology which is advocacy.

4.4.3 Advocacy

Phiri and Nadar locate women’s advocacy “within the discourses of liberation theologies which focuses on conscientising people in communities about their oppression, seeking theology to overcome such oppression altogether (2006b:14-15). Advocacy is therefore an important feature to be taken into account in the context of this study. Women’s life in the Kivu region is negatively affected by the side effects of conflicts such as death, rape, rejection, and abuse, the violation of human rights, corrupt leadership, and mismanagement of public resources and more. For many years the problem was concealed because of its cultural, economic and political implications, but the calamity has reached a point where it cannot be tolerated any longer and many national and international organizations are working toward exposing the perpetrators of

violence. However, nothing should be done without involving local women. In order to bring change, Congolese women need to be proactive and committed because it is for saving lives that they are fighting. Hopefully, this is in line with the focus of African Women's Theology. It is stated that, "The African women's theological reflections intertwine theology, ethics and spirituality. It therefore does not stop at theory but moves to commitment, advocacy and a transforming praxis" (Oduyoye 2001:16).

The widespread coverage by the media of the atrocities perpetrated by armed groups against women in the eastern Congo has made both national and international communities conscious of the depth of the violation of human rights involved in the conflicts. Many international organizations and local NGOs are doing advocacy and lobbying for stopping violence against women and girls. In many instances, this process seems to be done by outsiders without involving local women who are concerned with the situation. It therefore fails to bring about the transformation of the society that people need. The church in Congo, through the National Council, called *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC), has a ministry of 'Peace, Reconciliation and Justice' which deals with advocacy. Unfortunately, this service is almost entirely chaired and controlled by men. It does not offer enough room for women to air their views on how women can become agents of transformation. The major handicap observed thus far is the low level of education among women. Although The Circle has opted to use theological institutions to achieve its advocacy goals (Phiri and Nadar 2006b:15), this would not be efficient in the case of the Kivu region because of high level of illiteracy among women. It is true that many of these women are not able to attend formal schools to equip themselves with knowledge. However, one should not use the level of formal education to underestimate the power of their minds and their determination to build a new society based on justice and equality for all. During my fieldwork I realized that the empowerment of these women could still be achieved using informal education. Through Bible study meetings and non-academic seminars they are becoming aware of their situation and are learning how to claim their rights. There is hope as stated by my fellow Congolese sister, Bernadette Mbuy Beya, that women are "the stone the builders rejected which could become the cornerstone of tomorrow's church" (2001:195). Rural and less educated women are not only rejected by men but even by other educated women and yet they form the majority on which any women's movement should count to succeed. Advocacy for these women includes the acknowledgment of their role in the wider women's agency. To achieve this goal,

women need to work in a synergy without discriminating against one another. This leads us to the last feature of this analysis of feminist theology, communal theology.

4.4.4 Communal theology

Living in community is one of the characteristics that cuts across many African cultures. In such a culture women as life-givers and sustainers become the central pole around which family relationships are built. It is therefore logical that women's theology in Africa promotes a 'theology of relations' as depicted by Oduyoye: "This has led to the characterization of African women's theology as a theology of relations, replacing hierarchies with mutuality. It is therefore a theology that is society sensitive" (2001:17). Unlike some western feminists who exclude men, African women advocate working together with men for the change of society. This mutual and inclusive relationship for African women theologians takes its roots in the very nature of God who, according to Rose Teteki Abbey (2001), embodies both fatherhood and motherhood. She argues, "Our theology – conversation about God – can only be said to have two wings when the Motherhood as well as the Fatherhood of God can be expressed freely by men and women undertaking the pursuit of theology" (2001:153). Contradictions and discriminations disappear when theologians view God in an all- encompassing nature. Therefore the theology of relations is not limited to male - female but embraces all forms of discrimination. Abbey says rightly:

The task of Christian theology as it enters the twenty-first century is to allow God to be black as well as white, Gentile as well as Jew, poor as well as rich, crucified as well as risen, male as well as female. This will not only enhance our relationship with God, it will also change the way we relate to each other (2001:155).

These are all the contradictions that men and women in Africa suffer from. They should therefore transcend their differences and biases to seek liberation because they have both experienced oppression from racism, tribalism and colonialism. Speaking out of the South African experience, Msinga Mthembu argues,

The communality of black South African people is grounded in their African culture, in the anthropological pauperization of the African person, in the history of oppression and resistance, and in a common social experience. This heritage, history and social experience which holds black people together also manifests itself in the desire and struggle of black Christians to indigenize the Gospel by

liberating it and themselves from an inherited Christianity which has itself been in some sense oppressive and alien (1996:62).

What Mthembu observes in South Africa can be applied to many other African countries that have suffered under colonial rule. The communal life that prompts men and women to work together towards liberation from all kinds of oppression and transformation of the society, challenges the patriarchal system in African cultures which is based on hierarchy. Men who are at the top of the ladder oppress women at the bottom.

However, hierarchy does not need to be removed only between men and women but also among women of different classes, ethnic groups and different levels of education and needs to be replaced by mutuality. A communal theology compels women to bridge those gaps and unite for the transformation of the society. In their article, Phiri and Nadar (2006b) indicate that many women theologians, members of The Circle, have discovered the benefit of doing communal theology by engaging non-scholar women in theological reflections as they study the Bible together. The result is that many of them are empowered and their faith strengthened that they become agents of change in their communities. The inclusivity advocated by African women's theology is stressed by Renate Cochrane as she asserts:

Feminist theology advocates a wholeness of vision in which all power and domination relations are challenged so that all human persons may become partners and equals in the common task. The liberation of women can only take place in the context of a universal liberation process from all exploitative structures. Those in positions of dominance are called to serve those who are powerless. The aim is the transformation of the social order towards a just society free from any kind of domination (1991:37).

The wholeness of vision of the situation in the Kivu region requires that men and women strive together for the common task of bringing lasting peace. Though it is important that the inclusivity must embrace all tribes and religions in the region, Christians should take the lead if the movement has to get enough momentum to transform society. It is more important because an estimated 80 per cent of the population in this area claim to belong to Christianity and most of them are women. This leads us to discuss the last issue of this chapter, feminist ecclesiology.

4.5 Feminist Ecclesiology

As stated earlier in this chapter, African women theologians have above all opted for an inclusive approach to feminism which embraces the Bible and the church as elements of liberation in spite of their use for oppression by patriarchal systems that rule various churches. They acknowledge the significant role played by Christianity in shaping cultures and bringing about the development and change among various communities. Indeed, evangelism in Africa was carried out hand in hand with education and health care, reaching out to people living in very remote areas where governments could not build schools and health care facilities. Paradoxically, the massive presence of women in the church stands in stark contradiction with the exclusion from its meaningful positions and the discrimination that women have always suffered from in the institution. This discrepancy between the great number of women in the church and the marginal roles they are called to play remains the major concern underlying feminist ecclesiology.

The patriarchal system in many churches has been constructed in such a way that it is not easy for women to occupy leadership positions. Therefore, women often remain passive or do odd jobs that men do not want. The main activities that are available to women are those assigned to them by the male leaders. Melanie May argues that “The participation of women in the Church in Africa has traditionally been to fill the pews, provide hospitality, cook suppers, visit the sick, raise money for mission and gather in small groups for prayer and scripture reading” (1997: xviii). The marginalization of women in the church seems to be a common experience in several churches as noted by John Watts, “Institutional patriarchy maintains a gendered culture in these churches that disadvantages women, and most of them work either in a voluntary capacity or in the lower echelons of Church employment” (2008:4). Feminist ecclesiology challenges this male dominion in the church which is based on and upheld by a biased interpretation of the Bible. It therefore reflects on women’s experience of being the church an ecclesiology where theoretical teaching is not different from its practice (Akintunde 2005). In this section I would like to explore how women are rethinking about what it means to be church and its mission.

4.5.1 Women being church

Natalie Watson defines feminist ecclesiology as “one way among others for women to speak about their being church and their embodying the divine in the world” (2002:2). Watson notices

an ambivalent situation that women experience as they consider their being church. Women have to rethink what it means for them to be church in an institution which marginalizes, oppresses and excludes them. Letty M. Russell argues that “feminist ecclesiology from a feminist perspective is most definitely a way of talking back to a community whose self-understanding has been shaped in all its aspects of tradition from a patriarchal paradigm of authority as domination” (1993:42). The church in its tradition reflects well what Russell describes as a patriarchal paradigm of authority that legitimizes men’s domination.

What feminist ecclesiology deplores is that the administration of the affairs of the church should be left in the hands of men while women, as followers, must obediently and in silence do what men prescribe to them. In order to conform to the fashion of the day, a number of women are called to be representatives on committees and meetings without a significant role, only because many churches have subscribed to ‘gender equity or gender sensitivity’. Even where a change of attitude towards women is observed in some churches, unfortunately it is often initiated by men for their interest. Women who are chosen to serve the church according to this false premise, are not acknowledged as being called or as having talent and skills to do their ministry together with their male counterparts in the body of Christ. Feminist ecclesiology challenges this sinful generosity of the Church as stated by Natalie Watson, “In telling their own stories, women confess, they proclaim the presence of the living God in their shared lives, they speak out against the sinful structures of the patriarchal church and society and name each other as those who are the church against which the gates of patriarchy will not prevail” (2002:100).

Transcending this negativity, many women are very much involved in the life of the church because, according to Watson, they are able to develop their own discourses of faith in order to overcome patriarchy:

The church has, as well as being a space of oppression, been a space which has in the past - and continues in the present to create meaning for women. In many ways it is a ‘given’ that has to be part of the agenda if the task of feminist theology is the rethinking and rewriting of Christian theology in a paradigm that acknowledges women being church, celebrates it and regards any understanding that does not recognize women as church as incomplete (2002:3).

The dilemma of the church being an institution that creates both meaning as well as denying women the essence of their existence has been at the centre of discord among feminist ecclesiologists. Some women, like Mary Daly and other Western radical feminists, have decided to leave the church that they consider as an instrument of oppression, in order to create their own spaces — sisterhood — where they can freely express their being. But, Susan Rakoczy observes, “In western countries women have been leaving in appreciable numbers in the last generation but African women generally stay within the church” (2004:214). It is true: most of the African women theologians advocate remaining in the church and working from within for transformation and the creation of spaces. The question that many people are grappling with is why women should remain in an institution that discriminates against them.

An attempt to answer the question could be that African women are aware of shortcomings in the church, such as the patriarchal domination of women, but this does not stop them from participating actively in its life. The reason is they know that their withdrawal would put the existence of the church into jeopardy. In her article, *Women and the Church in South Africa*, Brigalia Bam argues, “If they have to remove women from the church in South Africa many churches will collapse because women are the backbone of the South African Church” (2005:12). Bam speaks of women’s organizations called *Manyano* which are present in many South African churches. These groups, according to Bam, wield considerable financial and spiritual muscle. With the spread of the HIV pandemic in South Africa, the *manyano* are playing a significant role in providing social and pastoral care as well as prayer support to people living with HIV and AIDS (Bam 2005:13).

Women are the backbone of the church not only in South Africa but also this is common to the church in many African countries and elsewhere. Women’s fellowships like *manyano* have become a growing movement among different denominations across the continent. In the DRC, *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (the Federation of Protestant Women) are doing what *Manyano* does. Women use these fellowships as their own spaces in which they meet to assert their dignity, empower one another and share experiences of being church. In fact this is not a new phenomenon in the history of the church. It is known that from the beginning of the institution ‘church’ and from the first century, women have always been the backbone of the church. The disciples of Jesus had their meetings in the house of eminent women wherever they

moved. According to Ellen Leonard (1988:350) “this movement was based on Jesus’ vision which called for inclusivity, and in which women and men are equally called to discipleship”. The partnership between women and men in the church is also reflected in the work of Dorcas Akintunde as she analyses the participation of women in various New Testament texts, from Matthew, Mark and Luke. She argues, “Taken together these three passages imply that Jesus was especially cared for by a number of women. Jesus did not disregard their services. Should not the Church also accept and allow women to be partners in ministry?” (2005:88). While exclusion and patriarchal rule are still present in the church, African women are actively engaged in the church because they believe that they have a mission to fulfil as discussed in the following section.

4.5.2 African women and the mission of the church

Women in Africa are aware that they have a mission as expressed by Oduyoye: “They know the real church and its shortcomings as well as its strengths. They remain in the church because they are called by Christ to do so” (2001:83). She goes on to explain the content of the mission of women:

They are convinced that the call and the task of the church are to identify the existing suffering and name it. They will not give up the belief that the church is confronted with injustice and deals with them in the name of God. They are in the church because it is expected to bring joy and abundant life. Their hope is that God will liberate the church from gender dualism and make all real participants in this household of God (2001:83).

The call of women is the continuation of the mission of Jesus, as defined in the speech of Luke 4. Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit *to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour* (Luke 4:18-19). At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus entrusted the church, which African Christian women claim to be, with the mission of proclaiming this good news to every nation in what has been called the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). This framework has ever since been repeatedly contextualized to meet the needs of a given community or society in time and space. In post-colonial Africa the general context of *Missio Dei* for these women is to proclaim the good news of liberation from all forms of sexism.

Moreover, they are called to minister to people experiencing poverty, HIV and AIDS and bad governance.

The mission for women in the eastern DRC is even more complex. In addition to what the entire African continent experiences, feminist ecclesiology in the Kivu region is confronting the dire reality of genocide, sexual violence and war. The church is faced with the huge responsibility of bringing about healing to a population suffering from rape, mass killing, rejection and hatred. This concern was eloquently expressed by Anne Kubai (2005) during the Johannesburg conference⁶⁴, when she shared the experience of women being the church in post-genocide Rwanda today. In her intervention Kubai delineates important actions that constitute the mission of the church in the region:

The church is commissioned to create an inclusive society in which there is peace, justice and true reconciliation, which can liberate both the victim from being consumed by hatred and bitterness, and the perpetrator from guilt and fear of revenge. The challenge is arguably unique; a society devastated by the attempt of one group to wipe out another, must now arrive to establish the trust needed to carry on as one people (2005:108).

What Kubai describes as the challenge to the Rwandan church after genocide, is similar to what the Kivu region is grappling with as the entire African Great Lakes region has had the same experience of genocide, war and violence. This is even more evident because, while Rwanda is now in the phase of reconstruction, conflicts and their related wretchedness continue in the eastern part of Congo. No one can tell when this calamity will come to an end in the region; that is why the church needs to display the Christian values of peace, justice and reconciliation.

This is a tough mission that the church in this region, as elsewhere in the world, cannot fulfil without women. Despite their exclusion by the patriarchal system, women in the region are determined to rise up to the challenge. Kubai observes that, “in Rwanda, women are rapidly rising from the ‘ashes’ of the genocide and becoming actively engaged in reconstruction and reconciliation” (2005:114).

⁶⁴ The consultation on “Being Church: Women’s Voices and Visions” was organized jointly by The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and the World Council of Churches in October 2003 in Johannesburg to reflect on how women experience the church.”

My experience in the DRC is that feminist ecclesiology is a reality. Women's meetings are encouraging the women to cope with a very traumatic situation caused by conflicts and extensive sexual violence against women. In many local churches men's meetings do not exist and where they do, they are unsuccessful. Whereas, women are drawing enough strength out of their suffering to make their meeting a space where survivors of violence can cry together and also receive mutual support in their misery. Being church is not a matter only of leadership positions but becoming a community, a body in which all members bring their diversities and create a space where people enjoy peace and justice. Watson (2002) concludes her book on feminist ecclesiology by underscoring the significance of restoring justice for women, men and children who are called to live in harmony as members of the church. Women do so by telling stories of their suffering and empowerment to others who feel encouraged to pursue the fight for a society of justice and good relationships.

The search for justice and right relationships are at the heart of what women in the eastern DRC and the whole African Great Lakes Region are expecting from the church. The church is called to address and shed light in the midst of the bloodiest conflicts and blatant violations of human rights that have already killed more than five million and have set a record of daily acts of rape perpetrated against women and girls. The fact that such atrocities are committed by a population whose majority claims to be Christian is a sign that the institution has become dysfunctional. Therefore, feminist ecclesiology in this context should fulfil its mission of helping the church to experience God's liberation and restoration of peace, justice and reconciliation. The influence of women as mothers, wives and custodians of culture cannot be underestimated in forging a community that rejects violence but promotes healthy relationships among populations. That is *Mission Dei* for Christian women in the church of the DRC in the current context and circumstances.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored different theories of feminist theology in general and discussed feminist ecclesiology as one important branch of feminist theology to be used in this study. Insights from these theories will shed light in my analysis of experiences of women who come from the war-ridden Kivu region in the DRC. I started by providing an understanding of the

terms feminist and/ feminism which have to do with the refusal of discrimination against and oppression of women. The feminist movement advocates for a fair treatment of women in all sectors of life. Anne Clifford has distinguished three waves in the current development of the feminist movement. The first wave that she locates in the 19th and early 20th centuries was led by women in Europe and North America fighting for their political rights. The focus of this first wave was on the right to vote and to own property in one's own name. The second wave took place in the 1950s and 1960s in which women asked for greater political and social equality, equal pay for equal work, reproductive rights and the recognition in law of women's human dignity. This second wave infiltrated the church as women started pushing for their ordination. The third wave came in the 1970s which saw the spread of the movement to include the voices of women from developing countries (Africa, Latin-America and Asia) to that of Europe and America. The claims were broadened to cover all kinds of injustice women face worldwide.

I have shown that the feminist movement found its major application in the area of theology as the movement became part of the liberation theologies. Women decided to re-read and re-interpret the Bible in order to free themselves from subjection and oppression. As with the feminist movement, Clifford underscores three types of feminist theologies. The first type is the *revolutionary feminist theology* which advocates breaking away from Christianity because of its being oppressive to women. The second type is called *reformist Christian feminist*, and is characterized by those who have chosen to remain in Christianity and find in their faith enough resources that can be used for change. The third type is the *reconstructionist Christian feminist theology* portraying those who would like to see deep transformation, true liberation and reconstruction taking place not only in the Church but also in the society.

I have also demonstrated that feminist theology is not a unitary discourse since women theologize according to their specific experience of oppression. White women in Europe and America speak from a background which is different from African-American women, or Latin-American and Asian women. Each group has tried to use a term that captures well their experience. Most of the African women theologians have chosen to call their movement African Women's Theologies. Despite the wide diversity of cultures and races within Africa, the terminology seems to be accepted by the majority, thanks to the influence of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

I have highlighted four major features of this theology. These are: (1) Narrative Theology because of its emphasis on storytelling as part of African culture. (2) Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics to reflect the centrality of culture in doing theology in Africa. (3) Advocacy as a means of bringing awareness of and mobilization for action against the oppression of women. This is more appropriate in the situation of the Kivu region where rape is being perpetrated without repression. (4) Communal Theology to mirror the inclusivity of African women's theology.

Theology would remain vague discussions if it were not put into practice in the life of the church; that is why women ecclesiology should reveal the depth of what women in Africa believe. In this section I have highlighted the fact that African women in general have chosen to lead their fight against patriarchal systems inside the church, unlike some Western theologians who have decided to break away from what they consider as an institution that promotes women's exclusion and oppression. Women in Africa are creating a space in the church where they can share their experience and participate in building the body of Christ. Although they are still excluded from leadership positions in many churches, they form the majority of the membership in every denomination and sustain the life of the church. Should women decide to leave, there will be no church in Africa. This is the essence of women being the church: that they need to assertively defend against male dominion. Church and mission are two inseparable concepts. African women being the church means that they are full partners in the accomplishment of the church mission. In the context of this study the church in Kivu region is facing the challenge of a population that has experienced genocide, war and violence. In its mission of healing the church is required to portray the Christian values of peace, reconciliation and justice. This study advocates for women to play a significant role in this mission as women being church. They have what it takes if they can use efficiently their numerical majority and the fact of being custodians of traditions and cultures. Women are entrusted with the protection of traditional values in many African communities; therefore Christian women have a huge responsibility to fight for the respect for human dignity, justice and a non-violent society because they are the church. By so doing they will be agents of *Missio Dei* which includes bringing healing and reconciliation to a desperate community waiting for a breakthrough. Before discussing the findings of my fieldwork among women and church leaders in the Congo I would

like to present in the following chapter the methodology I have used to collect and analyse data from my field research.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I have explored various strands of feminist theology, especially African Women Theology and Feminist Ecclesiology. The purpose of the current chapter is to discuss and substantiate the methods and methodology used to collect and analyse data. I have used qualitative research in this study dealing with women because this methodology is viewed as more compatible with feminist sensitivity. Alan Bryman (2008:396) mentions four reasons that make qualitative research find favour with feminists: “(1) women’s voice to be heard; (2) exploitation to be reduced by giving as well as receiving in the course of fieldwork; (3) women not to be treated as objects to be controlled by the researcher’s technical procedures; and (4) the emancipatory goals of feminism to be realized”. I kept these points in mind as I conducted my research during the fieldwork. In this qualitative study I have combined various methods in order to collect data that have helped me suggest a theology of peace that can be the driving force behind the involvement of Christian women in peace-building in the Kivu region. The combination of various methods, called triangulation, is highly recommended by many social researchers because of its usefulness to integrate data from different sources in the study of social phenomena. Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman define triangulation as “the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point. Data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question” (2011:252-253).

My methodology includes the review of written documents, group discussions based on a Bible study with women from a number of selected denominations, in-depth interviews with leaders of women’s fellowships from the denominations and leaders at regional and national levels. I also had interviews with a number of pastors of churches as well as some people working with independent organizations involved in bringing peace to the country. In this chapter I will examine the following sections: Sampling, Data collection, Data analysis, Ethical consideration and Methodological limitations.

5.2 Sampling

In this section I would like to discuss and justify the choice of the respondents to the interviews and of the participants to group discussions. Sampling is an important step in conducting qualitative research as expressed in this statement, “The aim is to select a sample that will be representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusion” (Durrheim 2006:49). It was not an easy task in this study because the phenomenon under scrutiny affects many people in the Kivu region and beyond. I therefore used a purposive sampling in which, “the researcher samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to research question” (Bryman 2008:458). The boundaries of my sampling were set by the fact that my research question deals with the contribution of Christian women to the process of peace-building in the region.

In this study my focus is on interacting with a sizable sample of which the results may be transferable to other groups experiencing the same situation of conflicts and political unrest as in the DRC, rather than seeking statistical accuracy. Kevin Durrheim calls this technique “sampling to redundancy in the sense that no new information can be gained from increasing the sample size” (2006:50). My sample is constituted of four major categories of participants. The first category includes groups of women from various local churches who participated in Bible study and group discussion, while categories 2-4 represent individuals who sat with me for an interview. Therefore, the entire sample can be schematized as follows: (1) groups of women from local churches, (2) leaders of women’s fellowships or federations, (3) pastors and heads of churches or denominations and (4) representatives of independent organizations. However, a fifth group of two, which was not in the initial design of the project, figures in the table below as special guests because during my fieldwork I had the opportunity to meet the National President of the FFP and also the Regional President of ECC North Kivu region.

Category	Women’s groups	Leaders of women’s fellowship	Pastors/Heads of local churches	Representatives of independent organisations	Special Guests
Number of participants	5	6	8 (1F & 7M)	3 (1M & 2F)	2
Code	WFG1-5	LWF 1-6	PCL 1-8	IOR 1-3	PEC & NFF

Table 5.1 Sampling. Participants: F: Female; M: Male

I will, in the following sub-sections, explain each category of participants and give reasons for choosing it.

5.2.1 Women from local churches

Women from local churches constitute the primary focus of my inquiry in response to the key research question of this study which is: what contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the Kivu region of the DRC? It is acknowledged by many that the aim of feminist research is “to focus on women’s experience and to listen and explore the shared meanings between women with an aim to reformulate traditional research agendas” (Bryman 2008:392). The women of my inquiry are survivors of violence and also agents of transformation for a sustainable peace in the region. The aim of my meeting with these women was to understand their perception of violence and peace and how they were dealing with the problem in their religious and cultural contexts. This study is designed to empower them so that they may together with their male counterparts be involved in peace-building. The choice of these women is in tune with our African women’s way of doing theology. Musimbi Kanyoro speaks of an ‘engendered cultural hermeneutics’ which she defines as “a method of theology that gives us African women our own voice and space... The result of the personal experience is a creation of new literature in which truths about women of Africa will be told” (2001:27).

What this study is seeking to achieve is to expose the truth about atrocities perpetrated against women and about their yearning for peace. The centrality of women’s experience is the unifying factor of the various waves of feminist theologies to which this study adheres. Rosemary Ruether argues that drawing from experience is not unique to feminist theology or liberation theology but “Human experience is the starting point and the ending point of the hermeneutical circle” (1983:12). She pursues her idea by showing that, “the uniqueness of feminist theology lies in its use of women’s experience, which has been entirely shut out of theological reflection in the past” (1983:13). During my field work I had the opportunity to gather with five women’s fellowships from different churches with a number of participants ranging from 50 to 120 per group, as shown in the following table:

Focus Groups	Free Methodist Church	Mennonite Brethren Church	Swedish Pentecostal Church	Norwegian Pentecostal Church	Assemblies of God
Church Code	CLMC	CFMC	CEPAC	CELPA	CADC
Code	WFG1	WFG2	WFG3	WFG4	WFG5
Number of participants	108	73	87	36	119

Table 5.2 Church Members' Focus Groups

5.2.1.1 Free Methodist Church (*Communauté Libre Méthodiste au Congo - CMLC*)

It was obvious for me to start my meetings with members of the Free Methodist Church in Congo because it is home. My husband and I are members of this church and it is with the recommendation of the Free Methodist Church in the DRC that I embarked on the journey of my theological training. The headquarters of the church is located in Bukavu. Besides, with its 140.000 members in the country, the Free Methodist church is the third largest community, after the Pentecostals of CEPAC and CELPA described below, among the members of the *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC) in the Kivu region. Although accurate statistics are not easy to get in this region torn by the war, it is estimated that the population in the Kivu region is 5 million of which 1.5 million would be Protestants attending churches affiliated to the ECC, 3 million of Roman Catholics and half of a million of others denominations and religions. Whatever challenge that the region faces, a great number of Methodist members are likely to be affected. This is the case with armed conflicts and sexual assaults against women that have been taking place in the region. Hence, the experience of Free Methodist women became important data for this study. More than a hundred persons, most of them women, participated in Bible study sessions for this study. They took place in Nyawera, one of the parishes of the Free Methodist Church in Bukavu.

5.2.1.2 Mennonite Brethren Church (*Communauté des Frères Mennonites - CFMC*)

The Mennonites are well established in the western and central part of the DRC. A small community is present in the Kivu region as a planting point. They have little influence in the region apart from being members of the ECC, the National Council of Churches in the DRC. Therefore, I decided to have a meeting with a group of women of this church during one of my trips to Kinshasa, the capital city of the DRC, where the church has been settled for many years

with a very large community. Mennonites are part of what is called historic peace-churches. They are renowned for their involvement in conflict resolution worldwide, as well as in Congo. It is because of this background that I have chosen to learn from their experience of peace-making in the context of the DRC.

5.2.1.3 Swedish Pentecostal Church (*Communauté des Eglises Pentecôtistes en Afrique Centrale* – CEPAC)

This is a Swedish Pentecostal Church with more than 300,000 members. It is the largest Protestant church in the eastern Congo. The Swedish mission has initiated many projects in relation to the current situation of conflicts. CEPAC is often consulted by all people who would like to know what the Christians are doing in the eastern Congo because they are present in every activity, including women's undertakings. The unique hospital in Bukavu specializing in treating severe cases of damages caused by gun rape belongs to CEPAC. My interaction with members of this church was a significant source of information.

5.2.1.4 Norwegian Pentecostal Church (*Communauté des Eglises Libres Pentecôtistes en Afrique* – CELPA)

CELPA is a church founded by the Norwegian Mission. It is the second largest in the eastern Congo. More significant is that the Norwegian government and mission have been very active in the field since the outbreak of what is now called the African War in 1996. The Norwegian Church AID (NCA) is one of the international organizations that are making an impact in the lives of the survivors of war. Women in CELPA are also involved in many activities. It is not by chance that the regional president of *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (the Protestant Women's Federation) in the Southern Kivu province comes from CELPA. Consultation with such a group shed light on what women are able to achieve in the current situation.

5.2.1.5 Assemblies of God (*Comunauté des Assemblées de Dieu au Congo* – CADC)

Assemblies of God constitute an important community of Protestants in the DRC, though divided in many groups. They have a great influence on the ECC and the Protestant Women's Federation (FFP). Assemblies of God continue to attract many people because of their emphasis on the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, making them a link between the new charismatic movement and old mainline churches. Most of their members are recruited among middle class and

grassroots citizens. I chose to meet this group because of their experience with the day-to-day life of women in the DRC.

It has been easy to meet most of these groups because of the interest shown by their leaders in this study. Here below are the categories of leaders who participated in my investigation.

5.2.2 Leaders of women's fellowships and the Federation

I had to consult the women who lead the Fellowships in order to get a first-hand view of what women at the grassroots level were doing to challenge and cope with the situation and also through them to have access to other women as a group.

5.2.2.1 National President of FFP

I know most of the leaders at national and regional levels because I have worked for many years as a leader of women in my own church. This has helped me have easy access to various offices and to book appointments with those in leadership positions. When I visited Kinshasa in July 2011, I had the opportunity to visit the head office of the National Council of Churches and had an interview with the National President of *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes-FFP* (Federation of Protestant Women) on 12 July 2011. As stated earlier in this study, the FFP is a branch of the National Council of Churches in Congo called *Eglise du Christ au Congo-ECC* (Church of Christ in Congo). It is a vibrant department in organizing activities for the church. In her position she has oversight of all the Protestant churches affiliated to the ECC as far as women's activities are concerned. Many projects are initiated by the national office and then sent for implementation to all churches throughout the country. Since the majority of the members of the church are women, the collaboration and contribution of FFP are required for any church project to succeed. It was important to know her perception on peace and violence in the country and strategies put in place by her office to alleviate the pain that women are experiencing.

5.2.2.2 Regional office of FFP

In Bukavu I had an interview with the regional President of the Protestant Women's Federation. Being a leader in the region where most of the abuses and violence take place, she had a lot to say on the impact of the war on the life of women in the region. She usually receives reports and complaints of women from various affiliated denominations and organizations in the region.

When possible she visits different women's fellowships for encouragement and also shares ideas or strategies that are designed by the regional or national office. She is the link between women from various denominations and churches that may not have the same doctrinal orientation. In her position she is the right person to talk to when dealing with empowering churchwomen for action.

5.2.2.3 Leaders of local women's fellowships

The strategy was to have a chat separately with the leader of each focus group mentioned above. It was planned to meet the leader or leaders before the discussions held together in our Bible study in order to prepare for the meeting with the entire group. From the leader you get a feeling of the expectation of the group. It worked well because I could in this way get clarity on how the denomination or church was doing in the area of peace-building and helping the survivors of sexual violence. It was also a time of sharing their activities and exchanging experiences or advice on how things may be improved in order to meet the need in the community. In many cases the leader of a fellowship would be accompanied by one or two collaborators but in rare instances we had one-to-one talks. At all times the correct procedure has to be respected, following the hierarchy of the church from top to bottom, in order to have free access to people I needed to meet for interviews or group discussions.

5.2.3 The gate keepers: heads of denominations or churches

Although the focus of this study is on women, I could not go further working with women in the church without involving or getting permission from heads of churches or denominations, who in most cases are men. The nature of this research is not discriminatory; I would like to see the entire church, men and women, being aware of their potential to bring social change, and to work together towards transforming the community. Hence I had to meet a number of heads of churches for a wider vision.

5.2.3.1 Regional President of ECC (the National Council of Churches) in the Province of Northern Kivu

During my fieldwork, I spent two days in December 2010 in Goma, Northern Province of Kivu. Since I did not have enough time to organize any meetings with church members, I sought to meet the Regional President of the ECC to share my research and its significance for the church

and to hear from him about the role of women in the current context. My request was granted, so we met for about two hours on 9 December 2010. It was easy to meet him at such short notice because I had known him many years ago. He is an ordained minister of the Free Methodist Church, to which I belong too. A Regional President bears a lot of responsibility in the province both for the church and the government. He therefore was an informed respondent on many problems that had been occurring in the region and also he was aware of various initiatives to solve the problems in and outside the church. His insights have shaped my findings as discussed later.

5.2.3.2. Ministers and leaders of churches

The protocol in many churches is that an outsider is not allowed to hold a meeting with church members without the permission of the pastor or lay leader in charge of the congregation. So it was important for me to be granted permission to talk with women in the church by pastors or the person in charge. Having worked with the church in the region for years, I knew what to do and where to go. Besides, my husband is an ordained minister in the Free Methodist Church of the DRC and being a minister's wife I have had easy access to many churches and gatherings of the Christians. To book appointments, therefore was made easier because some of them knew either me or my husband or both of us, since we have both been in leadership positions in our church and knew many of them. For those I was not familiar with, there was always a relative or a friend to introduce me to them. I did not find any resistance on the side of most leaders of local churches; to the contrary, many of them felt honoured to be part of this research. Once what this study sought to accomplish was clearly explained to them, they understood that my research would not disturbing the order nor challenge any position in the church nor discuss doctrines, but would contribute to what was felt as a common concern: how to live in peace in this war-torn part of the world. It made things smoother once the pastor or the leader understood the purpose of the research and consented to participate with his/her ideas through an interview. He/she became the spokesperson to advertise the meeting and to urge women to attend the meeting with me.

I would like to underline that most of the ministers and lay leaders chairing the parishes or congregations where we had our group discussions were men. Only one parish was led by a woman and it happened that it was a Free Methodist Church. Without arguing the issue of

women ordination that may have lead us astray from the scope of my research, it is important to notice the slow progress achieved thus far by mainline churches in accepting women's leadership in spite of all the campaigns to end gender-based discrimination. Many member churches of the ECC, which are mostly mission-founded or mainline churches, do not recognize women leadership and among those who do, like the Free Methodist Church, the number of women ministers remains symbolic. In Chapter four I showed that only 2% of ordained ministers in the DRC are females and less that 10% worldwide.

5.2.4 Independent organizations⁶⁵

It is important to note that my interaction with some people working with independent organizations was a kind of snowball sampling. In this approach “the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others” (Bryman 2008: 184). While conducting my fieldwork I was introduced to people working with locally-initiated non-profit organizations that interpret well the desire and effort that people in the region are doing to solve their problem. I met, during sessions of Bible study, two women from the private sector, one in Bukavu and one in Kinshasa. They worked with organizations that are inter-denominational and their focus was on empowering women to face the current situation of war and abuse in the country. I decided to have an informal talk with them. The names of their organizations are not mentioned because they did not have a mandate to speak on behalf of their organizations. Nevertheless, I was able to gather empirical data from their experience that has enriched my research. In my findings I have coded them IOR1 and IOR2.

In keeping with the intention of this study, which is to encourage and enhance local efforts for peace-building from the grassroots level, I decided not to deal with international organisations, though they are more equipped and fully funded to conduct research and provide relief. In fact, the situation of war in Congo has attracted the attention of many international organizations which are working in the field to address the issue of violence and peace and their findings fill the columns of the media. Unfortunately, many of them come as outsiders or experts bringing knowledge, expertise and relief with little participation from the local population. The

⁶⁵ 'Independent' in this study means organizations that are not under the direct control of church hierarchy or national government, but still are faith-based so that they remain in the scope of my research grounded on a theological approach.

assumption of this study is that people should not wait for international aid or external expertise to act upon their situation. However, I approached one local organisation called RIO, because of its connection with the church.

RIO, meaning 'network of organizational innovation', is a faith-based organization working with all the denominations in the region. It therefore has close links with the ECC (National Council of Churches), raising awareness of the impact of the situation on the community and empowering church members in various capacities. One of their activities in this period was to train people for peace and build a library where documents on the situation in Congo and on peace-making could be accessed. They regularly organized a number of workshops and seminars of training with church members and the community at large. I was interested in their work because they had a series of training for women who were leaders and also 'ordinary women' in the community to teach them about peace, sexual violence and nonviolent communication. From this wide range of samples I was able to collect data for my research.

The table below gives a summary of the categories of participants in this study, their location and date of being interviewed:

Category	Code	Date	Location
Leaders of Women's Fellowships	LWF1	2009-12-13	Bukavu
	LWF2	2010-01-09	Bukavu
	LWF3	2009-12-05	Bukavu
	LWF4	2010-07-05	Bukavu
	LWF5	2009-12-12	Bukavu
	LWF6	2011-07-17	Kinshasa
Pastors/ Heads of Local Churches	PCL1	2008-07-08	Bukavu
	PCL2	2009-03-16	Bukavu
	PCL3	2009-12-18	Bukavu
	PCL4	2010-01-08	Bukavu
	PCL5	2010-07-04	Bukavu
	PCL6	2009-12-14	Bukavu
	PCL7	2010-07-12	Bukavu
	PCL8	2011-07-16	Kinshasa
Representatives of Independent organizations	IOR1	2008-07-23	Bukavu
	IOR2	2010-01-09	Bukavu
	IOR3	2011-07-17	Kinshasa

Special Guests			
President of ECC N/Kivu	PEC	2010-12-09	Goma
National President of FFP	NFF	2011-01-08	Kinshasa
Bible Study with Women's Focus Groups	WFG1*	2009-12-12	Bukavu
	WFG2	2011-07-17	Kinshasa
	WFG3	2009-12-05	Bukavu
	WFG4	2010-01-09	Bukavu
	WFG5	2010-07-16	Bukavu

Table 5:3: Inventory of Sampling (*Individuals who made some comments during Bible study will be referred to by these codes e.g. WFG4:1 or WFG5:1)

5.3 Data Collection

From its inception this study was designed to combine various methods of collecting data in order to get a full understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny, namely the process of peace-building in the post-conflict Kivu region. Many feminists encourage the use of a broader and inclusive approach to understanding social phenomena. In her comment on the eclectic nature of feminist methodology, Ruether affirms that, “Feminism seeks not simply a feminist appropriation of one or another of these traditions, but a new synthesis of all” (1983:45). The scope of this study does not allow me to extend my investigation to all the traditions suggested by Ruether, which are mainly the use of pagan and Christian resources as well as thoughts from Marxism, liberalism and romanticism as discussed in chapter Four. However, by working with *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes*, as a platform which included women from various denominations and organizations affiliated to the ECC, I was able to gather ideas from a wide range of Christian women. The idea of using multiple methods by feminist researchers is further asserted by Gill Eagle, Grahame Hayes and Thabani Sibanda as they argue, “Since feminist social scientists are often interested in hidden or what are conventionally considered personal or private aspects of peoples’ lives, they often use interviewing, focus groups or open-ended information-seeking methods” (2006:506).

The combination of methods mentioned in this statement is not limited to feminist social scientists. I have used a similar combination in my feminist theological approach, with a few

innovations, in order to suit the particular context of this study. I combined in-depth interviews, a questionnaire, focus group discussions and documents analysis but not all at once. From one category of participants to another, I had to decide what strategy or method was more appropriate, and sometimes I needed a combination of two or more. This flexibility or innovation is allowed in order to address the complexity of social phenomenon as stated by Christa Fouché and Willem Schurink. They argue, “Qualitative researchers almost always develop their own designs as they go along, using one or more of the available strategies or tools as aid or guideline” (2011:308). I concur with the above statement because for this study I had to use more than one strategy to collect data. Researchers believe that in-depth interviews go well with individuals; therefore I used them for my encounter with leaders of churches or presidents of women’s federations. A questionnaire was often used in combination with interviews as a guide to focus on what was more important for this study, namely, a better understanding of the concept of peace and the way it could be implemented in the current situation. Bible study served to pave the way for group discussions with participants in focus groups. Valuable information was also gathered from documents as supplements to data obtained through interviews, the questionnaire and group discussions. The following section describes how these methods were used to collect data.

5.3.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with individuals: leaders of women’s fellowships and pastors or other leaders of churches using open-ended questions. Qualitative research recommends this approach because “open-ended questions allow respondents to communicate their experiences or opinions about a specific issue in their own words, without any restriction” (Kanjee 2006:486). Among them were two top leaders of the church, namely the National President of *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (FFP) and the Bishop, Regional President of the ECC. Interviewing is a highly useful technique for collecting data in conducting a qualitative research because it gives the researcher an opportunity to get to know people intimately, so that she/he can really understand how they think and feel (Kelly 2006:297). The aim was to allow the respondents to express their opinions freely and to learn from them how they perceived the phenomenon of peace-building in a post-conflict region. Still, it was important not let respondents wander out of the theme by using semi-structured interviews. The conversations

revolved around five major themes, as a guiding framework, in order to remain focused on the topic of this research. These themes were as follows:

- a) The effect or impact of war in the region
- b) What can be done to bring peace
- c) The role of the church in the current situation
- d) Women's contribution or involvement in the process of peace-building
- e) Any doctrinal or theological teaching to sustain the effort of peace-building

As stated above, conducting this interview was an opportunity to get to know a number of my respondents intimately but also to give them a space where they could share their experiences or feelings. Furthermore, the above themes could be covered in any order since qualitative research allows such flexibility by the researcher. Depending on the position or the gender of the interviewees, my emphasis would shift from one theme to another, as discussed in the following sub-sections.

5.3.1.1 Interviews with pastors and heads of churches

Women are striving to find a space for their own within this male-dominated enterprise but major decisions are mostly inspired by men. Hence, in interviewing male leaders of the Church I was cautious of the power relationship and the ethical issues that may have arisen when a woman has to interview a man. However, feminists are transcending the barriers that possibly exist between the interviewer and the interviewee based on gender or social status because research has to be done in a collaborative way without discrimination and prejudice. Marshall and Rossman observe that:

Feminist researchers have expanded qualitative inquiry especially by focusing on the power imbalances between the researcher and the researched, by expanding collaborative research, and by asserting that reflexivity is a strategy for embracing subjectivity, replacing pretences of objectivity (2006:28).

For the sake of my research, questions about their views on women's agency in church ministries especially in peace-building and what contribution women can expect from them, were very crucial. Since the questions were addressed in a conversational way, male respondents to my inquiry felt honoured to be part of this process. Their involvement in this project is significant

because they have the power to thwart all initiatives from women in the community if they are not willing to collaborate, especially when they feel overpowered by women. My respondents were frank and open in sharing their commitment to support any initiative from women toward the peace-building process. Nevertheless, there is a gap to bridge between the intention expressed by words and the practice as far as empowering women is concerned. That is why the opinion of women's leaders was very important for this study.

5.3.1.2 Interviews with leaders of women's fellowships

These are women who have the huge responsibility of proving to the world that they are as equally determined and equipped as their male counterparts to play a significant role in the church of Christ and in the community at large. Most of them do not have a high level of education but when interacting with them I made sure that they felt valued. As with male leaders, I used the same principle of avoiding power imbalances by trying to be at their level so that they should not be intimidated by my level of education. It is one way of doing feminist research, as is rightly stated, "Feminist researchers are committed to eradicating power imbalances between researcher and subjects. Research interaction is construed as an open dialogue rather than an opportunity to mine information" (Eagle et al. 2006:503). It is easier to get information from women who consider the interviewer to be a colleague and sister in Christ rather than coming to them as a scholar questioning less educated women.

To gain the confidence of these women is a significant issue in the Kivu region because many of them have borne the blunt of the aftermath of war more than any other group in the region. They are wounded and heartbroken and have become very emotional when they share their painful experiences. An interview with such a group of women became not only an interesting exercise for my research, but also a challenging experience, as the subject tended to bring back memories that many would like to have forgotten. Meeting their leaders who knew more about their members and had been standing alongside them to provide comfort, support and friendship that they could not receive from some family members was rewarding for my research. Leaders were able to release some sensitive information that survivors would hesitate to disclose to strangers. In his comment on interviewing people, John Madge (1965) says, "After all, it is argued, what social scientists are interested in are people, and if you want to find out something about a person, surely the best way is to ask him or one of his friends" (1965:150). In this case, I was

able to find out some problems that a number of women in a church has experienced through their leaders. Hence, being a leader of women in the current situation required a comforting heart and the capacity to help survivors of violence to cope with or transcend their surrounding situation. Although leaders of women's fellowships seemed well informed of what the real problem was and the extent of its damage in the life of the community, nothing could replace hearing the views and observations of women from the grassroots level in groups. They were key players in the implementation of this research as members of a community which was striving to stop its plight. The following section discusses how I collected data from focus groups.

5.3.2 Focus groups

In most cases, the interviews with leaders of fellowships or churches were a prelude to a meeting with the focus group. Bryman has shown that feminist researchers prefer the use of focus groups because it is compatible with "the ethics and politics of feminism" (2008: 487). These ethics according to Bryman are to study people in their social context as expressed in the following statement:

Focus group research is less artificial than many other methods, because in emphasizing group interaction, which is a normal part of social life, it does not suffer from the problem of gleaning information in an unnatural situation. Moreover, the tendency of many group researchers to recruit participants from naturally occurring groups underpins the lower level of artificiality of the method, since people are able to discuss in situations that are quite normal for them. As a result, there is greater opportunity to derive understanding that chimes with the lived experience of women (2008: 287).

In this regard I used Bible study as a means to interact with Christian women about the situation of political unrest and human rights violation that has befallen our community. It is also a useful tool to get their views on biblical principles that could be applied to curb the situation, as intended by this study. Using what Gerald West calls 'Contextual Bible Study', I chose to read the Bible with ordinary people as he recommends:

We must continue to read the Bible because the Bible is a significant resource and symbol for ordinary people and because it is important to stand in continuity with and to bear witness to the suppressed voices within the Bible and the neglected interpretation of the Bible (1993:19).

I should admit that more than ever before, with the outbreak of misery and violence in the eastern Congo, men and women have turned to the Bible to seek healing and God's intervention. For that reason, when a study is based on a biblical message, it is well received because most of the Christians at the grassroots level believe that the message of the Bible is genuine, without trickery, and participants take it seriously. During this study I saw the same commitment to the Bible as the norm that Madipoane Masenya describes among women in the South African Pentecostal Churches, as she concludes her article saying:

As African-South African Pentecostal Church leaders and laity commit themselves for freeing the Bible from its erstwhile wounding usage to which they have subjected it for so long, we may enable its women readers to encounter the Bible as a healing Sword and thereby experience what it really means to be Church in Africa today (Masenya 2005:55).

As Masenya points out clearly in the above statement, Bible study was designed to help women reflect on the healing power of the message of the Bible and what it really means to be Church in the Kivu region plagued with violence. The situation requires the women-church to be not only a healing society, but also an agent of social transformation. It is again West who underscores the transforming capacity of contextual Bible study as follows:

The contextual Bible study process is committed to both personal and social transformation, and includes the existential, the political, the economic, the cultural, and the religious spheres of life. The contextual Bible study process is committed to reading the Bible for transformation of all aspects of social reality (1993:21-22).

The transformation needed in the context of this study is to stop conflicts and violence against women and build sustainable peace in the region. I have selected the story of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25 as an illustration of the role of women in peace-making as I shall discuss in the sections below. I was helped in this exercise by the work of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA),⁶⁶ which is spreading awareness of gender-based sexual and domestic violence through the Tamar Campaign.⁶⁷ I would like to say the following about the Tamar Campaign which became an introduction to my Bible study.

⁶⁶ This campaign has been conceived by Ujamaa Center of UKZN. See their homepage: <<http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx/>> [Accessed 5 April 2013].

⁶⁷The Tamar Campaign was conceived by the Ujamaa Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as a vehicle to address through contextual bible studies problems of gender violence in the church/community. The programme

5.3.2.1 The rape of Tamar

The story of Tamar, a daughter of King David, who was raped by her half-brother Amnon is recorded in 2 Samuel 13. This passage has become a powerful tool to convey the message of violence against women as demonstrated by the wider audience it attracts in what is now known as the ‘Tamar Campaign.’⁶⁸ In spite of the diversity of cultures the message of this text is perceived with the same feeling, the horror of violence against women. Though the account of this story is about domestic violence, its application embraces all kinds of violence against women. In the Kivu region, as well as other provinces of the DRC, FECCLAHA is using this campaign to challenge the Church to address shocking sexual assaults perpetrated against women in the DRC. This campaign uses contextual Bible study to break the silence on this issue. As a narrative, people are called to answer a number of questions in order to understand the story, to discover the plot underlying the story and the various characters and their role in the plot.

After understanding what the story is about, participants engage critically in examining the story and bring it into their context by answering questions such, Who is Tamar today? Amnon? David? Absalom? They reflect on each character according to his/her role in the story by answering the question, what lesson can be learned from each of these characters? Finally, what should be done today to emulate or to avoid what you have learned?

As I said earlier the fact that many Christians women I met had already participated in one or more sessions of Tamar Campaign, it was not difficult to introduce the Bible study on Abigail by using the same approach.

falls under the area of women and gender. It was primarily designed to empower women and girls survivors of gender violence. The Tamar Campaign is now being used to discuss responsible masculinity. More on this campaign can be found on Ujamaa site, <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/campaigns.aspx>.

⁶⁸ FECCLAHA has developed materials in various languages such as Swahili and French which are being used in the DRC to bring awareness among the Christian church of the threat that violence against women and children poses to the society. (FECCLAHA), “Tamar Campaign and Sexual Gender-based Violence” <http://www.fecclaha.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=57&Itemid=197/> [Accessed 5 April 2013].

5.3.2.2 Abigail and David⁶⁹

The strategy was to start by saying something familiar to make people talk and be ready to participate. The Tamar Campaign was a good hook to this end. A few questions of introduction were made around the story of Tamar such as: Who has already participated in the Tamar Campaign? What have you learnt? What parallel can you draw between the biblical story and the rapes taking place in the DRC today?

As an introduction I would say something like, “The Tamar Campaign has helped the church, especially women, to speak out and speak against violence - the current study teaches how to engage in bringing peace to situations of conflict.” The approach to Abigail’s narrative follows the same pattern as the one of the Tamar Campaign.

At the start of the Abigail Bible study, a brief summary was given to describe the passage without giving all the details that the participants would need to explore and discover on their own. The summary could include the following:

The text in 1Samuel 25 is a good illustration of what women can do to bring peace. A bloody conflict was about to take place between, on the one side, David and his troops and on the other side the household of Nabal. The conflict was triggered by the attitude of Nabal as he treated harshly the soldiers of David who needed some food from him in acknowledgement of the protection they had provided to Nabal’s shepherds at Mount Carmel. When Abigail heard that her husband has been rude with David’s servants by sending them away empty-handed and that David was determined to avenge this, she decided to intervene and avert the conflict.

After the introduction the audience was given time to read the text closely. Then, participants would break into small groups for easy interaction where they analysed the text by answering a set of guiding questions (see Appendix 4). The focus was on different characters and their role in the story. The three key characters in the text are David, Nabal and Abigail. Participants would

⁶⁹ The story is found in 1 Samuel 25. Abigail was married to a rich man called Nabal, during the Israelite Monarchy. The shepherds of Nabal had been grazing in the area where David was hiding from King Saul’s threat and they enjoyed the protection of their flocks by David’s army for a while. When David wanted to get some food from Nabal in return, the latter rudely sent his envoys off empty-handed. This treatment angered David who decided to kill the entire household of Nabal in revenge. But when Abigail heard of the matter, she decided to intervene, prepared the provisions that David needed and met him and his army on the way, pleaded for forgiveness and succeeded in averting the murder of her family.

discuss in their groups how each character is portrayed by the narrator and his/her contribution to the story as a whole. In so doing they could notice gaps, missing parts or under-developed episodes in the text. To appropriate the text, participants had to answer questions such as ‘who are David, Nabal and Abigail today? What lesson can we learn for our context? What kind of action is this text leading us to?’

In fact it is important to notice that, from a feminist point of view, the Tamar story and the Abigail story show many similarities as they both pose a challenge to patriarchal cultures. In each of them there is only one female voice in the midst of many men. Nevertheless, the voices of Tamar and Abigail in these narratives are loud enough to speak on behalf of many missing or culturally overlooked female voices.

This exercise of leading discussions with women’s groups around biblical texts made the collection of their opinions about ending violence and peace-building easy. The reading of the Bible and the discovery of truths embedded in the narrative empowers readers because whatever decision or resolution they might take will not have been imposed on them from outside. Furthermore, people at the grassroots level have a strong belief in God speaking through the Bible that they take seriously whatever insights are gathered from Bible study. Data collected in this exercise seem to me a true and genuine expression of the participants’ will. However, I needed other techniques to complement the data collected through Bible study.

5.3.3 Questionnaires

In Chapter One on the general introduction to this study I mentioned that questionnaires would be used as another technique for collecting data. I have therefore attached in Appendix 2 and 3 a set of questions designed for women’s groups and for church leaders. However, I did not hand in a questionnaire to be filled in and then returned to me because of the high level of illiteracy among women and the delay that it may have caused when people who are not used to scientific rigour are asked to fill in an academic paper. Nonetheless, the questions that are in that questionnaire have been used extensively as a guide for all the interviews I conducted and also during part of group discussions. They served as a framework to keep our conversations in line with the research topic even though respondents were free to share their views and concerns in a wider scope beyond my questionnaire.

Another set of questions (see Appendix 4) was designed to guide the Bible study. In this way I assumed that data collected through face-to-face interviews and those drawn from group discussions that followed the Bible study, covered sufficiently the content of my questionnaire and gave clarity to most of the issues raised by this study. Yet, no technique should be considered as complete by itself as stated by Strydom and Delport, “Each data source has its strengths and weaknesses, and by using triangulation the strengths of one procedure can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach” (2008:377). To fill the gaps of the above techniques I had to analyse some written materials that contain information about my research area.

5.3.4 Documents analysis

Another technique used to collect data for this qualitative study was through the review of documents. I have used primary and secondary sources to gather valuable information from the historical and socio-political situation of war in the region to the effort of churches and women’s fellowships to bring change in the region. Though documents about the conflict are overwhelming following the exposé of scandalous violations of human rights that have accompanied the war in the DRC, there are yet few writings on Christian peace-building with a feminist perspective. Documentary data gathered in the process have been useful to corroborate the information I received from the respondents to various interviews and in group discussions. I had to analyze primary and secondary sources as illustrated by the examples below.

5.3.4.1 Primary sources

Ngongo Fatuma (2009), a Congolese woman, has written a valuable book entitled *Femme et Paix Dans la Ville de Bukavu de 1996 à 2006: Réflexion Théologique* [in English ‘Woman and Peace in the city of Bukavu from 1996 to 2006: Theological Reflection’]. This book covers a period of ten years during which war and violence against women were ravaging the eastern Congo. Although the region is still experiencing political unrest and the violation of human rights, this book is an eye-opener written by a woman who has witnessed and lived the situation at the climax of the crisis. The book describes the causes of the war, its effects on the community and upon women; and more importantly, various attempts made by women to be involved in peace-building. There is a strong appeal to Christian values and to women for peace which is in line with this study. More than any writing read on the situation in Bukavu, this document is a strong supplement to the interviews conducted in the region.

From the national headquarters of *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* in Kinshasa, I got a number of minutes and reports of various meetings related to the response of Christian women to the prevailing situation. These minutes are a precious source of information on how women have been reacting to the conflict and what effort and strategies they have put in place. One important document in this regard was the minutes of the National Congress of Protestant Women from all the provinces of the country, organized in Kinshasa on 20 - 25 July 2004. The theme of the congress was “Breathe that they may live” from Ezekiel 37:9. This was a call to Protestant women to speak out and speak prophetically in a country which had to be compared to the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel’s prophecy. These minutes present a survey of the political, social, cultural, economic and religious situation in the country after the war. At the end, the Congress formulated a number of recommendations to be implemented by political and religious actors, including Christian women in every sector of national life.

A third lot of resourceful documents was the minutes of a seminar on “Vulgarization of the Law on Violence against Women” organized by the National Federation of Protestant Women on 30 April - 3 May 2009. The seminar was an attempt to bring awareness of the various texts of the law that give the right to women to fight against violence. Participants were also informed about different forms of violence against women that are practised in the country. They were also introduced to the Tamar Campaign in this seminar as a biblical approach to speaking out about violence against women. Other documents were examined as secondary sources.

5.3.4.2 Secondary sources

Among secondary sources I read for this study is an interesting report by Randi Solhjell (2009) for the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) on “Combating Sexual Violence in the DRC.” This document presents ways and approaches that may lead to reducing or stopping sexual violence in the DRC. Since this violence has close links with the situation of conflict in the region, the report focuses on a number of resolutions by the United Nation Security Council concerning, women, peace, sexual violence in war and conflict. The report concludes by making a number of recommendations in which even the church is mentioned as a stakeholder in the process. The report is based on findings from a fieldwork sojourn in the North Kivu region which combined several interviews, informal discussions and eye-witness accounts.

Another important article I have used was written by Séverine Autesserre (2007:423-441) on “D.R Congo: Explaining Peace Building Failures 2003-2006”. This document examines the dynamics of violence in the DRC and the failures of all efforts of peace-building during the period of transition between the official cessation of war in 2002 and the first democratic election in 2007. The author demonstrates that unless local conflicts are settled, efforts done at national and regional levels may not bear fruit. In spite of international and national peace agreement signed during the transition, local conflicts over land, political power and ethnic antagonism increasingly became self-sustaining, autonomous, and disconnected from the national and regional issues. The emphasis on the local dimension of peace-building in this document is in line with my thesis of a bottom-up procedure using grassroots women to address local hostilities.

Dr Shelley Whitman (2007:29-48) has presented at the Southern African Universities ‘Social Sciences Conference (SAUSSC) in Gaborone in 2005, a paper on Women and Peace-building in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: An assessment of their role in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue’. This document discusses the role that women should play in peace-building since they are the ones who suffer the most and yet are forgotten around the peace-table. At the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (IDC) which took place at the Sun City (South Africa) February - April 2002, women were under-represented with only 9% of the delegates. However, this figure was seen as an improvement since in previous meetings held in Lusaka and Gaborone there was an insignificant representation of women. Despite their small number, the presence of women at the IDC bore positive results as far as gender awareness is concerned. This paper was a plea for the inclusion of women in decision-making if the DRC is to build a lasting peace. Thus, this article provided relevant data to my study.

The last document I would like to mention in this inventory is an article by the physician who has distinguished himself in helping women survivors of rape in the Kivu, Dr Denis Mukengere Mukwege (2009). The article is entitled ‘Rape with Extreme Violence: The New Pathology in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo.’ This article provides an in-depth analysis of the atrocities perpetrated against women and the damage they have caused in their lives. As a testimony of a doctor who has devoted his life to providing care to some of the most desperate cases of inhuman sexual violence, this article is a well of valuable data on the situation of women from a medical point of view and on why peace is needed in the Kivu region.

5.3.5 Personal experience and observation

During my fieldwork I also used observation as a means of understanding and discovering certain patterns of behaviour of the participants and of the feelings of people in the social context of this study. Marshall and Rossman argue that:

Observation is fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry. It is used to discover complex interactions in natural social settings. Even in studies using in-depth interviews, observation plays an important role, as the researcher notes the interview partner's body language and affect, tone of voice, and other paralinguistic messages (2011:140).

Since this study deals with the violation of human rights and the empowerment of women in a patriarchal society, observation was very important as I needed to go beyond stereotyped answers but rather to understand the deep feelings of women in relation to their situation and the role they are able to play. There was also a need of observing body language, movements and tone of voice of male heads of churches and pastors, when I spoke of supporting or working hand in hand with women in the process of stopping violence and of peace-building.

Besides observation, my personal experience as a member of the Congolese community helped me to anticipate or understand some interactions that are motivated by cultural and social constructs of the society. I could also easily notice changes that had taken place during the years of my absence from the country and how the war had affected the society at its roots.

In the table below I would like to summarize how the different techniques were used with which participants, in order to gather data on the field.

	Women's Fellowship	Leaders of women Fellowship	Regional National Leaders	Independent Organisation Representatives
In-depth Interview		X	X	X
CBS	X			
Books	X	X	X	X
Journals	X	X	X	X

Minutes			X	
Internet	X	X	X	X
Articles	X	X	X	X
Personal observat ion	X	X	X	X

Table 5:2 Data Collection: Methods applied

The collection of all these materials from interviews and written documents constitutes one leg of the process of this investigation. Scholars agree that the work of a researcher is not complete until one is able to make sense of the materials collected through various techniques used in this study. In the following section I will discuss the procedure I have used to analyse the various data.

5.4 Data Analysis

Data came from interviews, Bible study, focus groups, books review, minutes and personal experience. Marshall and Rossman consider data analysis as “an interpretive act, a process of bringing meaning to raw and inexpressive data” (2011: 210), They acknowledge that “Raw data have no inherent meaning; the interpretive act brings meaning to those data and displays that meaning to the reader through written report” (2011:210). This thesis contains my written report about the work done in the field and how I reached the conclusion and recommendations suggested in this study.

Indeed in order to bring meaning to the numerous data collected through the techniques described above, I needed to analyse and interpret them so that I could compile my findings and make proposals on how to achieve sustainable peace in the DRC. At the centre of this procedure stands the grouping of data into related themes and categories that make the interpretation easy and coherent. According to Marshall and Rossman (2008:210-217), this entire process can be divided into seven steps which are outlined in the table below. But Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:402-419) have extended the process to eight key steps, grouped into three phases which

are: preparing and organizing the data; reducing the data and visualizing; and representing and displaying the data. See the comparative table here below:

Marshall and Rossman	Schurick et al.
1. Organizing the data	1. Planning for recording of data
2. Immersion in the data	2. Data collection and preliminary analyses
3. Generating categories and themes	3. Managing the data
4. Coding the data	4. Reading and writing memos
5. Offering interpretations through analytical Memos	5. Generating categories and coding the data
6. Searching for alternative understandings	6. Testing the emergent understanding and searching for alternative explanations
7. Writing the report	7. Interpreting and developing typologies
	8. Presenting the data

Table 5.3 Comparative processes of qualitative data analysis

There are close similarities in the steps proposed by these two approaches in spite of the differences in the number. A quick look at this table shows that there is an overlap in some steps which may lead to merging them in order to reduce their number on both sides and make equal steps. They all revolve around three major phases: (1) preparation and organization of the data, (2) interpretation of the data and (3) presentation of the findings.

Nonetheless the number of steps is not a big issue since many scholars have found that the analysis and interpretation of data is not a linear process; As de Vos et al acknowledge the cyclic movement of this procedure as they affirm that, “The process of data analysis and interpretation can best be represented by a spiral image — a data analysis spiral. The researcher moves in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach” (2011:403). In other words, steps that lead a research or findings are not set into an unchangeable order. The process may require the

researcher to move back and forth in analysing and interpreting the data before attaining the goal. Even for this study I experienced how time consuming it is as one tries to make sense of data collected in various places and at different times using different techniques. In some cases a second or third trip in the field was required in order to get an accurate picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny. However, in spite of the flexibility in handling data the ultimate goal or the climax of the entire process boils down to one thing — transform data into findings.

The interpretive analysis in this study has followed the steps listed here above in order to draw themes and categories from the numerous data I had gathered. I have grouped these findings under four major themes: 1) the role of the church in peace-building; 2) women's involvement in peace-building; 3) challenges experienced by women; and 4) the place of theology in peace-building - to be discussed in the next chapter on findings. It is important to underscore at this point the ethical challenges that one meets in the field.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are very sensitive matters as one embarks on social research. Strydom underlines the pertinence of ethical responsibility in social sciences as unique by the fact the objects of study are human beings, unlike natural sciences in which the research is conducted in clinical laboratory settings (2011:113). Ethical problems facing a social researcher are complex, as expressed in the following definition:

Ethics is a set of widely accepted moral principles that offers rules for, and behavioural expectations of, the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (Strydom 2011:129).

This definition speaks of widely accepted principles between the researcher and people around him/her. He/she is therefore accountable not only to respondents but to other researchers as well since ethics includes not only respecting and protecting the lives of the respondents but respecting and acknowledging the work of another researcher. Plagiarism is contrary to social ethics.

My work in the eastern part of the DRC brought me into an area where ethical issues are vital. Knowing that most of the respondents were survivors of genocide, rape and massive violations of

human rights required that I behaved in a manner which was ethically acceptable, lest I caused more hurt or victimization to people who felt vulnerable. The university is aware of this complexity so that it requires an ethical agreement between the institution and the respondents before engaging in any social research that involves human beings. Hence, in conducting this study I am bound by the ethical agreement I signed with the University of KwaZulu-Natal at the beginning of this journey. A copy of my ethical clearance (Appendix 5) is attached to this thesis as a reminder.

One of the principles that we agreed upon was that the participation of each respondent is voluntary; no one should feel obliged to participate if he/she is not willing. I took time to talk on the phone and personally meet most of the respondents to explain clearly the purpose of my research or inquiry before we sat together for interviews. It is with their consent that as individuals or as groups, the participants sat with me for this exercise. I made it clear that they could withdraw at any time during this investigation if necessary.

I was aware of the importance of my ethical responsibility since I was working with people who had experienced abuse and violence. Appropriate behaviour was required, lest I caused more hurt and victimization to people who felt vulnerable.

It was also agreed to respect the personal privacy and confidentiality of the information gathered from the respondents, to avoid any harm. This was a very real issue with some women in the Kivu region. They had been so traumatised by the atrocities they had seen or experienced in their own lives that one had to approach them with kindness and care to avoid hurting them again. Strydom rightly argues,

Participants may experience concrete harm, for instance with regard to their family life, relationships or employment situation. Researchers often learn private details from participants such as deviant behaviour, opinions that they consider to be unpopular or characteristics that might be seen demeaning, like low income, which are sometimes only known to the participant and the researcher and therefore places a commitment on the researcher to keep the information anonymous (2011:115).

Another ethical problem I learnt during my field work was that because of the fear of betrayal or abduction by armed groups, people have become very reluctant to being tape-recorded. It gives an impression of being spied upon. Thus, I resolved not to use a tape recorder during my

interview. However, they were very happy with me taking notes, because they felt like they were teaching me things they knew better and sharing experiences that I could learn from them. Group photos in local churches were accepted but I avoided taking pictures of individual respondents during interviews in order not to violate their privacy.

When I started analysing and interpreting my data, I resolved to keep the anonymity of all my respondents as a sign of my cooperation with the confidentiality agreed upon in my ethical clearance. Hence, the five women's fellowships who participated in the Bible study and group discussions are referred to as WFG1 to WFG5; pastors and other male leaders of the churches who participated in the interviews, as PCL1 to PCL7; while the female leaders are named WFL1 to WFL6. The three respondents from the independent organizations are referred to as IOR1 to IOR3 (See table 5: 3 above). This codification is used in the next chapter on the findings.

5.6 Limitations

My methodological approach was subject to a number of limitations that I would like to discuss in this section. Every research carries its own limitations of time, resources or human ability to cover everything that is possible while conducting an inquiry. It is therefore important for the sake of this study to acknowledge those limitations and transcend them in order to move on and achieve the projected goal.

Firstly, one limitation was the scope of this inquiry on Christian women's contribution in peace-building using a theology of peace as the driving force for this undertaking. It was not possible to deal with millions of women in this category. The focus of my inquiry was on women whose churches or denominations are affiliated to the national *Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (a Department of the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC)). I am very interested in the ecumenical aspect of women's fellowships since there is a need for a certain synergy if women want to make an impact in the process of peace-building which is dominated by male actors. This procedure of narrowing one's sample of research in order to get better results is in line with the nature of qualitative research as underscored by many researchers in social science:

Even if it were theoretically possible to identify, contact and study the entire relevant population, time and cost considerations usually make this a prohibitive

undertaking. The use of samples may result in more accurate information than might have been obtained if one had studied the entire population (Strydom 2011:224).

By so doing, important bodies of Christian women that are not members of the ECC were left out. I think of women from African Initiated Churches (AICs), independent groups from the current Charismatic or Pentecostal movement, though in real increase in the country, and women from the Roman Catholic Church. The principle of better small and deep than wide and shallow can be applied here. There is a need for reaching out to them as a further step of this study, in the process of creating a large movement that may spark a countrywide involvement of women for peace-building. Nevertheless, I had some informal talks and sharing of views about the object of my research with women belonging to these groups. Some of them were friends or relatives; others were introduced to me by those who participated in our group discussions and interviews. I have taken into consideration the ideas they shared to enrich my data.

Another problem encountered on the field was caused by the schedule of meetings. Since many women have become breadwinners for their families because of the breakdown of the economic system during the war in the DRC and the high rate of unemployment among men, they are busy hawking goods along the streets all the week. My interaction with them could only be done on the day of their regular weekly meeting. In many denominations and churches I visited women who meet once a week in their fellowship. When two women's groups meet on the same day I had to postpone one session for another week, which became time consuming for my stay in the region but I needed this flexibility in order to gather additional information. The access to participants was not solely a problem with women but also men who are pastors or leaders of denominations were not available all the time. It seems that the higher in the hierarchy one is, the less accessible he becomes. Being flexible, patient and understanding of the situation added to gaining the confidence and trust of the participants. When they asked for an additional session, I was ready to adjust my schedule to their demand. The advantage of flexibility has been acknowledged and experienced by many researchers in social science: "In fact, the primary strength of the qualitative approach is this very flexibility, which allows, even encourages, exploration, discovery, and creativity" (Marshall and Rossman 2011:197).

The methodological approach of a qualitative research has its limitations as compared to the quantitative method and many scholars admit that, “Generalizing qualitative findings to other populations, settings, and treatment arrangements – that is, its external validity – is seen by traditional canons as weakness in the approach (Marshall and Rossman 2011:252).

Nonetheless, even though the findings may not be universally generalized, a well-designed qualitative research can “create a foundation for transferability and allow other researchers to use the findings in making comparisons with their own work” (Kelly 2006a:381). I know that this study is dealing with a specific situation in the eastern part of the DRC, which cannot be generalized to the entire country; neither can it be equated with what took place in the neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi. However, I have clearly stated in my framework and methodology that anybody working within the same parameters should decide if my findings may be transferred to his/her context. There is an assumption that, “the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the investigator who would make the transfer than with the original investigator” (Schurink 2011:420). This is what Marshall and Rossman call, “the second decision span in generalizing; which entails making judgments about and an argument for the relevance of the initial study to the second setting” (2011:252)

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the rationale behind my methodology for gathering and analysing data. In the first part I discussed the sampling procedure as I chose the participants to be interviewed and women to participate in Bible study and discussion groups. My focus was to select a sizable sample among Christian women in order to be in line with my research question. The study is designed to empower Christian women. This has also guided my sampling towards *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* as a forum which brings together women from different denominations, but not all.

Then I presented my methodology for data collection which consisted of in-depth interviews, Bible study followed by group discussions, and documents analysis. While Bible study was open to wider audiences, interviews were conducted with leaders and other individuals. Five groups

participated in Bible study. They were chosen according to the numerical importance of their denomination or their expertise in the topic of biblical peace. I gathered complementary data from written documents which I divided into primary and secondary sources.

I also discussed in this chapter the methodology used to analyse data collected during my fieldwork and through the different techniques described above. Data analysis dealt mainly with making analytic decisions on grouping data that go into one category or theme for a better understanding of the phenomenon of peace-building. All the findings were grouped into four themes to be developed in the next chapter. The chapter end by underscoring the ethical considerations that guided this study and its methodological limitations. The next chapter presents the findings of the analysis of all the data gathered during my investigation through the techniques described in this chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN AND PEACE-BUILDING IN THE DRC

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter on methodology I stated that my research is an empirical study based on data collected from in-depth interviews, Bible study followed by group discussions, and documents analysis. I also discussed the methodology used to analyse data, the ethical considerations that guided the study and its methodological limitations. This chapter is crucial to this study because it presents the findings of the analysis of data collected in the field. It is attested that, “for qualitative researchers, the process of writing is an integral part of understanding the ‘story’ of the data” (Schurink et al. 2011:419). I concur with the above statement that this step was important for understanding the phenomenon of peace-building in the eastern DRC. However, I am aware that many scholars underscore the problem of generalization of the findings of a qualitative research like this; still I concur with those who believe that “qualitative researchers are in a position to produce *moderatum generalizations*—that is, ones in which aspects of the focus of enquiry can be seen to be instances of a broader set of recognizable features” (Bryman 2008:392). The findings in this chapter are examined not for generalization but to open the door for a broader understanding of the phenomenon and various approaches to tackle it.

In fact, the analysis of data has allowed me to understand the complexity of the situation of war in the eastern DRC which I discussed in Chapter Two. There seems to be a legacy of tribal and ethnic conflicts that has been inherited from the colonial rule and from subsequent governments after independence. Many actors have used the division between different ethnic groups for their economic and political agenda. In addition, the successive waves of migration of people of Rwandan origin, both Hutus and Tutsi, who have settled in the region and the effect of the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda and Burundi, have exacerbated the tension among the people who live in the eastern DRC. In addition to the above problems, the overall economic crisis engendered by political instability, corruption and incompetent leadership have compounded the severe poverty that prompts the youth to join armed groups for survival. This internal and

volatile situation sets the stage for what is now known as the African War in which many neighbouring countries are involved as well as the international community.

It is against this background that this study on restoring durable peace is set. In order to answer the main question of this research which is, what contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the Kivu region of the DRC? I have grouped the findings of data analysis under four major themes: 1) the role of the church in peace-building; 2) women's involvement in peace-building; 3) challenges experienced by women; 4) the place of theology in peace-building. In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the first three themes but the fourth on theology and peace-building, which is the ultimate goal of my research, is dealt with separately in Chapter Seven.

6.2 Role of the church in peace-building

During my field research, as I interacted with various participants on the role of the church in the community, I realized that it was necessary to clarify certain concepts. For example, the word 'church' is a generic and broad concept that needed further explanation for people to answer my questions accurately. Whenever the word 'church' was used it evoked a bit of confusion in the mind of the respondents who wanted to know at what level the concept is applied. This clarification is more important in the case of the DRC because the word, *Eglise* ('Church') is generally used to designate the *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (National Council of Churches); while different churches that are affiliated to the National Council are referred to as communities, assemblies, denominations and congregations. It was therefore important to distinguish between particular local congregations and regional or national assemblies and Councils. This same structure applies also to various fellowships of women as they meet at these different levels. Since this study is designed to interact mostly with women at the grassroots level, I avoided using abstract or philosophical concepts of the church such as the body of Christ, which would mean all believers worldwide taken together as one unit in Christ. On the other hand, I did not consider each individual as the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, making therefore every believer a small church on his/her own. In this chapter I use the term 'church' as the gathering of Christians, women, men and children, in their recognized assemblies, denominations, congregations, and fellowships at local, regional or national levels in the DRC. Since the focus

of my research was on women's fellowships and churches that are members of the *Eglise du Christ au Congo*, these findings may not be generalized to reflect all of Christianity in the DRC and beyond, as expressed in the limitations of this study in Chapter Five (section 5:6).

Another important element of clarification that respondents had to make in their answers was the distinction between the internal conflicts which have been caused by tribal and ethnic rivalries and the war waged by neighbouring countries and their allies for the control of mineral resources. The respondents' responses may have differed depending on whether they were dealing with internal conflicts or the African War, although it is not hard to establish a link between the two, as some respondents did.

It should be noted that data has been collected with the consent of the interviewees after reading the form I provided in this regard (see Appendix 2 for church leaders and Appendix 3 for women's fellowships). Because of the trauma caused by years of conflict and a general feeling of betrayal and false accusations, people in the Kivu region have become very suspicious about signing documents or being tape-recorded. Therefore few participants accepted to sign the form while many decided to give their consent verbally. In this chapter I predominantly examine the answers to the interviews, while the result of the contextual Bible studies constitutes the materials for Chapter Seven. Nonetheless, I do highlight some insights from the Bible studies as they induced a change of attitude among the respondents who participated in both the interviews and the Bible study. With these general remarks it is time to discuss the findings.

6.2.1 Role of local churches

One should remember that each local church has its own women's fellowship or gathering. Even though the focus of this study is put on women, at this stage they are included with other members (men, youths and if possible children) as 'local church'. The role of the women in particular comes in the sections below. Most of the respondents to individual interviews acknowledged that the local church should play a significant role in warning its members of the consequences of internal conflicts. The statistics show that in the DRC, 70 – 80% of the entire population claim to be Christians. This includes Roman Catholics, Kimbanguists and other charismatic and independent churches that are not the focus of this research. As part of the colonial inheritance in urban cities and major towns, Roman Catholics alone account for more

than 50% percent of all Christians, because they were considered by the Belgians as belonging to the state religion. Things are different in the rural areas where many of the atrocities have taken place. In some villages, members of main-line missionary-based churches form more than 60 percent of Christians because that is where Protestant missionaries were allowed to plant their churches. The question that this study poses is why this majority cannot make an impact toward restoring peace among their communities. In this regard the views of pastors (PLC) who were approached for interviews in the margin of meetings held with women's fellowships, as designed in my methodology, shed light on the problem.

In this section I examine responses to questions 1 and 2 designed to guide interviews with leaders of local churches (Appendix 1). These read as follows: Question 1: What is your understanding of being the church of Christ in a war-torn region? Question 2: What role can the church play in bringing peace?

In general, many leaders approached in this study were concerned with the violence and conflicts that take place between villagers from different tribes or ethnic groups despite a number of them being members of Christian churches. The excerpt below is drawn from the conversation I had with PLC3, one of the pastors in Bukavu, on 18 December 2009.

Interviewer: *How challenging is it for you to be a pastor in this time of conflicts in the region?*

PLC3: *My sister⁷⁰...the hard part of this ministry is not the war that comes from Rwanda or Uganda but conflicts which involve members of our different ethnic groups and churches. More and more people are affected by these inter-ethnic conflicts and no one can tell when all this will stop. ...Christians are in great need, physically, spiritually, emotionally and materially, beyond our means as pastors.*

Interviewer: *Do you feel desperate because of the situation of your church members?*

PLC3: *No...no, I do not mean that I am desperate.[Mm...] As a pastor I am praying and I have faith that things will come back to normal one day.*

⁷⁰ It is common in the DRC, that Christians prefer to address one another by 'brother' or 'sister' instead of calling people by their names.

Interviewer: *What is your church doing to solve the problem?*

PLC3: *[Laughter] Ahaaa...To solve the problem... problem is to restore peace once and for all. Do I have the power to tell armed groups to drop their weapons and work for peace?... With the members of my church we are trying to avoid participating in conflicts but bring our small relief and comfort to survivors of abuse, hoping that the hierarchy of the church with politicians will find a way to end the conflicts.*

The answers of PLC3 indicate a certain trend among pastors and leaders of churches who think that the problem of bringing peace to the region is beyond their ability, even when they are aware that ethnic groups are constituted by church members of different denominations. In their apathy they limit their action to showing solidarity with those who suffer. This attitude may explain why there is little mobilization of Christians at the grassroots level to strive for peace in their communities. It is more than apathy because answers to the question about the role of the Church have revealed a variety of reasons behind the paralysis of the church. In my interview with another pastor, PLC2, conducted on 16 March 2009 in Bukavu on the same issue about the role of the church in a situation of conflict, he was more straightforward in his answer:

Interviewer: *What is the church doing to curb the violence in the community?*

PLC2: *We pastors could help our members to refrain from violence if we would step out of the conflict. But often when people decide to fight for their ethnic group or avenge those who were assaulted by their opponents, the entire community, including church members and pastors from all denominations participate in or encourage reprisal.*

Interviewer: *By so doing, is the church signalling that killing enemies or avenging in time of conflicts is right?*

PLC2: *[silence]...I know it is not right. The message of the Bible is to bring peace and not war but the point is that Christians do not live according to what they preach or hear. If in this region all Christians, from every ethnic group, would refuse to participate in the conflict, we could stop or at least reduce the atrocities that our people experience today. Yes! People suffer from wars coming from neighbouring country, but what make things worse*

is our internal conflicts. Children of this country are turning against one another.

Interviewer: *What shall the church do then?*

PLC2: *The Church can achieve a lot in this situation. It is a matter of breaking the fear of being rejected or persecuted by the militias and members of the community who know us because we stand against violence. But it has to be done in unison.... You know, 'one finger cannot beat the drum.'⁷¹ ... I think it is the responsibility of national and regional leaders of ECC to bring churches together and ask them to work for peace. (2009-12-18)*

PLC2 started by affirming that pastors can do something if only they dissociate themselves from the perpetrators of violence and overcome the fear of acting against the will of the community, as far as revenge or killing is concerned. But at the end he turned the responsibility to the hierarchy because it has failed to rally everybody behind curbing violence. This sounds like the blaming mentality that many political players in Africa have adopted to cover up their inefficiency by accusing developed countries in the West or colonial regimes which ended decades ago, for being responsible of the current misfortune facing a great number of African nations. The danger with the blaming mentality is that it paralyzes any effort to shake off the misfortune and to take initiatives that could free individuals or communities. Both PLC2 and PLC3 acknowledged that the church can make a difference in the current situation of conflict provided they all work in unity. As local pastors it is not their responsibility to call upon members of other denominations, therefore blame should be put on leaders in higher position than theirs.

While church leaders are trying to justify their inaction by pointing fingers at the culprit located somewhere else, bad things do happen inside their own parishes. This was vividly expressed by the only female pastor,(PLC1, I interviewed during my first visit to Bukavu on 8 July 2008.

Interviewer: *What experience (s) of war do Christian women share in the region?*

PLC1: *It is painful to see that our own members participate in looting, killing and raping other Christians because they belong to a rival tribe or ethnic group. If we believe that all Christians form together the body of Christ, it is irrational for members of one*

⁷¹ A popular saying meaning unity is power.

body to harm one another while pretending to belong to the Kingdom of Christ. Something has to be corrected.

Interviewer: *What should be done in your position?*

PLC1: *I am speaking out and loud in my parish to expose the evil and to challenge those who are members of the church but participate in harming others, especially women and children. ... And, you know... there are many organizations of human rights in the region teaching women to break the silence and speak out. All churches should do the same but many keep silent.*

I am reminded, as I think of what PLC1 said as a woman, of the boldness of those who started feminist theology to challenge the patriarchal system which is established in society and in the church, but also who persistently continued the movement which has now spread all over the world. I wish pastors in the DRC could emulate the boldness of the pioneers of feminist theology. As stated earlier in chapter four, in Africa we honour Mercy Amba Oduyoye as the founder of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle). Oduyoye, with the support of a small number of other women theologians, launched the Circle which has become a powerful tool for all of us doing theology in Africa to challenge oppressive cultures and practices in our churches and cultures. In her explanation on how women in Africa do their theology, Oduyoye has these words:

African women's theology does not end in documents, for the divorce of theology and ethics does not make for commitment and responsible living. This makes women seek a theology characterized by a struggle to make religion relevant to the challenges of contemporary Africa (2001:18).

Likewise, leaders of local churches could make a significant impact in their communities if they took this mission as a commitment for saving lives. No matter the struggles they may face in this process, they should make their teaching relevant to the challenges posed by conflict, sexual violence and killing prevailing in the region.

It is indeed a pity to realize that the Church is at the same time victim and perpetrator. The conflict in the eastern Congo has revealed the weaknesses of the church which persecutes its own members. Therefore, church leaders, even those ministering in small local communities, should look beyond the usual finger-pointing or witch-hunting for excuses, as observed in the

conversations with PLC2 and PLC3. It should not be understood that I am praising PLC1 because she is a woman. I met a couple of other pastors who attested that they are warning their members about the danger of being part of the perpetrators of violence and abuse while pretending to be Christians. In my conversation with PCL7 (2010-07-12) in Bukavu, he said:

I do not wait for an order from above to teach the truth of the Gospel to my congregation. It is my duty and I do it by organizing fora where we meet as church and reflect on our responsibility to address abuse and violence in this region, especially inter-ethnic conflicts.... This thing is everywhere in the media, the church should not be left behind (PLC7:2010).

PLC7 is an example of courageous leaders who understand that change has to start somewhere, even by an individual or a small group of people, before spreading and reaching a wider community. It is commonly said that even the tallest building starts with one stone at its foundation.

Also, I would like to acknowledge that local churches alone cannot solve the problem of ending the conflict in the DRC. They have a limited scope of authority in their undertaking. They have to face many roadblocks in the hierarchical line of decision-making that exist in most of the main-line churches. It is easier to take decisions and implement them within charismatic movements and AICs because their leaders are at the same time founders or are endowed with supreme authority. Yet churches affiliated to the ECC (National Council), targeted in this study, come almost exclusively from main-line churches. That is why in the next section I would like to discuss the role of the regional and national offices of the ECC in this process.

6. 2.2 Role of regional and national offices of the *Eglise du Christ au Congo*

In the above section I indicated that a number of respondents explained their inaction by the lack of guidance and strategies from the regional or national offices of the *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC) or their own hierarchy. This study focuses on the regional office because of its proximity to the field where the war and atrocities are taking place and also because of its influence on Christianity and governance in the region. It is important to notice that the national head office of the ECC is located in Kinshasa 2000 km away, and is not able to follow the daily activities that occur in the region. The regional office of the ECC can bring together members of affiliated churches and make them act as one body, which would enhance their capacity to turn the

situation around. Moreover, the ECC constitutes a large constituency in the DRC. The leaders of the ECC are always present at all important meetings with the regional or national government. They are part of the different committees which discuss important decisions in the country. Also some of them sit as members of the Regional and National Parliaments and even of the Senate. But the general feeling of local pastors interviewed in this regard was that not enough is being done as far as mobilizing the affiliated churches for action is concerned. Pastor PCL5 interviewed on 4 July 2009 was even more critical:

I always attend all the meetings called by the regional office of the ECC but I cannot remember once such an important problem as planning how churches can work together to stop the violence and sexual assaults featuring as the main point on the agenda. It is always talked about in general terms and in certain instances statistics of rape and information about villages affected by violence are disclosed by church-based organizations working in this area. They act as if they ignore the power of churches working in synergy.

Since this statement echoes what many other respondents have expressed in one way or another I had to meet people in the regional office of the ECC to have a second view on this matter. I wanted to meet one of the regional presidents of ECC in the region. An opportunity came when I was in Goma for two days waiting to travel to Bukavu. I booked an appointment and quickly was given priority to go for an interview with the Regional President of the ECC (code PEC), one of the two special guests defined in Chapter Five. After reading the form of consent, he accepted the project and said that he did not need to sign it because he and my husband were both ordained ministers of the Free Methodist Church in Congo and we had known each other well before his elevation to that high position.

Meeting PEC in Goma on 9 December 2010 was important because there was no need afterwards to meet the Regional President of the ECC in South Kivu, in Bukavu because these two offices (Bukavu and Goma) work together and have joint meetings and missions for any issue of major concern for the region. In his conversation, PEC, now called Bishop⁷², spoke for the entire old Kivu region (South, North and even Maniema). In fact, Bukavu and Goma are located at the two ends of the Lake Kivu, at a distance of less than 200 kilometres apart. They used to be cities of the one Province of Kivu; the separation into two entities, North and South Kivu, is a recent

⁷² It should be noted that in the DRC, all the Heads of the ECC's office at regional and national level bear the title *Evêque* (Bishop), even those coming from the denominations which historically do not ordain Bishops.

political development in the country. What was initially designed to be a relatively short interview turned out to be a long conversation of almost two hours. In the following sections I will give short excerpts of PEC's speech and a summary of important points.

Interviewer: *What is your office doing to address the situation of violence and unrest in the region?*

PEC: *I have never been so busy before like it is now... I am always in meetings with the government, the UN peacekeepers, churches and other organisations, and most of these meetings are in relation with the political and social situation of the region. I participate also in meetings with neighbouring countries, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda to bring peace to the area.*

Interviewer: *People in local churches seem to be unaware of what you are doing on their behalf as the Chair of the National Council.*

PEC: *As the Regional President I have regular meeting with the heads of the churches affiliated to the ECC or their delegates with whom I discuss what we are doing as the Church and make resolutions that I take to political leaders of the country. It is the responsibility of each delegate to explain what was discussed to their congregations.*

Interviewer: *Are you satisfied with your intervention as church in this situation? Do you see any progress?*

PEC: *(with laughter)... absolutely ...absolutely. The church is a key player and people respect our opinion; that is why we are often entrusted with delicate missions in this process, both in the DRC and out of the country. Let me mention some to you.*

PEC mentioned four key areas in which the regional office of the ECC had made significant contributions. These are: demobilisation of children soldiers, establishing networks with other key players in the African Great Lakes Region, advocacy against violence and abuse and reconciliation among affiliated churches.

6.2.2.1 Demobilisation of children soldiers

According to PEC this is one area the regional office of the ECC has been very active in, working alongside the United Nations and other organizations to persuade children used by the

rebels to drop their arms, leave the bush and be integrated into normal life. Almost all armed groups in the region have used young children to do the killing and all kinds of atrocities. They are put on heavy drugs to brainwash them and make them do whatever the warlords want. Rescuing these children is still a matter of emergency for safety in the country and also for saving their lives from destruction. These children have no future while serving as militia. Some of them are used in illicit mining to earn a living but they do not earn enough money. Others get paid from the plunder when they invade a village and loot everything they find there. In some instances they are forced to remain among other rebels because if they escape, their lives and the lives of their relatives are in danger when the rebels come for retaliation. The best way to describe them is that they are slave militias. PEC did not give the statistics for young boys they had brought back home in this operation but was happy to announce:

Our effort as church in this process has been recognized by other actors, and the United Nation in 2011 gave a prize to the regional office of the ECC in Bukavu PEC, 2010-12-09).

Though PEC was proud of their achievement, one should admit that this work is far from being fully achieved as compared to the great number of uncontrolled armed groups operating in the region. The number of children still being used by those armed groups is big. A number of warlords using these children for their own interest would not accept to sit at a table of negotiation with the church or humanitarian organisations, lest they lose their business.

The challenge with this operation is that these children need the financial means to go back to school or to be occupied with activities that can restore them to normal life. Some of them before joining the militias were either orphans who had lost either both parents or one of them during the war, or their parents were so poor because of the economic crisis engendered by years of war, that the children had become destitute and useless to society. For such children being given a weapon, eventually with a uniform, creates in them a sort of self-esteem because the weapon gives them power to kill, to rape civilian women and men and to participate in looting wherever they invade - without being charged. Therefore, returning such children to the community without providing them with alternatives does not solve the problem. On this point PEC admitted that:

As a church we are capable of easily reaching the soldiers and even their commanders. Everybody listens to us and in this way we are more successful than any other player in this field. However, we do not have the means to sustain their life after demobilization; that is the part to be played by international organizations.

It is visible in the region that many international organizations are providing aid to various categories of the population (abused women, disadvantaged children, and children soldiers) but they are quickly overwhelmed by the needs because of the pauperisation of the population. After a while they stop the operation.

Without aid, these children soldiers become outlaws in society and do whatever evil they can to survive. The dramatic side of the story is that for many years the DRC has not had a strong and responsible government to tackle serious social problems caused by persistent political and economic crises. It seems as if all the effort of the government is geared toward security issues, to deal with the presence of armed groups and conflicts in several provinces so that little attention is given to improving the social life of the population. I have shown great interest in this group because it constitutes potential abusers and rapists of women and girls as described in Chapter Two. PEC mentioned other issues that I need to explore.

6.2.2.2 Networking in the African Great Lakes Region

PEC said that stability in the DRC cannot be achieved without the collaboration of other stakeholders from neighbouring countries. Since it is not easy for each denomination to negotiate individually with members of churches in other countries, national and regional offices have taken up the responsibility of sensitizing the leaders of the church of Jesus in each country to abide by the message of the gospel of peace. In his explanation of why certain church members at grassroots level were not aware of their intervention, PEC said:

Some of our activities may go unnoticed by members of the congregations because they are held sometimes out of the country or behind closed doors but a strong network is being established to facilitate dialogue with neighbouring countries. The fact that leaders of churches in the African Great Lakes Region are able to meet in spite of political suspicion and accusations that characterize the politics in the region, is a positive sign on the side of the church: it

shows we are all willing to promote peace and unity (PCE 2010-12-09).

However, PEC was cautious in acknowledging that the war in the DRC had national, regional and even international stakeholders and many of them did not abide by biblical principles. Furthermore, the constitutions of concerned countries create a secular character for the state, which does not favour any religious group. Therefore, Christian churches are not the only organ that governments in each country consult. For this reason, the church should continue raising its prophetic voice and make advocacy even when its suggestions are not accepted by the government as discussed below.

6.2.2.3 Prophetic voice and advocacy of the church

The regional office of the ECC is in a better position to carry out the prophetic role and advocacy for its members. It is obvious that the voice of individual members or local churches does not have the same weight in the sight of the government as the one raised by the Regional or National Council. Besides members of the Regional and National Councils sit in strategic meetings and have access to political leaders as well as to those in charges of international organizations in the region. On this issue PEC was very apologetic:

It is part of our responsibility as officials of the ECC, at each level, to denounce evil when the physical and spiritual welfare of our members is threatened. Under the current political crisis, the ECC has become even more vocal in every meeting we have with different authorities, to urge the key players inside and outside of the country to restore peace and security to the population.

When I asked PEC if he was satisfied with the work of advocacy which the office of the ECC was doing and its application among affiliated churches, he acknowledged that:

... Mmm (hesitant and a bit embarrassed)... I can't say that we have already achieved our goal, more is still to be done. But it is not accurate to think that the ECC is not speaking out about the tragedy that has befallen its members. In meetings with governments or with heads of denominations the problem of the violation of human rights and ways to bring peace are always evoked. What makes the advocacy delicate in the DRC is that many key national institutions for security and justice are dysfunctional. The crisis in the DRC has affected the

judiciary; the police and the army so severely that people do not feel secure. This has weakened the capacity of the government to stop violence despite all the claims.

But many respondents deplored that little was being done by the church as a body to speak out loudly against the evil deeds that are perpetrated by militias and rival communities. This was clearly expressed during the interviews I had with the leaders of women's fellowships (code LWF) in response to questions 2 and 4 of the guiding questionnaire for women's focus groups (Appendix 1): Question 2: what experience of war do women share in the region? Question 4: what is the role of the church in the process of bringing peace?

Before the Bible study with WFG 2 on 6 December 2009 in Bukavu I had an interview with, the chairperson of the group (LWF3) on 5 December 2009 as reflected in the following excerpt:

Interviewer: *What is the church doing to address violence against women and children?*

LWF2: *...to be honest, very little. I do not see any courageous action initiated by the ECC or our own denomination to denounce the plight of women in this region.*

Interviewer: *What do you expect from them?*

LWF 2: *I would like to hear several sermons from the pulpit and see specific actions initiated by the church in order to inform and equip Christians to refuse violence and hold perpetrators responsible for their misbehaviour.*

I got the same reaction when on 12 December 2009 I talked with LWF5 - and many others later.

LWF5: *Our effort as women to speak out is not backed up by pastors in our churches... I wonder if the men who are leaders of the church are not sensitive enough because most of the victims of sexual assaults are women. Could it be different if men were the principal target of sexual violence?*

Although LWF5 might be right in her observation, it is recorded that in some instances of the rebels' invasion, men and women were equally humiliated through acts of sexual violence in remote rural areas. But the major target of sexual assault remains women and girls.

The major concern of women in this matter is that pastors and church leaders have used general statements to condemn violence and massacres which accompany conflicts in the DRC. There is no strong message to perpetrators of rape and sexual assaults which are coming from the church. The prophetic voice and advocacy women expect from the regional and national office of the ECC, as well as from the heads of denominations, would be to hold the perpetrators of violence and the government accountable for massive violations of human rights in the region.

There is no need to remind anyone that violence against women in the eastern DRC has reached a level of being qualified as a national disaster. It has been published by the media worldwide and attracted humanitarian organizations from major parts of the world. One would expect that the Regional Council and all the denominations in the region would work together to curb the violence and the other aftermath of conflict in the DRC. For these women, the church is not taking seriously the scourge of violence that people at the grassroots level face.

In my opinion, women are right to deplore the lack of strong condemnation of the situation by the leadership of the ECC. They may be doing something but during my frequent trips in the country I hardly heard of any strong petitions or read in the media declarations from the ECC to hold the government accountable for what was happening in the country. Women have to speak out loudly for themselves in order to be heard. The last point of PEC was the effort to keep affiliated churches together.

6.2.2.4 Reconciliation among members of the ECC

One important point that the PEC underlined in his comments is that peace in the DRC is multiform. The provincial and national offices of the ECC have as much work to restore peace among its members as to stop conflict in the country. On this issue the PEC revealed that:

It is not easy to maintain unity of such an eclectic organization as the ECC; with more than 80 affiliated denominations and mission agencies, each holding to its doctrinal beliefs and values. ...Do you know that 70 percent of affiliated denominations live with internal strife for succession struggle or the threat of a split over leadership succession? It takes sleepless nights and time-consuming meetings for the leaders of the ECC to negotiate internal peace between members of a given denomination in conflict (2010-12-09).

PEC said that the DRC is proud that churches who do not sit at the same table in the West, where the missionaries came from, enjoy true fellowship in the ECC. The ECC does not suffer much from interdenominational discrimination among its members. Protestants in the country started meeting together to discuss issues pertaining to their churches in order to speak with one voice to the colonial government of the Belgians. From that humble beginning and after many changes during the history of the country the ECC⁷³ is now a powerful platform which represents Protestantism in the country. “*The unity of the church is a substantial contribution to peace in the country,*” he concluded. I personally have no objection to the effort of the ECC to create unity among Protestant churches, though I know that the unity that people see at the surface covers deep fractures and disunity which appear at moments of crisis. However, none of the ECC’s achievements would be possible without an outstanding contribution from women, so I turn now to discuss their role in the restoration of peace in the country.

6.3 Involvement of Women in Peace-building

In line with the main question of this study, which is, ‘what contribution can Christian women make to foster a culture of peace in the DRC?’ this section is crucial for this research. There are sound reasons for this. On the one hand, the women in the DRC form the majority of church members in every denomination affiliated to the ECC and other organizations. On the other hand, it is the women who have suffered severely from the consequences of internal conflicts and wars. It becomes therefore important to see what input the women can bring to solving the problem of violence in the country. In the guiding questions for interviews (Appendices 1 and 2), designed for both pastors and leaders of women’s fellowship there was a set of important questions regarding women such as: What contribution do or can women associations make towards the effort of peace? What is your perception of women’s agency in the church? What is your vision of women’s involvement in the peace process?

⁷³ Details on the history of the ECC and of the DRC in general can be found in a book by E.F Kisangani and F.S. Bobb *Historical Dictionary of the Republic Democratic of the Congo* (Third edition). Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press 2010 and on the <<http://ecc.faithweb.com>>

Ideas discussed in this section come mostly from the answers to the above questions to which I added my personal comments or materials from the literature to support the arguments. I have considered separately the viewpoint of male church leaders (PCL) from the answers of the leaders of women's fellowships (LWF) or individuals from women's focus groups (WFG). The interview with the National President of *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (FFP) is considered as a unit of its own because of the significance of its content and her embodiment of Christian women of the ECC nationally.

6.3.1 Viewpoint of men

Although few congregations in mainline churches of the DRC are led by women, they have distinguished themselves by being the hands and feet that make churches work and move, while holding their status as ordinary members. They not only form the majority of the membership, but also sustain the church through financial support, social activities and assuring the cleanliness of church premises. It becomes even more evident in the current situation of the country where there are few jobs available for men; entire families, husband, children and all the relatives, depend on what women earn through their business. The country is experiencing a cultural paradigm shift which changes the status of men from breadwinners to dependent members of the family even among Christians.

Nevertheless, when asked about the specific role of women in the church, as far as peace-building is concerned, the recognition of women's capability becomes mitigated. It is important to underscore that I avoided touching the issue of women's leadership or ordination in the church as it is not within the scope of my research and also because of the controversy it would raise among my respondents. The following excerpt of interviews with male leaders illustrates their different perceptions of women's agency in the process of peace-building.

PLC3 (2009-12-18) whom I have already mentioned above, had this to say on women's agency:

Interviewer: *What is your perception of women's contribution in the Church?*

PLC3: *I am happy with the work women do in the church; they are very helpful in many areas. We need women.*

Interviewer: *How about their involvement in bringing peace?*

PCL3: *I think the problem of bringing peace in our region is very complex and our women are not very prepared to face some of the challenges that are involved in this process. But, we are not leaving them behind; we are trying to carry them along in everything we do. They are always represented in our different committees. But they have also their own meetings where they help one another.*

Another interview with PLC6 on 14 December 2009, showed almost the same pessimism towards women:

Interviewer: *What contribution can women in your church make towards bringing peace in this region?*

PLC6: *I do not think that many of them will even accept to sit in those meetings where people discuss big issues that affect the region. My church does not have many learned, middle or high class citizens. I minister to ordinary, low income citizens in this city. ..I see two or three among women of my church who can share some ideas but they are good in helping one another in case of need. Their fellowship does great in supporting those who are suffering, including men of the church and others.*

This sounds like the old-age conception of women being second class citizens, not mature enough to accomplish something important on their own. This misconception of women is symptomatic of a great number of male church leaders who claim that they need the support of women in order to succeed in whatever they undertake in the church. But the underlying idea is that they (the male leaders) are key players in this enterprise and women would back them up in support. Not all my respondents shared the same view toward women.

On the other hand, I had the view of PCL 4 (2010-01-08), who thought otherwise:

Interviewer: *What is your vision of women involvement in the current peace process?*

PCL4: *In my church when I want something to be done quickly and effectively I would better involve the president of the women's fellowship to take up the matter because men are not reliable when it comes to giving their time and energy on unpaid church business. Women are already doing great in collaborating with other women even from communities or congregations that were*

fighting in the past. They can do more if they are given more space to participate in what we think of as being strategic meetings reserved to men.

Another view comes from PCL7 (2010-07-12) who said:

I always persuade women who have skills to work along with men so that we have the work done and properly. Women always bring something new that us as men often overlook. In my church we work together and I would encourage the hierarchy and regional office to count on the expertise of women in all our resolutions...Some women are underprivileged because of their low level of education but that is the history in our country.

Whatever may be the reaction of these leaders, none of them denied that women's contribution is necessary in the church in order to achieve its mission. In fact it has never been the wish of African Women Theologians to subjugate men or to take over their hegemonic power but rather to share power. What they advocate is to have a church where partnership, mutuality and complementarities are manifested, as it ought to be in any functional body in which each part plays an active role. This is well expressed by Dorcas Akitunde as she argues:

The Church should be a living example of a free community of women and men, a community that is set free in Christ. I believe that we must all work together to transform the patriarchal model into one in which power is shared, and which seeks to lift up and strengthen all (2005:90).

Akitunde's statement gives me the opportunity to discuss how women see themselves.

6.3.2 Viewpoint of women

I was fortunate in this research that I was able to talk with women from the top national office of *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* (FFP), with the regional office, local fellowships and down to ordinary women in the church. As explained earlier, this was made possible by my position as a former leader of the women's fellowship in my denomination. I knew personally most of the leaders I had met for years, which created a friendly atmosphere during most of my interviews. In this section I would like to share their views on how women perceived their involvement in peace-building in the DRC starting with the head office of the FFP.

6.3.2.1 National office of FFP

I visited the national office on 8 July 2011 and met the national President of FFP (code NFF) at the headquarters of the organization in Kinshasa, the capital city of the DRC, and had a fruitful exchange with her. This interview was very significant for my study because it gave me the opportunity to have first-hand information from the office that conceives and oversees several activities that are carried out nationally by Christian women in the DRC. I will, in the following section, summarize important points of the lengthy talk I had with the NFF with a few direct quotes from her explanation.

Having known the NFF before, our meeting was very friendly. She read the form of consent and agreed to provide any information I needed in relation to the involvement of women in the peace process in the country.

Interviewer: *Mama President⁷⁴, how is your office preoccupied by the situation of conflict in the eastern DRC?*

NFF: *My office is really worried with what is happening in the eastern DRC. This conflict has tarnished the image of the whole country because of the loss of many lives, its violation of human rights and horrible sexual assaults perpetrated against women and children. For any office like ours designed to seek the welfare of women and their children; this is too much to bear.... [Shaking her head]*

Interviewer: *What are you doing to address the situation?*

NFF: *Since the beginning of the war in 1996, this office, more than any other department of the ECC, has taken the matter to heart. My staff and I are working tirelessly towards finding a solution to this tragedy. Let me tell you that the situation is complex, with actors who have different interests behind this war. This war is used to justify the maintenance of peacekeepers in the country, economic players are benefitting a lot out of this crisis and politicians are using the situation to advance their own agenda.... But for us in the FFP office every delay in stopping the war means an increase in the plight of women and children.*

⁷⁴ In the DRC, *Mama* is a title of honour for any women one owes respect to. Women prefer this title while men in charge of important offices of the ECC have adopted the title of 'Bishop'.

By all means, we are determined to do our part until peace is restored in the country.

NFF followed her speech with the enumeration of a number of activities initiated by her office that I would like to summarize here below.

One significant milestone in the undertaking of the national office of the FFP remains the establishment of a relationship between Christian women of the DRC and of Rwanda. While people in the DRC see the Rwandan nation as the worst of its enemies, repeatedly waging war to destabilize the security and economy of the country for its own security and commerce, this action toward restoring peace using women's agency is outstanding. The fact is that in both countries women continue to suffer, in one way or another, from the consequences of recurrent conflicts and genocide in the African Great Lakes region. This initiative has been now taken further by the heads of National Councils in the countries of this region allowing leaders of the Church in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC to meet and discuss ways of bringing peace to the region. Regular meetings and exchanges have been established between the women of these countries and on the day we met, the NFF was preparing a team to go and share the Tamar Campaign⁷⁵ with their Rwandan colleagues. Women from Rwanda also visit the DRC regularly, trusting that this network can be used to cement the broken relationship between our nations.

Another major event in the DRC was the organization of the fifth Congress of the FFP (20 -25 July 2004), bringing to Kinshasa women from all provinces for a week of reflection and encouragement as many of them had come from areas devastated by the deadliest war (1996-2002), now known as the African War. This should be considered a great achievement for women when one compares the size of the country and the effort it takes for each participant coming from remote corners to reach Kinshasa for the sake of women's fellowship. The theme of the Congress was "Breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Ez. 37:9). The aim of the Congress was to awaken Christian women in the DRC to raise a prophetic voice in order to speak out against the atrocities of the war and also to call upon the Holy Spirit, breath of life, to revive and restore the nation, slain by years of conflicts and violence. During that week women participated in workshops and seminars to be equipped to go back and spread the vision of the

⁷⁵ Though the Tamar Campaign was conceived by the Ujamaa Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in the DRC the Campaign was introduced by the office of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) in Kenya.

FFP, expressed in the above theme. The President added that since 2008 they have developed a number of annual themes around the general motto of the FFP since its creation in 1962, which is *MWASI MOKLISTO AJALI MWINDA*, meaning: A CHRISTIAN WOMAN IS THE LIGHT.⁷⁶ These themes include: “Christian woman light of the world”, “Suffer to bring peace”, and “The Prayer of Jabez” (1 Chr 4:9-10), a theme asking women to refuse to be confined but to expand their territory and “to bear fruits that will last”. The FFP has compiled a document which has been distributed across the country about how to bring about the transformation of the society for peace.

Finally, NFF underscored the mobilization which was done by the FFP in the country so that Christian women from other provinces and countries could join the international World March of Women which took place in Bukavu, on 13-17 October 2010.⁷⁷ The First Lady of the DRC, *Madame Marie Olive Lembe Kabila* opened the ceremony which was attended by delegates from 48 countries and more than 1500 women from various parts of the DRC, including ministers. The theme of the event was ‘Peace and Demilitarisation’. This event boosted the determination of the FFP to pursue peace-building in the country through the action of Christian women.

In summary the national President of the FFP believed strongly in woman’s agency to bring change to the DRC. She concluded by saying that, “*As women, we are here to bring light in the darkness of the country, provide spiritual, moral and financial support to the community and work together to stop the war*”(2011-07-08). She acknowledged that there were major weaknesses and handicaps that I will share in the section on challenges facing women in the process of peace-building.

⁷⁶ This is a well-known motto for all Christian women in the DRC because it has become the logo that is found on every document and on the fabric that women often wear on special occasions. Even women whose churches are not affiliated to the ECC or are not members of the FFP, prefer being identified with that logo and wear the same fabric. Recently it has been modified because men have decided to wear shirts made from the same fabric; therefore to accommodate men in the logo, the word ‘woman’ has been removed; Now it reads, *Moklisto ajali mwind*, ‘A Christian is the light’. Although the text has been modified, the public still refers to the logo as ‘a woman is the light’.

⁷⁷ Details of this march are available in MONUSCO’s report, “Bukavu: World March of Women’, 18 October 2010. <http://monusco.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=10927&mid=14594&ItemID=18270>, accessed 14/09/2013

6.3.2.2 Regional office of FFP

I made six trips to Bukavu in the South Kivu Province between 2008 and 2011 because this was the area of my fieldwork. I met the Regional President of the FFP (code LWF1 2009-12-13) a couple of times and visited her office once. Being responsible for women in the region where a lot of conflict and the violation of women's rights had taken place, she had many stories concerning the horror of what women had experienced during the war and continued to endure.

Interviewer: *What is, Mama President, the great challenge that your office faces since the hub of the conflict is located in your area?*

LWF1: *The most challenging part of our work in this period is to provide relief and comfort to women survivors of sexual brutality who are displaced from their village to seek safety in the city. Since many denominations in Kivu region cannot cope with a great number of women in need of medical treatment, food, shelter and counselling, they turn to us for help. Our office itself does not have enough funds to cater for all these needs, but we are mediating between humanitarian organisations and local fellowships, also coordinating things so that all those who need assistance might be recorded and eventually helped. However our ultimate goal is to see peace restored in the region (2009-12-13).*

The rest of this conversation is summarized as follows:

LWF1 deplored that, since peace talks had borne little success thus far, the number of women and children being raped would continue to increase. In some remote areas the government had no control at all. There reigned the law of various militias exploiting mineral resources for warlords and their allies while ill-treating civilians. Care for most of the survivors was a vital component of their recovery because it at least gave them peace of mind.

The office had been much involved in hosting the World March of Women, mentioned above, and acknowledged that the event stimulated the creation of several national organizations dealing with violence against women. Thanks to these national and international organizations seminars have been frequently organized in churches and the community at large to break the silence about violence and to teach women the appropriate attitude when they face gang rapists and militias in order to avoid severe damage. Women have also been learning about their rights and

laws, both national and international that would protect them from abuse, in spite of the current political crisis that seemed to establish a culture of impunity. They are encouraged to speak out and denounce the perpetrators even when justice is lacking. In this regard, the Tamar Campaign has played a significant role by creating a platform where women and men can talk openly about violence against women.

The overall impression was that the regional office was mostly mediating between activities that were planned by the national office and individual initiatives from local fellowships and organizations. This may have explained the very limited number of staff, 4 persons in total. This office had few funds and depends solely on the ECC regional office. There were structural problems that needed inquiry: for instance, the national office of the FFP enjoyed large autonomy in funding, personnel and programme planning, while the regional office in Kivu seems to be miserable. I found that much of the work in the region has been done by local fellowships as discussed below.

6.3.2.3 Local women's fellowships

The action of Christian women in various churches (code WFG1-5) was mostly channelled through their local fellowships. I found that similar activities had been held throughout all these local fellowships so I decided to give a summary of what they were doing instead of reporting on what each group had to say. Unless there is a particular thought from a leader, the following section gives an overview of what women had been able to do in their congregations and beyond.

Apart from prayer, singing and meditation on the word of God, their activities included providing relief, comfort and encouragement to survivors of violence, and also some kind of resistance and activism against sexual abuse. They were helped in this by international organizations that were operational in the region to teach women to speak out and seek help. I realized that there was even such a plethora of organizations that it became confusing to distinguish who does what.

It should be remembered here that the brutality with which rape has been perpetrated upon women in the eastern Congo has been so devastating that survivors have to come openly to seek medical treatment or face death. This disclosure of rape has exposed many of the survivors to being divorced or rejected by their families because of the cultural stigmatization attached to

exposing female sexuality in several communities in the DRC. When rejection has occurred, local churches often have not had the financial means to take care of them. That is when women's fellowships have intervened to provide help. Donations in cash or in kind are often organized during women's meetings and the proceedings are set aside to help those in great need; among them have been victims of sexual abuse, widows and other marginalized women. Women's fellowships have not only provided food, clothing and other material things but also they have become a support group for moral and psychological recovery. Although they have very limited resources themselves, these women have been making an impact on the lives of their peers in harsh conditions. A woman I met while conducting Bible study in WFG2 told me:

Mama, if not with the help of this women's fellowship I would have died. I was abandoned and sick. Nobody in my family wanted to help me... I was not even a Christian but was living near their church. When they heard about me they started bringing food, clothes and treated me with love and care. Today I am saved and loved. Even my family has come back now that I am relieved (WFG2:5; 2011-07-17)

Testimonies like this are common among women in the Kivu. By so doing, women are bringing inner peace to those who need it the most, which is part of the biblical shalom. Many of these women did not feel that they were able to influence decision-makers in the country or those who sustain conflicts by their funding, but they were making a significant contribution in the community. As stated earlier, peace is an all-encompassing concept which includes wellness and also the restoration of self-esteem and dignity to those who have lost it.

Another area in which women have been engaged in making peace has been in holding meetings of reconciliation at the grassroots level. The leader of LWF2 in an interview we had in Bukavu on 9 January 2010, candidly confessed that:

In our fellowship we have the Banyamurenge, and Congolese from different tribes. We do not listen to people who would like to divide us...we are not politicians.

Women's fellowships have been, where possible, organizing joint meetings for prayers and sharing testimonies in order to bridge the divisions that have been created by ethnic conflicts in the country. They argued that as women they should transcend the hatred that is mostly propagated by men, since most of them earned their living by exchanging products that they harvested or traded with their neighbours. This initiative was taken even further at national level.

As we discussed earlier, the national President of the FFP had established contact with the women of Rwanda and other networks in the Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the DRC).

Also, a number of women from these local fellowships were proud of having participated in the Women's World March for Peace that had been organized in Bukavu in 2010. Many admitted that it had been a powerful way of expressing their disapproval of violence and conflicts and asking for the end to violence against women in the region. The fact that women from other nations had joined in great numbers in this march was an encouragement that they were not fighting alone: there were people from outside of the DRC who were in support of their combat. It was also a learning experience when they remembered that public manifestations in the DRC had always been violently repressed by the security forces. Students and many activists of peace and members of political parties of the opposition had lost their lives under the dictatorial reign of the late President Mobutu Sese Seko. It has not been possible even under the current regime to organize demonstrations against the government. This march gave them the confidence to claim their rights and some confessed that since then they had participated in other small scale marches organized in the province for the same cause.

After listening to members of different local women's fellowships, one reality caught my attention. Although in feminist ecclesiology, as discussed in Chapter Four of this study, many scholars advocate that women are the church, this concept is not understood in the same way by many women at grassroots level. Few of my respondents seemed to attribute what they were doing in their fellowship to their local churches; but the majority of the respondents dissociated their action from that of what they called 'the church'. Frequently, I heard those women saying "the church is doing nothing, but our fellowship is fully engaged in addressing problems created by conflicts". For many, there is on the one side the 'church' led by male pastors and dominated by men; and in which women are only parts or members and on the other side, there is their own 'thing', which they call women's fellowship. I think this attitude comes from the freedom that women have in their fellowship to express their opinion and exercise their talents without male supervision or restrictions, and also from a sense of belonging which they develop during their meetings. This is the same feeling that Brigalia Bam (2005) observed taking place in the *Manyano*, women's fellowships in some churches in South Africa. Whereas the church in

general is not doing enough, women are fully committed to alleviating the pain from violence that other women suffer.

Many women from these fellowships participated in the Bible study and were very assertive and vocal in expressing their views. I shall discuss the findings of this in the next chapter (Chapter Seven). However, at this point what one should remember is that the Bible study on Abigail is about women's involvement in peace-building. It fits well with the concern of this study and what women in the DRC have been struggling with. Those who participated in the sessions of Bible study could easily identify with the situation of Abigail. They understood that should Abigail let the conflict between Nabal and David continue, the fate of Abigail would resemble what they were experiencing at the time. No matter who started or was behind the ongoing unrest in the country, women were the ones who had suffered a lot in this period. They had been raped and infected by HIV by the fighters. They had lost husbands and children who died as soldiers or militias and now they had to feed their households alone and take care of old people left without resources. Many of them work day and night as hawkers on the street to get just enough to survive. The determination of Abigail to step in, even without the permission of her husband, in order to avert bloodshed is a heroic act that many women have learned and would like to emulate. The question one would ask is why have they not been doing what they know is the right way to move things? This question leads to considering what challenges that these women have faced in this process.

6.4 Challenges to Women's Intervention

Here are a great number of challenges that women face while trying to bring peace to the community. These range from their own weaknesses to what is imposed to them by a patriarchal society. In this section I will examine a few which were often mentioned by the respondents. These include the low level of education among women, divisions in the church and community, exclusion from decision-making meetings and the lack of effective leadership.

6.4.1 Low level of education

In one session of Bible study in WFG1, I told a woman who was very active and sharp in her intervention that,

The church should think of sending you as delegate in those meeting at the provincial office where they discuss the problems of war and abuse of women (Interviewer).

Her answer was:

Nobody pays attention to us who do not know French. We are good for cooking because when others were studying, we were busy learning how to raise children and clean the house (WFG1:3, 2009-12-12 unnamed interviewee).

The women's role in most Congolese cultures is linked to their homes. They are child-bearers; they take care of their husbands and do the entire domestic work that falls under their social script. Education is mostly reserved for men. Even when they are allowed to go to school, they are limited to a basic knowledge of reading and writing. In many cases women in the DRC are discouraged to further their studies, lest they remain single because men are afraid to marry highly educated women. The educational system put in place by the colonizers and even after independence has been tailored in a way that encourages boys to go for higher education while women should learn skills that are related to their domestic tasks at a lower level. The lack of education among women creates numerous barriers in various aspects of life even today. Many of them suffer from an inferiority complex so they are afraid to stand up for their rights in an assembly. At the grassroots level many women have no formal education at all, which excludes them from participating in matters that require debate and critical thinking.

Leaders in the society and even in the church take advantage of this lack of education to exploit women because they are naïve and easily turned into fanatics who follow every movement blindly. News of adventurous politicians and founders of religious sects who are manipulating women to support their ventures are reported all over the country.

It was even disappointing to see that women, who know how to read and write, were ignorant of many stories of the Bible. They were content with what the pastor teaches and how he interprets what he reads. While doing Bible study, many women confessed that they had never heard of Abigail nor read her story. Others admitted that they had heard of the name of Abigail among the women of the Bible but without being shown how this woman challenged the male power of her time to become the heroine of the Bible. It is therefore not a surprise that women look down on

themselves, estimating that they are not able to do great things in public, unless they are led by men.

Reading the story of Abigail with these women was a challenging experience as many of them started realising that it takes courage and determination to transform society and that it can be done even by women. Abigail used her feminine intuition and wisdom from God to succeed where David and Nabal, probably more educated than herself, failed. The lack of education is certainly a fact that women will continue to grapple with for generations to come but it does not constitute a barrier to action nor an excuse for apathy. At the end of the Bible study many women affirmed that they could do something and that what it takes is somebody to drive the movement and rally other women behind a cause. The second challenge of the idea of rallying many women behind a cause is how to overcome divisions.

6.4.2 Divisions in the community

The divisions observed in the Congolese community are not only a challenge but a major cause of conflicts in the region. People are strongly divided along ethnic and religious lines to the extent that it becomes a problem to cross over and reach people who belong to the other group. These divisions were not created by women but are imposed upon them by a patriarchal society. Unfortunately, women, in their traditional role of custodians of African cultures, seem to have interiorized these divisions and are supposed to impress them upon their children as part of a legacy to be preserved. This has been a cause of discord for local women's federations when they are asked by the hierarchy not to have fellowship with women from other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, while the heads of congregations or denominations meet amicably to discuss matters during sessions of the ECC, the Congolese National Council of Churches, ordinary members, most of them being women, are deemed to maintain their identity and not mingle with other denominations. Male leaders fear that their members are not spiritually mature enough to stand their ground in ecumenical gatherings. They may either compromise their doctrine and faith or be swept in by the sheep-stealing phenomenon, as is observed with the new charismatic movements which are draining many believers from mainline churches in the DRC.

To overcome this situation the national office of FFP has invested much energy and effort to break the yoke of division among women members of the Federation. There is still much has to

be done but the enterprise seems to have borne fruit as women in the eastern DRC are showing exceptional solidarity and compassion towards their colleagues who are survivors of abuse and violence across ethnic boundaries. It is not an easy task and leaders of the FFP are aware that they need to be courageous to bring women together, while the legacy the church in the DRC inherited from the missionary era was that Christian denominations were ethnic-based. Each missionary agency was restricted to a certain ethnic group or territory as an assigned field of evangelism, avoiding invading other missionaries' fields. Those barriers are now falling apart in a world which is becoming a global village and women are conscious of the situation.

In her interview in December 2009, LWF3 argued:

The hierarchy of the church is often reluctant to allow us to attend joint meetings with other women's fellowships, pretending that they want to protect us from bad influence, but I think they are either afraid of women competing with men or jealous of women achieving the unity that they as men have not been able to do (2009-12-05).

This feeling was also shared by PLC1 as a female pastor when she confirmed that:

When we meet as pastors in this city, my colleagues are often suspicious of what women do in their fellowships. They know that women share their experience and learn from one another how to overcome what is being done in their denominations. When they come back they start questioning certain limitations imposed on them by the church. I often tell them that whatever women are doing is for the glory of God and His church not to bring shame to the church (2008-07-08).

It is interesting to see that women were aware of the danger of being divided if they were to be agents of transformation in the community. While the national office of the FFP enjoyed enough autonomy and freedom in its undertaking, this autonomy and freedom of action became less and less visible as one moved from provincial to local fellowships. The great battle has to be won at local level because that is where the people are. This leads to the discussion of the third challenge which is decision making.

6.4.3 Exclusion from decision-making

Of major importance in this discussion was the exclusion of women from decision-making bodies, both in the community and in the Church. In many denominations decisions are taken by

ordained ministers, a stage which is denied to women in most of the DRC mainline churches. And even in denominations that allow women to be ordained, they form a symbolic minority who are unable to make a significant impact during the vote. Ordained women are often appointed in positions that report to or fall under male authority. Those who would like to exercise their God-given authority and freedom have to break away and form their own independent churches. Progress is being made to change the situation as more and more churches are opening their doors to women's ordination but the way ahead to equal recognition of power between ordained males and females remains a long awaited dream. The patriarchal structure of the society is set in such a way that male dominion and rulership should be maintained in every sector of life. I have also pointed out that even women's fellowships have become more and more subordinated to Church authority as one moved from national to local congregations. Some women said that in their local congregation any activity that required them to go out and do things with other churches or in the community in general, must be authorized by the pastor or the overseer. It becomes a challenge when what they want to do does not meet the approval of the pastor. More than one respondent acknowledged that there have been several missed opportunities for women to bring change to a community because they were not given permission by the hierarchy of their denominations.

However, women did not see it as an insurmountable problem. Most of the respondents indicated that as the years have gone by, women have learned to organize themselves in their fellowships to be given more and more room to implement their plans provided they are able to defend it as for the benefit of the community or the church. The exposure to the global world and the presence in the DRC of a great number of organizations working in the area of human rights, especially women's rights, is slowly loosening the screws that have tightened women under patriarchal bondages. I am here reminded of Sicily Muriithi (2008)⁷⁸ as she describes how women's groups in Kenya constitute a space to overcome their vulnerability and resist patriarchal oppression. In the DRC, women's fellowships are organized from the local community in a village up to the national level. Depending on the capacity of each group to negotiate with its hierarchy, many of them have gained relatively enough freedom to organize or

⁷⁸ See Sicily Mburu Muriithi (2008). *Vulnerability and Capability in Kenya: Towards an African Women's Public Theology*. PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, a study which explores ways of using public theology to respond to women's experience of general vulnerability.

attend activities that go beyond their local community. That is why strong leadership is important for any communal action as I discuss in the last challenge.

6.4.4 Lack of effective leadership

Although this may be a common problem at the basis of the downfall facing the country in general, lack of capable leadership is underscored as a handicap to the progress of a great number of women's fellowships. For any movement to take place there must be a mover and a visionary capable of leading the team. Women have been aware of this problem and some have accused patriarchal systems in the church which appoint inefficient women leaders for control, as expressed in the following statement.

In our fellowship we cannot achieve much because we were not allowed to choose our president but the Board of the Church appointed one for us. The president was not chosen on the basis of her ability to innovate and lead the fellowship but because she obeys uncritically everything the Pastor says and through her all our activities are filtered by the Board (interviewee who requested anonymity from WFG4:1, 2010-01-09).

This may be a common practice in several denominations in which women have imposed on them somebody who may not fully defend their cause because she has been appointed by the church, and should therefore be loyal to the pastor and people who appointed her. This control exerted by some churches over women's leaders impedes their creativity and freedom of action. It is important to have somebody women trust to lead, otherwise major activities of the church will be paralyzed if women are not willing to collaborate with a leader imposed on them by the church. Women are not short of innovation when they are encouraged and work hand in hand with their leaders.

These are some important challenges that women have to transcend in their endeavour to bring peace to the country. As I said earlier there is hope because much is being done by women at the grassroots level and the landscape is rapidly changing with the globalization of the media. What they need is a strong ideology or theology that should be the driving force behind their involvement. I discuss this in the next chapter.

6.5 Conclusion.

In this chapter I have examined some of the findings of the analysis of part of the data collected during my fieldwork. The result has been grouped into four themes but in this chapter I have dealt with three, namely the role of the church, the involvement of women in the peace process and the challenges faced by women in this exercise. The next chapter will deal with the role of theology in peace-building. This will lead to the formulation of a theology that could be a driving force behind the mobilization of Christian women for peace. When speaking of the church I have distinguished the intervention of the local church from that of the regional or national church. At the local level, where there are Christians, I have shown that leaders have acknowledged that there is much to be done in order to curb the conflicts between rival groups because most of them are members of local churches. However, the result is far below what one would expect because leaders of the churches are themselves divided in their denominations and ethnic groups so that it makes it difficult for women to love and embrace those from rival groups, even though they are trying to work against the will of the hierarchy. There is a real weakness in the preaching of biblical principles for peace both in the intensity and the practice. Since everybody would like to see peace established in the DRC, local churches will have to revise their way of doing things to obtain a better solution.

At the regional and national levels, I have shown that, though they do not interact directly with Christians in their various local churches, the provincial and national offices play a role of mediation between the government and the church on the one side and between different denominations on the other side. From this position they have a momentous role in providing direction and strategies that should be implemented by local denominations and also in speaking prophetically to the key players at national and international levels.

As for the involvement of women, I discussed how men were divided on the issue of the contribution of women to the process of peace-building. Though they generally accepted that women have a great role to play, some respondents maintained that they were equal partners in the process, while for others that they could only bring support to what men were doing in the church. But these considerations did not deter the determination and courage demonstrated by many women interviewed in this regard. The national office of the FFP, for example, was not short of ideas on how to mobilize women to bring peace to the country. They called national

meetings and sent regular messages and guides to the provincial offices that have to be disseminated down to the local churches. They have also entered into dialogue with the women of neighbouring countries involved in the African War. The regional office, to some extent, was also striving to coordinate the activities of women in affiliated churches, although it did not have the same power and means as the national office. At grassroots levels, women acted and identified themselves with their fellowships rather than with their local churches or the ECC, which they considered to be male-dominated institutions. Women's fellowships in different denominations have become the haven of hope for those who are survivors of sexual violence and for other people in need. That is where women have received relief, moral and spiritual support and sometimes even shelter for those who had been rejected. Women have been showing a big heart in a country characterized by pauperisation.

However many of these activities have been done in isolation since women are still battling to break the traditional barriers of ethnic groups as well as the denominational divisions that exist in the society and the church . Apart from divisions, women have also to transcend their lower level of education, the exclusion from decision-making bodies and the control exerted by male leadership upon their activities. What they need is strong leadership and a unifying and compelling theology that can rally women from all denominations and groups behind the cause of stopping violence and establishing lasting peace in the DRC. This last point is dealt with in Chapter Seven as the analysis of data continues with the role of theology in the process of peace-building.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THEOLOGY AND PEACE-BUILDING

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Six I discussed a number of insights from the data collected during my fieldwork, mainly through the interviews with the 18 respondents, as described in Chapter Five, who had been selected because of their position in the church and the role they may play in the process of peace-building in the eastern DRC. Among the respondents were leaders of women's fellowships and the President of the South Kivu Provincial office of the FFP; and pastors of local churches, especially those who were in charge of parishes where Bible studies with women's focus groups were organized. I also shared the views of two prominent leaders, the National President of the FFP and the President of the ECC (Council of Churches) in the Province of North-Kivu. In addition, three members of independent organizations gave their input on the subject too. I grouped the views of the respondents into four sub-headings: the role of the church, the involvement of women, challenges facing women who would like to participate in peace-building, and the place of theology in peace-building. I analysed three categories of my findings and promised to carry on the discussion by analysing the last category in a separate chapter. I concluded the previous chapter by arguing that despite ethnic and denominational divisions, low levels of education and the control exerted by male leadership, women's fellowships have shown determination and courage in catering for the needs of survivors of violence and working together with other women to restore peace in their community. I know that people in the DRC, especially women, are longing for the durable peace and wellness that they have been deprived of for many years.

This chapter therefore takes the issues discussed in the previous chapter one step further towards answering the question 'what is the appropriate theology that can motivate women to engage in peace-building?' To answer this question, I will first explore the fourth category of data which deals with the views of respondents about the place of theology in peace-building. Then, I will compile the insights shared by various groups that participated in the Bible studies. In the light of the reflections drawn from this collection of data analysed in this study I will make an attempt to

formulate a theology of peace that may be applied by Christian women in their endeavour for durable peace.

In fact, when the situation of conflict has badly affected so many lives in the region, it is important that peace ceases to be a mere wish as it is expressed every day through various forms of greetings. This chapter explores how Christian women can rise above the pretence of wishing one another *salamu* while conflicts continue, to a real concern of articulating peace in daily actions. It should be noted that in the western part of the DRC people use the Lingala word, *Mbote*, meaning wellness, for greeting each other; while in the eastern DRC people use the Swahili word, *salam*, or *salamu* —a vestige of the Arabic influence from East Africa, which is close to the biblical peace, *shalom*. Let me start by presenting the views about theology of the participants in the interviews.

7.2 Views of Respondents Regarding Theology and Peace

Almost every respondent interviewed in Chapter Six acknowledged that local churches could make a difference in internal conflicts, although their influence remained minimal in the African War, which is being fought by foreign powers and neighbouring countries. But in tribal conflicts, villagers go out to plunder and kill rival villagers. It becomes therefore a serious challenge to Christians and their faith because a great number of actors in these conflicts claim to be Christians and continue to attend church services in their denominations and local churches. So how can local churches prevent their members from participating in acts of violence and killing? To address this question, this study inquires how Christians can apply biblical teachings in their effort to bring peace to the region. Respondents had to answer a set of questions drawn from the guidelines designed for this purpose. To leaders of women's fellowships (Appendix 1), I used question 6: In what way does the Christian belief/doctrine of your church/denomination stimulate your involvement in peace-building? And question 9: What doctrinal or theological teaching is able to sustain women's efforts in peace-building? Whereas pastors and other church leaders (Appendix 2) were asked question 3: What biblical teaching guides your action in the process of peace-building? And question 4: What does it take to make this teaching a driving force for a wider community of believers to work for peace-building?

The answers to these questions revealed the need to define a theology of peace that should unite Christian women for action. However, during the interview, I often used words such as ‘Christian belief’, ‘biblical teaching’ or ‘doctrinal teaching’ instead of the term ‘theology’ because of a negative connotation that some ordinary Christians attach to ‘theology’ and also the difficulty of its translation into vernacular languages. The following excerpts from interviews give an idea of what the participants thought, starting with the women.

Interviewer: *What does your church teach to help you cope with this situation of crisis?*

LWF3: *I do not think there is a particular teaching from the church in this regard. Pastors continue to preach about love for one another and prayers for God’s intervention in this situation. Everybody is tired of seeing victims of violence everywhere and no one to stop the conflicts?*

Interviewer: *But I see women doing great things. What makes you very committed and engaged to helping each other and even being open to embrace those from other groups?*

LWF3: *It is because we as women cannot tolerate seeing our colleagues suffering. It touches us and we need to do something. It is our way of doing things in the fellowship. We help those who give birth and widows; we assist our colleagues when they have problems. This is how we show solidarity and love to other women*

Interviewer: *What difference do you establish between what Christian women do and those who are not Christians?*

LWF3. *...Aha...[astonished]. It is different, we Christians pray and read the word of God together, and in this way we encourage one another. I do not think that it could be the same if they were unbelievers. (2009-12-05)*

The answer does not articulate clearly the place of theology or biblical teachings in what is being done arguably in the name of God. I asked a similar question of another leader of a women’s fellowship and her answer was not convincing on how her knowledge of God was a determining factor in what she was doing.

Interviewer: *What teaching of the Bible can help you and members of the fellowship to address efficiently the issue of violence?*

LWF5: *We know our duties as Christian women and we do it, in this problem you do not wait for pastors to tell you what to do because they are not showing an example of people of peace and justice. Pastors are not taking time to insist that members of the church should refrain from taking part in the conflicts.*

Interviewer: *What are your duties as Christian women?*

LWF5: *We share our problems with one another; we pray and help those in need. Also we tell those we can reach that raping women and girls or killing one another is bad. It is causing a lot of suffering and misery in our society. People should be compassionate toward those who are suffering (2009-12-12).*

Women in this fellowship, according to the above answers, have been doing their ‘duties’ intuitively and have been appealing, on compassionate grounds, to perpetrators for the cessation of violence. Here again the biblical driving force that can help Christian women to relate action to faith is not well articulated. It raises the question whether the respondents ignored that Christian actions should be grounded in biblical principles or that they assumed that would be obvious. For more insights on this matter I wanted to have the views of pastors and male leaders of churches as discussed below.

Interviewer: *As a pastor of a local church what biblical teaching is appropriate to help your congregation step out of the conflict?*

PCL2: *It is undeniable that the region is experiencing times of troubles and conflicts. All this can stop if we love one another; the Bible urges us to love even our enemies. This is the message I communicate to all the members of my church.*

Interviewer: *How is your congregation applying the message of love in order to bring peace in their community?*

PCL2: *The application of what we are teaching is the challenging part not only with my congregation but with the church in general in this region. It seems that few people are willing to obey what the Bible teaches. Mostly during this time of conflict the voice of their relatives and friends becomes more important than what we teach in the church (2009-03-16).*

The answer of PCL2 revealed what other respondents, men and women, had expressed during the interviews. It is an indication that there was a problem that hindered Christians from backing an overt fight for peace. I therefore decided to find out why Christians were not moved by the teaching of the Bible to work for peace in the region. Respondents were able to give a number of reasons why the teaching of the Bible was not being applied and in the following section I have divided the findings into three major groups. These are: loyalty to the cause of one's tribal or ethnic group, plurality of Christian denominations and lack of discipleship.

7.2.1 Loyalty to one's ethnic group

Interviewer: *Why are Christians involved in conflicts while the gospel of Jesus you preach is against this practice?*

PCL3: *There is a great pressure exerted by the community upon Christians during this time of conflict so that many are not able to defend their faith. The truth is that it is considered as an act of betrayal to refuse to participate or remain neutral when the people from another village or ethnic group launch an attack on your community. A person accused of betrayal is either rejected or persecuted.*

In another interview, IOR1, working for RIO Bukavu said,

IOR1: *One would expect believers to behave differently in this situation, but when we are called to assist people caught in conflicts in villages around the city, we discover that both Christians and non-Christians had participated in violence. Only a few among local church leaders refuse to get involved in ethnic conflicts (2010-01-09).*

It seems to be established that most Christians join their co-villagers in solidarity to attack or avenge other communities during internal conflicts opposing people from rival ethnic groups. One of the reasons invoked by many respondents is that people identified themselves more with their tribal/ethnic group because that is the first social group, as Africans, they join at birth. This could be understood as many African societies (including in the DRC) are characterized by the *ubuntu* philosophy, which advocates communal life: "I am because we are."⁷⁹ But living in

⁷⁹ More about *Ubuntu* can be learned from a book edited by Munyaradzi Felix Murove *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009). See also Hannah Wangeci Kinoti *African Ethics: Gikuyu Traditional Morality* (Amsterdam: Radopi B.V, 2010) and Munyaradzi

solidarity with one's community is not enough to explain why Christians should compromise their faith by siding with people who commit atrocities. That is no longer *ubuntu* vis-à-vis thousands of women and girls whose lives have been destroyed and millions who have died since the war broke out in 1996. Munyaradzi Murove rightly argues, "It is mainly by acting with a sense of concern for the wellbeing of others that one is regarded as endowed with *ubuntu* or humanness" (2011:125).

In the interview above, PCL2 mentioned an important factor in this conflict that Christians were afraid to dissociate with the violence movement in the community, lest they were accused of treason. In other words Christians have been afraid of being cut off from where they belong, their ethnic group, or of facing persecution and death. That is why they prefer to side with the majority. Fear of being marginalized creates a tension in the life of many Christians in the Kivu region as they are torn between remaining loyal to their ethnic groups or being a disciple of Jesus who requires: *Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me* (Mt. 10:37).

Christians should remember that from its beginning the church of Christ has always faced the tension of double identity, of being at the same time members of their culture and also of the new community of believers. Christianity does not take people out of their culture but through the incarnation Jesus penetrates their milieu. However, Jesus teaches that when one is required to decide on which side to lean in any situation, one's first choice should be to side with Jesus.

The challenging issue with ethnicity is the intrinsic assumption that one's ethnic group is superior and better than any other group, which is the cause of ethnic hostility in the region. The following statement reflects well what is happening in the DRC: "Indeed, if one examines the various ethnic groups, one cannot fail to identify some core narratives held by each of the different ethnic groups which have contributed to sustaining inter-ethnic conflicts and ethnic marginalization, and have often culminated in violent ethnic clashes" (Tusabe 2002:86).

The dilemma of living with a double identity as a Christian and as a member of a local community is not unique to the Kivu region, but one should learn to make good choices when the

Muove *African Moral Consciousness: An Inquiry into the Evolution of Prospects and Perspectives* (Saarbrücken, Germany:LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011).

situation requires it. African women theologians are familiar with living in problematic situations as they seek liberation and justice from oppressive patriarchal practices, both in cultural and in biblical traditions, while fully professing their faith with dignity. Musimbi Kanyoro has the right words to express how women navigate this dilemma as she argues:

The task confronting women theologians, in Africa, is how to incorporate discussions on culture in our African communities so that women find it safe to speak about issues that harm their well-being. The biblical conviction that men and women are created in God's image in itself demands that women too must live in dignity. Any pattern of discrimination, domination or oppression is contrary to God's justice (2001:163).

African women theologians critically engage with the culture and the message of the Bible in order to let the justice of God prevail. This is the way the situation in the eastern DRC should be dealt with by Christian women who would like to promote biblical peace in the region. God's justice is contrary to killing human beings in retaliation because one wants to be loyal to his/her biological ethnic group. It is significant to notice that all respondents acknowledged that this is an area of weakness that needs to be strengthened in order to create peace among communities. It becomes clear that deep and engaging biblical teachings are needed as demonstrated later in this study.

7.2.2 Plurality of churches

The second factor of the inefficiency of resisting violence by Christians raised by a number of respondents was the plurality of churches. Here are some ideas from the respondents:

Interviewer: *Why are Christians involved in violence despite the biblical teachings they receive in the church?*

PCL8: *As a Mennonite I can assure you that the teaching of peace is at the core of our doctrine. But even there it is hard to account for what each pastor teaches. It is therefore harder to confirm that all the Christians from more than sixty denominations affiliated to the ECC receive the message that promotes peace among communities. I am afraid to say that apparently some churches are in support of violence when one considers the way they respond to conflicts (Kinshasa 2011-07-16).*

The same feeling was shared by the regional office of FFP in Bukavu in our conversation with the President (LWF1). She observed:

The mobilization of women in the region is hampered by some denominations affiliated to the ECC whose doctrines do not allow their members to participate fully in programmes set up by the FFP. There is often a spirit of over-protecting women against other doctrines, like small children, in order to maintain them under subjection. When the FFP organizes seminars or workshops for the empowerment of women, leaders of those denominations refuse to release their members. Working in a context of plurality of denominations is a battle we fight day and night. I am not discouraged because I have seen a change over the years. It was more difficult at the beginning, but things are slowly improving (Bukavu, 2009-12-13).

The multiplicity of denominations in one platform such as the ECC may sometimes be a blessing as each one can benefit from the experience of another. However, the experience of conflicts in the DRC shows that it is not easy to create a synergy of action and harmony out of plurality. A great number of respondents pointed out the plurality of denominations as a hindrance to the current process of peace-building in many ways. On the one hand, quality time that could be used to work for peace is spent on trying to align competing interests and contradicting doctrines. On the other hand, one cannot assure that the message of peace is taught with the same accuracy across different denominations. During an interview one pastor remarked:

The problems of mobilising Christians for peace lies with us leaders of denominations and not with our members. We are confusing our members with our divisions and contradicting messages which do not reflect the unity of Christ and his love toward the entire creation (PLC4 Bukavu, 2010-01-08).

The responsibility of pastors and leaders of denominations was also underscored by the regional office of *L'Eglise du Christ au Congo* (PEC) as expressed in the following statement:

This office of the ECC frequently shares strategies that we find appropriate for the difficult situation facing our country but, since affiliated denominations keep their autonomy and their doctrinal principles, it is up to each of them to decide on how they would implement what we suggest. Often some denominations propose their members to do their own ideas instead of applying what is agreed upon through the ECC. Therefore, it is a major challenge to convince the various denominations of the ECC to work for a cause whenever an issue is raised in the community. In many instances we move ahead with those who comply (Goma, 2010-12-09).

This study focuses on *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes*, (FFP) because this is the forum which brings together women from all denominations affiliated to the ECC. Although women are also grappling with the issue of the diversity of denominations, the department of women seems to be more successful in bringing together its members and having the programme conceived by the FFP, adopted by different local fellowships. The President (PEC) acknowledged that in some events, even women from branches of Christianity which are not affiliated to the ECC, such as women from charismatic groups and independent congregations, join the group or carry out the recommendations of FFP in their assemblies. The fact that Christian women are able to turn their diversity into strength proves their capacity to transcend their differences for a noble cause. Christina Landman has observed the same willingness to transcend diversity amongst African women theologians as she argues:

However, the diversity itself creates an urgency amongst African women theologians for dialogue and solidarity. A dialogue of culture, for instance, would offer a critique of African cultures but would also explore the potentially liberative aspects of cultures for the women participating in them (1999:138).

Following the above statement, this study encourages the FFP to follow the example of African women theologians, to use its diversity within various women's fellowships for solidarity and dialogue. It is through dialogue that Christian women can foster a culture of lasting peace in the region. By so doing they will be able to turn the plurality of Christian denominations from handicap to opportunity. The last handicap suggested in this study is the lack of discipleship.

7.2.3 Lack of discipleship

Many respondents mentioned that the bottom line of the above mentioned weaknesses is the lack of the proper and steady teaching of Christian values as illustrated in the following statements:

A Christian working for an organization dealing with human rights observed:

When we organize our seminars we realize that there are less systematic teachings focusing on the situation of conflict and how to restore peace by the preachers. I wonder if the reason is that pastors are occupied with their own survival so that they do not have time to prepare those teachings or they do not know how to do it (IOR1, Bukavu 2008-07-23).

A leader of a women's fellowship in Bukavu shared the same observation:

It is not right that real issues that affect Christian life, such as how to stop violence and killing are overlooked in many sermons preached every Sunday. People are tired of abstract messages on love and salvation while women and girls are being raped by other so called Christians. We would like to see pastors organize regular workshops involving women, youth and men to reflect on our responsibility as bringers of peace in the world ridden with violence (LWF2 Bukavu 2010-01-09).

Those in charge of discipleship should invest their time in teaching Christians words and deeds that can help them to lead a life of compassion and justice by setting an example. That is what people expect from their church leaders during such a time of crisis. Assuming that Christians will read the Bible for themselves or giving casual sermons during Sunday services are not enough to create a culture of nonviolence among the believers. There is a need to groom a generation which will turn its back on the mistakes and failures of their parents and build a community of people living in peace and mutual respect. Therefore, discipleship should start at home where children and the entire family share their core values and determine the code of conduct which is compatible with their belief. These values have to be told again and again at home, in Sunday schools and church services so that they become a way of life. Is this not what the Israelites were told to do in the Law of Moses?

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deut. 6:6–9).

During the Bible study with WFG5 women admitted with regret that

We, women, used to teach our children good conduct, but now we do not have time to do it anymore because of the political and economic crisis in the country. Our husbands are not working and we are left to cater for the needs of the family. We wake up early, trade on the roads until late and come back tired so that we do not have time even to inquire where the children have been and what they are doing. No wonder that many children from Christian families are now counted among street gangs and rebel militias (Bukavu, WGF5:3 2010-07-16).

This woman expressed a deep cry shared by many parents in the Kivu region experiencing the aftermath of conflicts as they deplored the disintegration of families and the breakdown of all

moral values in the community. It highlights the responsibility of the Church and parents when they fail to educate the youth to display Christ-like behaviour in the midst of corruption and violence. Parents are aware that children have gone wild because there is no one to watch over their education and upbringing. The positive side of these claims is that people remained confident that Christianity has an answer to violent predicaments provided the message of the gospel is well understood and applied. I was encouraged by the positive attitude of a leader of a women's fellowship, who boldly attested that:

Sermons on violence are rare and many pastors are not setting a good example for the believers to emulate. How can members of a church behave otherwise when they see their leaders indulging in the same wrongdoing, even sometimes doing worse than ordinary believers? However, women are concerned about the future of this country so that fellowships are doing what they can to equip women so that they may impart Christian ethical values to the young ones to behave well in the society and be peacemakers (LWF2 Bukavu 2010-02-09).

It is true that women remain the custodians of cultural and religious beliefs and are able to pass them on to the new generation. Who ignores that to educate a woman is to educate a nation? I felt the willingness among women all along my journey in the region; they are thirsty to learn from the Bible as to how they can improve their situation. It was an encouragement for me to know that the story of Abigail was needed to cater for the needs of my respondents. Amazingly, whenever I suggested that I would like to invite Christian women to a contextual Bible study on peace-building, I found that not only were the leaders of women's fellowships happy with the idea, but also pastors offered to mobilize women to attend the session. With these remarks let me introduce the discussion of the contextual Bible study.

7.3 Contextual Bible Study

In Chapter Five I have stated that my methodology included in-depth interviews and contextual Bible studies. I was helped in this exercise by the work of the FECCLAHA, spreading the Tamar Campaign in order to raise the awareness of the rape of women and girls as is rampant in the DRC. This story has stirred up the need among women to use the Bible to address real issues in their lives as stated in the following testimony:

I am grateful that the Tamar Campaign came to us. This story and its message are making a difference in the life of many women in this region. We have learned to say no to violence because it is evil, and are now speaking out when the church and the society would not like us to tell our story. If we had more lessons like this and pastors who can teach us biblical stories in a very practical way as it is done with the Tamar Campaign, we could be equipped and be able to resist violence. Tamar is an empowering story for us women. (WGF1:2 Bukavu 2009-12-12).

This testimony underscores the reason why African women theologians have adopted storytelling as their way of doing theology. It is an expression which is grounded in the African culture and women, both educated and uneducated can easily identify with some characters in a narrative. Oduyoye explains the role of stories in African women theology as she argues:

In their theological reflections, women of the Circle proceed from the narrating of the story to analysing it to show how the various actors in the story see themselves, how they interact with others, and how they view their own agency in life as a whole. They ask ‘What is the meaning of the story as a whole?’ The next stage is to reflect on the experiences from the perspective of the Christian faith — a conscious implementation of biblical and cultural hermeneutics are at work in the process. From this perspective they identify what enhances, transforms or promotes in such a way as to build community and make for life-giving and life-enhancing relationships (2001:16).

The steps described by Oduyoye in the above statement are almost identical to what is suggested by the Tamar Campaign and also by what I had proposed to use for the Abigail Campaign. Even those who are not theologians, - and most of the women who participated to the contextual Bible study I conducted were not - could make a meaning out of the story. It moves the participants from reading the story in order to identify major characters, to reflecting on the role of each of them and then drawing parallels between their own situation and that of the biblical story in order to appropriate lessons that would help them transform their situation. They have done this before with Tamar’s narrative where they could easily identify themselves with the characters of the text.

The women at the grassroots level are not interested in theological debates, or in hermeneutical criticisms, but in finding the relevance of the story to the real-life problems they face. In so doing they are inclined to a theology of experience and praxis for the transformation of their communities. The positive impact that the Tamar Campaign has had on the life of many

Christian women in the DRC was a ground-breaking experience upon which I could build my Bible study on the story of Abigail. Their interest was raised by the fact that I told them that the story of Abigail is a step forward after learning in the Tamar Campaign how to speak out loudly about sexual violence. The story is designed to teach them how to engage in the peace process in order to avert more violence. Many respondents were eager to sit and learn another story which can enhance their thrust for life-changing actions and for a peaceful community. This leads us to the discussion of the outcome of the contextual Bible study.

7.4 Major Issues that Emerged from the Story of Abigail (1 Sam.25:2-35)

This section discusses the major issues as recorded in the final reports that emerged from the contextual Bible study conducted in the five focus groups identified in the Chapter Five.⁸⁰ The story of Abigail brought to the mind of the participants new insights on what it entails to bring peace and the basis upon which durable peace could be built. The result of this Bible study far surpassed my original expectations. Participants showed great interest in engaging with biblical texts to address problems in their context, just as they had been doing with the Tamar Campaign. I will not give in detail what each group discovered; rather the findings are grouped into three sub-headings: (i) understanding the biblical text; (ii) Abigail's endeavour to bring peace; and (iii) application of the story to the situation in the DRC.

7.4.1 Understanding the biblical story

The answers to questions 1-3 (Appendix 4)⁸¹ provided information that helped the readers to grasp the overall understanding of the text. They had time to read the text in plenary and in small

⁸⁰ As a reminder of the methodology discussed in Chapter One, the contextual Bible study (CBS) was consisted of three major phases. First, the plenary during which the Bible was read in Swahili and French (in the Kivu region) and Lingala and French (in Kinshasa). In this phase I gave an explanation of the text as well as the questions to be discussed in small groups (Appendix 4) without pre-empting what the readers had to discover on their own. The second phase was carried out in small groups led by facilitators. Finally, the third phase was the last plenary where each small group reported on its findings, which were recorded in a compiled document. Usually, the finally report concluded with recommendations, strategies or action plans for the way forward.

⁸¹ Questions for discussion: 1. What is this text all about? 2. Who are the main characters and their roles in the story? 3. What is the cause of the conflict in this story?

groups in the language they understood better and to share ideas emerging from their reading. Different reports suggested that the narrative revolves around conflicts between male actors and Abigail's intervention to restore peace. In general, participants agreed that the story of Abigail is about conflict resolution and peace-making by a woman, which brought the story close to the prevailing context in the region. The specific point that they had to ponder on deeply later was the emphasis on female agency in this conflict resolution. After defining the unifying theme of the text, in the second step participants had to identify the characters.

The identification of the main characters and their role is crucial to understanding a narrative because they constitute a model to follow or to avoid in life. Since the text has a limited number of characters, participants identified the following: Nabal, David and Abigail as the most important characters. But the story would be incomplete without the presence of the militiamen of David, the shepherds of Nabal and God acting behind the scene.

The narrator introduces Nabal as a wealthy man with thousands of livestock, but surly and mean. Further in the text Abigail, the wife, adds that Nabal was foolish (v25).⁸² Many respondents agreed that even in their society, a number of rich people enjoyed a high social status but they had become selfish, arrogant and rude toward the poor. One woman from WFG5 said, *“When I need something I prefer to ask neighbours who are also struggling like me. Between us we help one another. But the rich, they will let you wait longer at the gate before they open and when you get in they treat you as a beggar. In many cases they will send you back empty-handed”* (2010-07-16). Therefore the description of Nabal in this text and his reaction to the demand of food from David are understandable, as they quoted the passage.

But Nabal answered David's servants, “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. Why should I take my bread and water, and meat I have slaughtered for my shearers and give it to coming from who knows where? (25:10–11).

In their comments another woman said *“Nabal pretended that he did not know David. That is exactly how the rich react; they pretend they do not know you as a way of justifying their selfishness. I think Nabal knew David (WFG5:4, 2010-07-16).* Nabal in this text plays the role of

⁸² In their report, participants were requested to quote the biblical verse (s) to help others understand where they have drawn their idea/argument in the story.

the principal instigator of a conflict which would have become deadly to his household should Abigail not have intervened on time. Further comments will be added in the section on the application of the story to the Kivu context.

As for David, participants described him as a military commander, surrounded with young men (combatants), who decided to act as a gangster because Nabal refused to give him food in acknowledgment of the hospitality he and his army had offered to Nabal's shepherds. Participants found a very negative image of David as they noticed a striking match between the portrayal of David and his militia in this story and the behaviour of armed groups that kill, terrorize and rape women in the Kivu region. One participant argued, *"It seems as holding a gun takes away patience. All these armed persons behave in the same way—rebels, soldiers and police—when they are upset they think first of using their gun. David's language was not for reconciliation but oppressive as he declared, 'if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him (Nabal) (25:22). Rebels in the Kivu region have been attacking innocent villagers in the night and when the sun has risen they retreat to their hiding places carrying with them hostages and plunder while leaving behind ruins and raped women. Although David deserved to receive hospitality from Nabal in return, there was no need to claim it by force. Nabal was not legally indebted to David. Consequently, both David and Nabal were moved by pride and were eager to assert their masculinity onto the other.*

The findings of the participants at this point concerning these two male characters, Nabal and David, confirms the assumption found in a number of feminist writings that violence and oppression are intimately associated with patriarchy and masculinity. Donna Warnock observes that, "Patriarchy is a society which worships the masculine identity...Under patriarchy men are entitled to everything. It follows that patriarchy is inherently violent because it thrives on captured prey" (1982:23).

There was little said about the other male characters, mainly the soldiers of David and the servants of Nabal. Their duty was to obey the master even when they did not approve of the decision. Participants, however, appreciated the behaviour of Nabal's servant who brought the news to Abigail. One participant remarked that, *servants are like children in the house. When the father is rude they become very attached to the mother (WFG1:6 2009-12-12).* Participant saw a

form of resistance to oppression when a servant told Abigail what happened in the meeting between the two belligerent groups, urging her to act in order to avert the disaster.

As for Abigail, the study found that she was the only female character mentioned in the text. Astonishingly, Abigail is portrayed as an intelligent and beautiful woman, as compared to the wickedness and foolishness of her husband Nabal. Many women found an encouragement in the positive portrayal of Abigail because women are culturally considered less intelligent than men in the DRC. More of their comments are shared in the next section where they discussed the involvement of Abigail in solving the conflict.

I can say that even outside of the DRC, this portrayal stands in contradiction of the patriarchal culture under which the Bible was written and often interpreted. Thoko Mpumlwana observes that “as women we have always been made to feel that the Bible talks about courageous, good and strong men on the one hand against the weak and sinful women on the other” (1991:379). But Abigail does not fit into such a pattern. She stands as a beacon of strength and peace-making where men have failed. This is why women in the DRC can use the story of Abigail in the Bible to strengthen their faith and challenge the situation they face, as wished for by Ofei-Aboage when she writes:

I would also want Scripture to empower women by projecting situations in which women’s wisdom and persistence won the day and where women did better than men. It would show what certain scriptures mean for a woman as compared to a man (2007:66).

In the following section I would like to demonstrate that Abigail’s story meets all the wishes expressed by Ofei-Aboage in the above statement. Indeed Abigail’s wisdom and persistence won the day.

7.4.2 Abigail’s endeavour to bring peace

The major focus of this contextual Bible study was put on Abigail’s intervention as reflected in the guideline (Appendix 4, questions 4-7) (1 Sam. 25:23-31). The participants found the text to be an illustration of a patriarchal society. They read into it the same cliché of how women are often excluded when serious matters are dealt with in Congolese society and in the church. This

was clearly expressed by a participant as: *In the church and in the community, everywhere they consider us women as children, incapable of solving problems.* That is what happened with Abigail. Despite being portrayed positively by the narrator as an intelligent woman, only Nabal and his servants sit with the men sent by David without her being informed. She was informed later by a servant when all had been decided.

The experience of most women participating in this Bible study was that when things go wrong, women are the ones to bear the consequences. They observed that: *After creating conflicts, men do not know how to stop them - and now see how women and children are suffering in this region.* This confirms Elisabeth Ferris' observation, "Since the beginning of recorded history, women have been working for peace and picking up pieces from the wars started by men" (1996:11). Abigail finally entered the scene when men had already damaged their relationship; as Ferris says, she picks up pieces to restore peace. Credit was given to one of the servants of Nabal, who is unnamed in the text, for bringing the information to Abigail that triggered the salutary intervention. His plea to ask Abigail to rescue the family proves that she was such an outstanding woman that she had won the admiration of everybody in the household of Nabal, especially among her male servants. Participants quoted the request to show how desperate the situation would have been if Abigail had not intervened. *"Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his household"* (25:17).

Two aspects of Abigail's intervention caught the attention of the participants: her strategy and her understanding of God or her theology.

7.4.3. Abigail's strategy

When Abigail decided to rise up to the challenge, participants found that she planned her strategy well, in four major steps.

First, she gathered what David requested and prepared for the travelling to meet David on the way (v.18). Participants noticed that Abigail resolved to implement her plan without consulting her husband, as they read, *"She did not tell her husband Nabal"* (v,19). This sentence raised a few questions among the participants since it contradicts the teaching of the church that women ought to submit to their husbands in everything (Eph. 5:24). Many of them wanted to know whether this was a sign of disrespect toward her husband or not. One even asked the question: *Is it wise to*

inform a man who is described as foolish? How many of our plans as women's fellowships have failed because pastors did not approve them? (WFG3:2 Bukavu, 2009-12-05). On the other side we had women who questioned the process arguing: *What shall happen when the husband find that the wife has left for a journey that he did not know? Will this bring peace or more trouble in the house?* Eventually, a consensus was found that this does not rule out the mutual respect that a couple owes to each other. Even African women theologians advocate working in partnership with men but there is a lesson that participants drew from Abigail's attitude in this incident, which I discuss in the section on the application of the story in the context of this study.

Second, participants pointed out Abigail's attitude as she chose to confront David's pride with humility in order to avert the tragedy. Upon meeting David and his soldiers, she prostrated herself with her face on the ground as an act of self-abasement (25:23); a gesture that Nabal's masculinity would never have yielded to. One participant who appreciated the strategy acknowledged that: *When things are tough, as women, we know how to cool the situation down by humbling ourselves. It is not a sign of weakness but a tactic to get what we want. Men become tender and kind when you plead with them like children.* Abigail needed to find an appropriate strategy for the occasion. The reading shows that both Nabal and David were asserting their masculinity with pride and arrogance, which created the tension and led to violence between them. McAllister suggests that one's tactical self-defence action should go beyond the attacker's area of strength in order to succeed as she argues, "It is necessary that we explore other ways in which we might counter the attacker's script with our own, maintaining as much fearlessness and flexibility as possible in each situation" (1982:392). For Abigail, her own strategy to bring peace between David and Nabal, two males boasting of their egos, was to use humility.

Third, Abigail assumed the responsibility of her husband's action by asking David to put the blame on her. The quote below was the cause of debates among the participants:

She fell at his feet and said: My lord, let the blame be on me alone. Please let your servant speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. May my lord pay no attention to that wicked man Nabal, he is just like his name—his name is fool, and folly goes with him. But as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my master sent (1 Sam.25:24-25 NIV).

Some women found that Abigail had gone too far in her humility to the point of almost worshipping David. Others found that many men do not appreciate the sacrifices that women endure for them. Here examples were given of women who cover up the wrong-doings of their husbands in the church or in the community so that they will not lose their position. [Laughter]...*Mainly the wives of pastors they know how to hide things to protect their husbands' seat...Some of them end up by being divorced instead of receiving appreciation.*

There were testimonies of survivors of violence to shed light on Abigail's attitude. One woman said when her family was attacked by a group of rebels she begged the soldiers calling them names like king, father and so on, and in the end she and all her family were not harmed. As she argued: *Do not forget that David was a chief rebel going to kill the house of Nabal. Abigail had no choice but to try anything that could stop the massacre taking place,* In the end participants had to remember what Jesus did on the cross. Though he was not a sinner, he bore the sins of the world so that people may be saved.

I am reminded of Wanda Deifelt who wrote that women in Latin-America identify themselves with the image of a suffering Christ, the recovery of the body on the cross.

To acknowledge Jesus' body on the cross brings a different dimension to the notion of embodiment. It is a suffering body, in the midst of pain, exposed to violence, and expropriated from its dignity that calls for attention. It is a body that shocks and questions established values. Faced with the horror of an innocent's sacrifice, there is no place for evasion (2003:43).

Women all over the world are, willingly or unwillingly, exposed to violence and their bodies to suffering so that Christology becomes the branch of theology that most feminist theologians often refer to. However, some feminist theologians are very critical of this kind of Christology because it leads women to accept fatalistically the role of victims of patriarchal systems. Mary Daly (1973:77) in her radicalism sees this Christ who lives and dies as a scapegoat, offering his life for others as a way of idealizing sacrificial love and the passive acceptance of suffering so that women become victims in their various cultures. It seems that African women theologians interpret the suffering of Christ positively as it is clearly stated by Nasimuye-Wasike:

Jesus asks the African woman not to accept her hardships and pain fatalistically but to work at eliminating the sufferings and creating a better place for all. In her

undertaking against the oppressive structures her struggles become God's struggles. It is then Christ who suffers in her and works in her to give birth to new and better human relationships (1992:78).

Abigail by her suffering restores the relationship between David and her family. This study argues that women in the Kivu can also give birth to new and better human relationships in the region.

Finally, Abigail's strategy was to plead with David by evoking God's will and principles. Participants discovered that Abigail had demonstrated a deep understanding of spiritual realities, which David seemed to overlook when he sought to destroy Nabal's household. She reminded David that as God's elected leader he should forgive because God himself would vindicate him. *"Please forgive your servant's offence, for the Lord will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master...But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling"* (25:28–29). She went further, warning David that, should he decide to avenge himself, it is he, not Nabal, who would be the guilty party. David would bear all his life the burden of blood-guilt before God.

The debate here was how it could be possible to preach to the rebels. Participants were divided in their opinions. Some said it was easier for Abigail because David himself was God's servant and he was ready to listen to the word of God. To this argument other retorted that even among the chief rebels in the Kivu region most of them were Christians; they attended churches and asked for prayers from churches. Then another argument was raised that not all women know the scripture they could quote when confronted with such an unexpected situation. *How do you expect women to preach the word while in our churches we are not allowed as women to do so?* (WFG4:2 Bukavu 2010-01-09). Abigail's undertaking of the word of God and the ability to share it with David became a real challenge during many sessions of this Bible study.

The challenging part of this last strategy of pointing David to the word of God is that it melted the anger of David. In the end David appreciated Abigail's intervention and her profound knowledge of God's statutes which prevented him from shedding blood in the household of Nabal. He also realised that there was no need to carry out an action which would tarnish his career with blood-guilt.

With the completion of this four-stage strategy, Abigail achieved her mission. In the end, the two parties departed in peace. David accepted the gift and returned with his men to their camp while Abigail returned home assured that her household was out of danger (25:32–35). That is why many respondents described her as the heroine of this story.

The above discussion gives a hint of the interest this story had raised among the participants who were then called to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses with regard to the story of Abigail, in the next section on the application or appropriation of the text. This whole exercise focuses on one point: how can we use this story in the context of the DRC?

7.4.4 Application of the story of Abigail to the situation in the DRC

People who have used contextual Bible study know that the shift from the text to the real context of the readers is the most delicate but also the most exciting part for the participants. The guideline for this study has provided questions to be answered in order to channel ideas toward finding the right applications of the story for the context of the DRC. Questions 8-10 (Appendix 4) are designed for this purpose. Participants had to draw parallels between the context of the story and what they are experiencing in their life. Also they had to answer the question on how this story of Abigail could empower women in the DRC and lastly to decide what action plan should be made to address the situation. The section below summarizes the answers to these last three questions, to which I have added other resources to strengthen the arguments.

7.4.4.1 Parallels between the story of Abigail and the situation in the DRC

First, the participants found striking parallels between the major cause of the conflict in this text and in the DRC. In both contexts, men are the instigators of the conflicts, fuelled by male arrogance, superiority complexes and power struggles. Nabal was arrogant because of his wealth and David was confident in his weaponry and army. Neither of them was willing to listen to the other and solve their differences amicably. In addition, they decided to discuss their problems without involving women. One participant argued, *I am sure if the wife of David and Abigail were involved in that problem from the start the matter would probably be solved at once.* (WFG2:3 Kinshasa 2011-07-17). But women become involved or are caught up in the circle of violence that ensues at a later stage. This is what creates conflicts even in the DRC, they said. In their comments women noted:

We have leaders of ethnic groups who claim the superiority of their group over others in the region. They are thus ready to launch attacks on others because they have people and they can buy weapons. Besides, we have the politicians and rich people who smuggle minerals across the borders with their international partners, they recruit young people as militiamen but in fact what they want is to make them miners in the forest for their own benefit (WFG3:5 Bukavu 2009-12-05).

The problem of conflict is mostly a problem of dangerous masculinity in both the story of Abigail and in the DRC. Conflicts can decline if men can learn to humble themselves and to count on women. This observation concurs with the study of Bruce Kokopely and George Lakey who established a connection between patriarchy and the military state as they observe that, “The parallels between these powerful institutions are striking. Both prefer more subtle means of domination but insist on violence as a last resort” (1982:238). As David and Nabal resolved to use violence instead of solving the matter peacefully, participants could picture where their misfortune has come from.

Second, the reaction of David who, because of Nabal’s refusal to give them food, organized a military expedition to kill an entire household had tremendous echoes with the situation of armed groups in the Kivu region. *You know, what causes rebels to invade villages regularly is the lack of food. They do not cultivate there. They dig gold and spend their money on drugs but when they are hungry they attack villages. I think David and his men did the same (WFG1:6 Bukavu 2009-12-12).* It is true; punitive expeditions into villages are carried out regularly by rebels to rape women and kill innocent people because of trivial matters. Discussion on this issue went as far as condemning those who put guns in the hands of irresponsible persons, like children soldiers and all those who in one way or another decide to solve issues by the use of force. Nabal was lucky because he had an intelligent wife who diffused the doom before it took place, but for most of the participants, no one was there to stop the violence and bloodshed. This leads to answering the question on how women in the DRC could be empowered by this story.

7.4.4.2 How this story could empower women in the DRC

Participants were unanimous that this story has the potential to introduce new dynamics into women's fellowships. Abigail in her role as a woman, life bearer and protector of her family, had inspired participants with a number of lessons. I kept four which were often mentioned in various sessions of the contextual Bible study. These are: her sense of effective leadership, her courage, her humility and her knowledge of the Word of God. Many of these qualities are developed further in this chapter as ingredients of a theology of peace.

a) Leadership. Participants were amazed to see how on short notice Abigail was able to put in place her strategy and to implement it successfully. It takes a very strong sense of true and effective leadership that many women who had studied the story wished they could have. One participant said: *Abigail knew how to live with people in peace that is why her servants were willing to help her succeed in her mission. I think she was a good organizer* (WFG4:4 Bukavu 2010-01-09). She demonstrated her ability to lead people because she was really in charge as she organized her servants to prepare an abundant provision of food, meat, wine, grain, flour and fruit as quickly as they could because they needed to act before the army of David struck. People carrying the provisions went ahead while she followed behind; she had her convincing speech ready. So everything was perfectly and skilfully done. As she met the requirements defined by Charles Schwahn and William Spady, Abigail would qualify to be one of the 'Total Leaders' (2002), the five pillars of which are: purpose, vision, ownership, capacity and support. Each of these pillars had been displayed by Abigail in her intervention. Irrespective of one's gender, anyone can achieve success if he/she has what it takes.

b) Courage. Abigail was also much-admired because of her courage and boldness to challenge the patriarchal society by acting in defiance of her social script in order to bring peace. As discussed earlier Abigail decided to hide her plan from her husband and go on her own to meet the adversary without fearing for her marriage. Nevertheless, what would the marriage have been if she waited until David and his army arrived and killed everybody as they intended? She did not consider the status of being the wife of a rich man more important than saving lives. *I like the way Abigail handled her matter. She decided to carry out her plan without being distracted by the advice of her husband. I think she wanted to challenge David by confronting him alone without her husband. Women in this region - we should be like Abigail* (WFG5:3 Bukavu 2010-

07-16). The participants appreciated the attitude of Abigail because her action interrogates women submission when the husband is opposed to peace-making even when lives are in danger. Although she acted without her husband's permission, the outcome was the salvation of every male in Nabal's household.

Her attitude is in line with what Steve de Gruchy calls "the concept of vital theology". This is a theology which is in service to life and in opposition to life-denying and death-dealing theologies, seeking and promoting life in the midst of social injustice (2009:3-4). This is a great lesson for women in the DRC, where lives are not valued and Christian women are afraid to challenge the *status quo* and to resist violence.

Abigail demonstrated self-denial and audacity to confront a military expedition and prevent them from killing. In the DRC, an act like that of Abigail's means to rise up to the challenge of being raped and/or killed by armed persons, as so frequently happens in the eastern Congo. In her answer to the question 'Are women their own enemies?' Kunbi Labeodan gives an important encouragement to women as she says, "There will be plenty of challenges. Welcome and defeat the challenges as they come. They will make you stronger, smarter, faster and a far superior player at the game of life" (2007:126).

c) Humility. Many reports from the Bible studies singled out Abigail's humility as an important factor in peace negotiation and which can find an application in the current situation of conflict in the DRC. Abigail could have refused to abase herself before a soldier, even though David was a commander. After all, she was married to a rich man and surrounded by many servants and maidservants. Nevertheless, she humbled herself before David and called him "my lord" (25:24). Participants found that: *Even in our homes we know that when your partner raises the voice, you lower yours, because when both of you start shouting and swearing, there will be a fight. Abigail was clever not to elevate herself before an angry soldier* (WFG4:6 Bukavu 2010-01-09). Such a gesture is not weakness but it is power and an antidote to male pride. They pointed out that humility should not be required from women only. Men also should learn to be humble. It is in tune with the teaching of Jesus, that "*those who humble themselves will be exalted*" (Luke 18:14 NRSV). I will discuss this later.

d) Knowledge of God. Abigail was outstanding in her knowledge of God's law and how to apply it to peace-making. She appealed to David's faith and relationship with God rather than evoking social and humanitarian reasons. One participant shared her regret, *Even though we are not pastors, we need to know the Bible. There are a lot of opportunities to share the Word of God with people we meet every day or those from false religions, but we do not know where to start* (WFG2:3 Kinshasa 2011-07-17). But Abigail knew the Word so she asked David to forgive his offenders and insisted on the sin of blood-guilt and avenging oneself which every person who kills another, bears; even when one reacts in retaliation. Other participants acknowledged that God's law or theology is the missing element in various strategies being used to bring peace to the DRC. Peace is negotiated on social and humanitarian grounds, even among Christians. A number of lessons from this - the intervention of Abigail - provides elements which help formulate a theology of peace that can become a motivating factor for the involvement of women in peace-building in the DRC. Before moving to a theology of peace, there was a last question of application.

7.4.4.3 Action plan that may help women address the situation

These are some of the recommendations formulated by the women's focus groups.

We need to continue doing this kind of Bible study even in our meetings of women's fellowship instead of keeping with our old way of having a preacher who speaks to us and we just all say "Amen". We have to learn from Abigail how to bring peace, starting among ourselves members of the fellowship, before we can think of confronting rebels and other perpetrators of violence who live with us (WFG2).

We should negotiate with our pastors to be present and in acceptable numbers whenever an important meeting of the church is held. That is where important decisions are taken that affect women and we are not aware. Sometimes they ask us to send the president or the president and one delegate while tens of men attend. It is time to wake up like Abigail and help men solve the conflicts (WFG1).

This Bible study on Abigail should be organized many times and everywhere so that we can have the same understanding of our responsibility and plan to do something great which will have an impact at regional and even national levels (WFG5).

From the above recommendations, participants have expressed their need to continue reading the Bible in a proactive way. They acknowledged that during their meetings in fellowship they preach the Word, maybe to encourage one another but not with a purpose in mind as the Tamar Campaign and the story of Abigail have been conducted. The challenging part of this resolution is that few women are able to facilitate this kind of contextual study without having the required skills. My encouragement was that they should keep on doing what we did together, maybe using the notes so they could repeat the same lesson or use the same guidelines on another narrative. I am aware of the shortage of skills among women but it has cultural reasons that will not be overcome in one day.

Their dream is to start meeting and see areas where they can work together in advocacy or resistance in order to advance the cause of peace-building in the church first, then in the community at large. More of what women recommended is included in the last chapter as recommendations and a way forward for this study.

7.5 Formulating a Theology of Peace

From the beginning of this study I have highlighted the complexity of the situation of current conflicts in the DRC. Since it is not possible to single out a unique cause of the war, the search of bringing peace becomes equally complex. The study of the story of Abigail provides a number of values that are central to constructing a theology of peace that cuts across different cultures and ethnic groups. Since many people involved in current conflicts in the DRC claim to be Christians, it is important for Christian women to engage their conscience on the basis of Christian values or theology as motivating factors, besides the current trend of calling for peace because of the social evils caused by conflicts, such as misery, the violation of human rights and the loss of human lives. The story of Abigail teaches that waging war is a sin because it violates Christian values and ethics. Therefore, the way to restore durable peace should consist of upholding a number of Christian values found in the story of Abigail, as discussed in the sections below; namely, courage, humility, forgiveness, to refrain from shedding blood and not avenging oneself.

7.5.1 Courage

Participants in the Bible study were all astonished by the exceptional courage of Abigail to take a risk while the matter had gone out of the men's control. It took much courage and determination for a woman to rise up and resist violence during the time of Abigail and even today. Abigail stood as a beacon of courage when she decided to go without her husband and meet the attackers on the way to bargain for peace.

Abigail lost no time. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain and two hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal (1 Sam. 25:18-19 NIV).

Despite a certain patriarchal portrayal of women as weak vessels and fearful to take action, biblical accounts and modern African history are full of stories of women who have challenged tyrannical monarchs, opposed wars and organized resistance against violence. Women like Queen Esther needed courage to appear before the King of Persia and advocate for her nation condemned to extermination by Haman. The Bible reads, "*I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish*" (Est. 4:16). From South African apartheid to modern wars for black diamonds in Liberia and other parts of Africa, women of courage have shown their determination to stand against violence and conflict.⁸³ All these women have faced terrific threats in their communities but like Abigail, they were determined to overcome their own fear in order to save lives as rightly expressed in the following statement:

Many of these stories tell of women being motivated to act because they are mothers, agonizing over their children's disappearances, angry because of continuing violence which destroys their families. Maternal thinking is indeed a powerful motivation for women's action for peace and justice (Ferris 1996:13).

As for women in the DRC to become peacemakers like Abigail, they need the courage to act in spite of their frustration of being the prey of rapists. They need to temper their anger with the compassion of life-saving in order to be effective in their action. Pam McAllister has the right

⁸³ I think here of the march of South African women on 9 August 1956 to the Union Buildings to challenge the law on carrying passes which caused a blow to the Apartheid regime, and recently the winning of the Nobel Peace Prize 2011 by Leymah Gbowee from Liberia as a symbol of resistance and defeating wars through nonviolence by African women and other women all over the world.

words to capture the combination of anger and compassion in women's endeavour as she explains that,

It is with our rage we defy the male supremacists; find the courage to risk resistance. And it is with our intimate connection to the life-force which pulses through our veins that we insist there is another way to be. By combining our rage with compassion, we live the revolution every day (1982: iv).

Violence is a choice that many perpetrators have made in the DRC but women are there to risk resistance in order to tell people that there is another way to be. Therefore, the appropriate theology in this context should excite women to be courageous. However, to answer violence by violence does not solve the equation; instead it results in the escalation of violence. That is why the way of humility becomes a powerful approach as discussed here below.

7.5.2 Humility

This is one of the virtues very much needed and yet hard to apply in the context of the eastern Congo where each party involved in the conflict strives for acts of nationalism and for asserting the pride and prowess of one's ethnic group. When the only language which prevails is that of weapons and force, humility is likely to be equated with cowardice by those who do not understand the overpowering effect of a humble spirit. Participants in the Bible study discovered that Abigail displayed this humility so well that it disempowered David's thrust for revenge. He had to listen and yield to what Abigail asked him to do.

When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "My lord, let the blame be on me alone" (2 Sam. 25:23-24).

The humility of Abigail spoke more vividly and powerfully than the arrogance of Nabal to quench David's anger and abort the punitive expedition. This is not weakness which leads to humiliation but a self-abasement which leads to elevation. It works on both sides: it does not hurt nor humiliate either of the two parties involved. From the African women theologians' perspective, humility is part of what Esther Ofei-Aboagye terms 'women's wisdom' as she argues that, "By careful observation and intuition, they [women] generate a lot of wisdom that could be nurtured and tapped for the collective growth of the society" (2007: 51). She defines

steps that women in their wisdom take. “When women receive information, they process this into wisdom through

- analysing the information by trying to understand the motivations, causes and effects of the events;
- applying these to their own circumstances;
- processing the lessons for their own future behaviour and choices...” (2007:51-52).

The story of Abigail shows that her strategy follows the process proposed by Ofei-Aboagye after being told by Nabal’s servant about what happened between her husband and the envoys of David and the decision of David to revenge the insult. She analyses the situation and adopts humility as the right approach and as a way to counter the egocentric masculinities of both Nabal and David.

Humility is one of the virtues of Jesus Christ, the perfect human being and reconciler, who calls his disciples to imitate him: “*Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart*” (Mat. 11:29). To achieve reconciliation and peace between human beings and God, *Jesus humbled himself, became obedient to death on a cross* (Phil 2:8). One cannot expect peace where each party involved in a conflict displays arrogance and pride. One party should humble itself like Abigail to allow a dialogue to take place.

Although in the DRC women are taught from a very young age to be humble, kind and obedient, one cannot say that humility is inherent in all women, even those in the Church. The cultural humbleness imposed on women by a patriarchal society is a way of subjecting women and keep them submissive to men. True biblical humility is a virtue that needs to be nurtured, especially in the current context of the eastern Congo, where people live in rivalry and hatred. I am thus convinced that a theology of peace that can make a difference in the current situation should teach people humility. The reading of the story of Abigail shows that peace-making requires more than humility and Abigail knew it, as we turn to another virtue in this study — forgiveness.

7.5.3 Forgiveness

In her appeal to David, Abigail says, “*Please forgive your servant’s offence*” (1 Sam 25:28). This is a powerful tool in peace-building and reconciliation; in other words, forgiveness is the cornerstone upon which the entire process stands. In the DRC many people, especially women,

still bear a grudge against perpetrators of sexual violence and killing from rival communities or armed groups. Paradoxically, each community can count both victims and perpetrators since repeated actions of retaliation have taken place several times over the years of recurrent conflicts.

During the Bible study participants were divided in their views on the prerequisites to true forgiveness. There were questions like these:

Was it easy for David to forgive Nabal while he does not ask for forgiveness?

Is there any value in forgiving an arrogant person who does not mind even when he/she hurts others?

Participants understood how hard it was for David to forgive Nabal after all the insults hurled against him. It could be fair if at least Nabal himself had made an apology but it was Abigail instead who offered to take the blame upon herself. The debate was heated not because of David and Nabal but because of how to apply this lesson in the context of the participants, when it came time to draw the application of this story of Abigail to their real life.

One participant said,

I think David could forgive Nabal because I was told he was a foolish man and probably they had nothing to do with one another later. After this incident each one would go his way not to meet again. But think of us here. We meet some of these perpetrators on the street, and even in the church and they have no regret at all of what they did to women and children. What kind of forgiveness would you show to this then which will make sense? (WFG3:8 Bukavu 2009-12-05).

Another confirmed,

I do not partake in the Lord's Supper in our church because I know it is not good to have communion with people with whom you do not share the same faith. People who are known as rapists and rebels but still pretend to be full members of the Church. I would like to forgive those soldiers and rebels I do not know but those ones I keep my distance not to associate with them (WFG3:9 Bukavu 2009-12-05).

Participants knew that some of the perpetrators would never come back to ask for forgiveness. In that case people wondered how one can forgive a person who does not acknowledge his /her wrongdoing. As Christians, people are taught to forgive because if they do not forgive, God will not forgive them. This is what Christians repeat in the Lord's Prayer which is part of the ritual practiced by many congregations in the DRC. *"Forgive us ... as we have also forgiven"* (Mt.

6:12). But the daily repetition of these words does not make forgiveness easy; mainly when one remembers that in the eastern Congo people have experienced horrible conflicts causing trauma, separation, displacement and bereavement in many villages. In addition, women have been and still are being victims of brutal acts of rape and sexual assaults. Thus, people live in an environment dominated by revenge and divisions because of the multiple injustices and evils committed by and among communities.

Forgiveness in such a situation becomes a dilemma because of what Denise Ackermann (1998) describes in her article “An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”. In this article she discusses the dilemma of the Dutch Reformed Church during the South African apartheid era to bring together different racial groups at one Lord’s Table. She acknowledges that we live in a world of injustice and that human beings are unable to live together in peace: “We are a broken world, a world in crisis, an age which is difficult” (1998:14). In such a broken world, like the one in the eastern DRC, it becomes therefore difficult to live with those who behave, act or think differently: they are ‘others’. The remedy to this predicament is an ethic of true relationship and mutuality which can break the barriers of difference and otherness. She argues, “Mutuality spells forbearance, generosity, kindness, forgiveness and considerateness, virtues often neglected” (1998:18).

In Chapter Three I have discussed the different aspects of biblical peace—*shalom*. One of its strands is peace with God and peace with humans. However, there is no other way peace between the Holy God and human beings as sinners could be achieved without forgiveness. The mission of Jesus to reconcile the world with God was accomplished by his blood of forgiveness. The writer of the letter to the Ephesians (2:11-22) states that through the blood of the cross Jesus broke the barriers that existed between Jews and Gentiles and also between humankind and God to become our peace. The same principle stands if peace has to be made between rival communities in the DRC: forgiveness is required. Christians understand how difficult it is to embrace enemies with love and forgiveness despite the pain and ill-treatment they have caused in the past. But they have to do it, because it is the only way to restore peace.

The lesson that Abigail gives in this text is that without forgiveness both the victim and the perpetrator become prisoners in their difference and otherness. David had to forgive to free himself and also to free Nabal’s family. In the case of this study, people are striving toward peace

building in the Kivu region but it will not occur unless forgiveness is done, especially by those who claim to be Christians. The aim of this study goes beyond forgiving what has happened. It seeks to create a culture of peace that will prevent those communities that live together from continuing to fight and to kill one another in the future. That is why it is important to set a solid basis upon which the decision of not waging war and the guarantee of a bright future should rest. This is a crucial matter in a region where conflict and genocide are a recurrent phenomenon. The story of Abigail proposes other important ingredients in this regard; namely, to avoid the guilt of shedding blood and avenging oneself. Although these two can be linked together, in this study I will discuss them separately.

7.5.4 Refrain from shedding human blood

It is known by most of the people involved in ethnic conflicts in the DRC that God's commandment asks them not to kill one another. However, in time of conflict this commandment and many others that seem to be prohibitive are interpreted differently in order to waive their application. There are other ethical considerations, such as self-defence, the protection of the family in time of danger, that are used to mitigate the clear prohibition of killing; creating in this way ambiguity in the mind of Christians. As Ackermann says, "when the other is a threat the strategy is to separate people and then, increasingly, to dominate and to demonise them" (1998:15). The last action is mostly used in tribal or ethnic conflicts in the DRC, to demonize others who are a threat and then label them with names that strip them of their humanity; they become beasts, insects or any other object. Once this dehumanization is established, people kill the 'other' without regret. The question that this study poses is: Can a Christian kill and be at peace with his/her soul or spirit?

The story of Abigail becomes a challenge to those who claim to be God's servants but kill others. The attention of the reader of this text is drawn to the dialogue between David and Abigail as a reminder of why a servant of God should not kill." *The Lord has kept you from bloodshed* (v.26)... *Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live* (v.28). Abigail goes on with her argument and says, *my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed* (25: 31). And David agrees that it is true, *May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day* (v.33).

The author of the text has put the answer to the above question in the mouth of Abigail as she attests that no matter the motivation that leads a servant of God to kill another person, it is wrongdoing and the perpetrator shall live with a conscience burdened by the guilt of bloodshed, which can be removed only through repentance and forgiveness. In Chapter Three I stated that biblical peace also implies having a good relationship with oneself, also called inner peace or peace of mind. When a person has a conscience burdened by bloodshed, he/she will lose inner peace. The lack of inner peace creates bad feelings such as fear and anxiety leading to panic attacks (Anderson and Miller 2000; and Williams et al. 2000). It is therefore difficult to envisage peace-building in the DRC without addressing the lack of inner peace among Christians for participating in one way or another in the killing that is being done in the region.

The most interesting part of this discussion came when people spoke about different forms of killing. Although some women have actually participated in the torture and genocide that is taking place among communities in the region, many could testify that they had never physically taken up any weapon to kill a person. However the participants pointed out that there are other forms of killing in which women have been very active that should be avoided as well. The fact is that women keep alive whatever ill-treatment they face and express overtly their desire for punitive justice and revenge; those memories become an incentive for men and boys to commit violence. Moreover, women are the custodians of African cultures and primarily responsible of the education of their children. In this way they transmit ideas of ethnic superiority, nationalism, hatred of other ethnic groups and many other negative values which have an impact on future generations. As discussed earlier, when there is no forgiveness, one should expect that an unforgiving spirit will continue to spread memories and aspirations that perpetuate tribal conflicts and genocide. Cynthia Adcock has the right words to express the influence of women upon children as she argues:

In most of human history, the original authority of the mother was reinforced throughout the formative years by primarily female teachers, nurses, nuns, housekeepers, babysitters, etc. The felt authority in a child's life was mostly female, unlike the remote male authorities such as Daddy, Santa Claus, the policeman, the president, and the masculine God (1982:215).

Childhood, according to Adcock, starts under mother's influence; therefore male sexism and militarism originate from women's original authority. However, true discipleship can help

mothers to shape positively the behaviour of children. One mother, when discussing the lack of discipleship, expressed the regret of those mothers who would like to teach their children Christian morals and values but because of the economic crisis, they spend all their time selling on the street to feed their families. It is a fact that is recognized worldwide that women are capable of shaping the history of individuals, communities or nations for good. In the New Testament, Timothy's faith and good conduct is attributed to the influence and teaching of his grandmother and mother. Still alive in our memory is the story of women in Liberia who, regardless of their tribal or religious affiliations, stood together to protest against the shedding of innocent blood by rebel factions. They were the initiators of the new revolution that is changing the face of Liberia and other African countries, now spear-headed by their female President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Participants in the Bible study acknowledged that theology is hardly associated with their current action. It is thus the aim of this study to underscore that understanding that refusing to bear a burdened conscience of bloodshed can make a substantive progress toward peace-building in the region. Linked to shedding blood is the desire for revenge.

7.5.5 Refraining from avenging oneself

Another reminder Abigail makes to David in the text, is not to take justice into his own hands. *"The Lord has kept you from...avenging yourself with your own hands"* (25:26); and she pursues her argument by saying, *"My master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of... having avenged himself (v.31)*. And the acknowledgment of David is that, *May you be blessed for keeping me from... avenging myself with my own hands (v.33)*.

Abigail reminded David of the law from the book of Deuteronomy 32:34, where God commands the Israelites not to avenge themselves. The idea is not only to avoid the guilt of bloodshed but also that there is a promise attached to this commandment: if one leaves vengeance in the hands of God, Yahweh will repay, he will avenge his people. The argument of Abigail is that if David refrains from avenging himself with his own hands, God will deal with his enemies. *But the lives of your enemies he (God) will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling (v.29)*. By evoking these promises at this point, the author of the book of 1 Samuel would like to anticipate the end of the story that was not included in this Bible study in order to keep it narrow and focused. In the end, Nabal suffered a heart attack after this event and died thereafter. This is a good illustration of why the servants of God should not take into their hands what God can do for them. David had

good reason to bless God and thank Abigail when he heard that Nabal passed away without him being involved in his murder.

For Christians, biblical teachings about not avenging themselves and God's reward to that action, are clear. Some have probably heard sermons preached on these texts or those who are used to having personal devotions, might have read them on their own. The writer of Romans is adamant on this issue: *Do not repay any evil for evil....Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord* (Rom 12:17,19).

However, certain circumstances make it difficult to apply Christian principles. The temptation of avenging oneself is strong, objected many participants, because of the situation in the country. How would one stop an enraged community, knowing that not all of them are Christians, when they are being attacked by neighbouring communities who plunder, kill and rape? On the other hand, there has been no responsible government, for many years, able to take action and punish the wrongdoers. In fact women in the eastern Congo have become suspicious of any man in their way, because sexual assaults and rape against women and girls are perpetrated by everybody: national police and army, rebel groups, fellow citizens and even UN peacekeepers. Perpetrators of these atrocities are not even tried, because the fabric of the judiciary system does not function. Until such a time when peace and justice will be restored, people would be tempted to take justice into their own hands. But now the problem is how Christians comply with biblical teachings in such a situation.

The lesson to be learned from this Bible study is a challenge to the prevailing practice. Participants are aware that revenge has not brought peace to the region; instead acts of revenge are spiralled into a circle of violence that has imprisoned communities to date. Unless an alternative is found, there is no way out. The story of Abigail reminds people of the old remedy which is still efficient today: do not avenge yourself, leave it in the hands of God. The conflict in the DRC can quickly dwindle if those who claim to be Christians among the population decide to live up to this biblical principle. Hence, establishing durable peace in the DRC can shortly become a reality.

Taking into account the pertinence of the above elements, drawn from the story of Abigail, I will now attempt to formulate a definition of a theology of peace.

7.6 Defining a Theology of Peace

In Chapter Three I have discussed the essence of a theology of peace which is, according to John Dear (1994:15), the search for God's way to transform the world's violence into nonviolence. God calls human beings to participate in this transformation in order to make our earth a peaceful habitation for all. This is the call that Christians in the DRC need to respond to, if they want to change the current situation of conflict and misery. I have shown in Chapter Three that the peace that comes from God is more than the cessation of war because it encompasses the wholeness and well-being of the entire creation and good relationships between humans, nature, and God. The findings of my fieldwork (interviews and contextual Bible studies) discussed in the previous sections of this chapter show that despite the profound wounds that have affected the communities who experienced the atrocities of war and conflict in the DRC, people long for peace. Furthermore, participants in the Bible study have expressed their desire to imitate Abigail as their action plan and to start working towards building a durable peace for future generations.

The story of Abigail has given us a hint on what it takes to be a peacemaker. The story upholds avoiding the sin of avenging oneself and of blood-guilt, valuing life, humility and forgiveness. This takes courage, boldness and even the challenging of hierarchical structures in the community, just as Abigail did. A theology of peace should embrace all these ethical values drawn from the Bible study and embedded in the Christian faith. This study suggests that a better way to make these values known to women targeted by this study and for them to become part of their daily lives is to include them in a form of a statement of faith or creed that should be read or sung as often as possible during the meetings of *la Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* at local, regional and national levels. The aim of this undertaking is that the thrust for peace kindled by Christian women of the Federation will influence other members of the church and slowly infiltrate the community at large.

The creed that I have compiled from all the data collected during my field research captures well the essence of the commitment Christian women in the DRC should make in order to achieve this goal. It reads as follows:

As God's servant I believe that,

- i. God calls both men and women to be bold and courageous agents of peace-building in a world of violence;

- ii. It is my responsibility to promote justice and peace for the entire creation;
- iii. Human life is precious and should not be destroyed by any means;
- iv. God will hold accountable any person who sheds the blood of or commits acts of violence against another person;
- v. God is the avenger of God's people therefore it is a sin to avenge oneself;
- vi. Just as God has forgiven us in Christ, we should forgive one another, including those who have hurt us the most;
- vii. God honours humble peacemakers but opposes arrogant trouble-makers.

I believe that this form of recital meets the needs of those women at the grassroots level who have expressed the desire of being reminded of what Christian values they have to keep and promote during this time of conflict and the violation of human rights. At the grassroots level women learn through songs or play. My wish is that this creed becomes a song that women and men will be singing in their meetings. By so doing, they not only confess their faith or theology but also affirm their determination to make a difference. One cannot underestimate the power of slogans or mottos that politicians and some congregations in the DRC have used for many years to rally the masses behind their causes and ideals.

7.7 Conclusion

As I close this chapter, I have reached the point of this study by discussing the role of theology in peace-building. I have shared the views of respondents collected during the interviews, who think that Christians could make a difference in handling the situation, mainly conflicts that involve local communities. But, in spite of the majority of the population claiming to be Christians, they do not display Christian ethics and values when they participate in the fighting. The failure to live out one's faith is attributed to three major factors, namely: strong tribal or ethnic ties, the plurality of Christian denominations and the lack of discipleship.

On tribal or ethnic ties, respondents said that when conflicts occur many Christians side with members of their ethnic groups and participate in any violence they do, as a sign of their loyalty to their group instead of acting as Christians. The reason is people are ready to forsake their Christian faith in order to keep their tribal identity. Secondly, respondents pointed out the diversity of the message or teachings the communities receive from their different denominations, which makes it difficult to form a body of Christians. What one local church teaches is sometimes challenged, even rejected, by another Christian church in the same community. Finally, people found a culprit in the lack of steady and consistent teaching of the Christian message which links theory and practice. There is a weakness in the teaching of God's principles, the more so with those who are in charge of teaching the Gospel: they do not live according to those principles. Therefore people, especially women, seem to be hungry for practical teachings that address their real lives, which explain the good memories of the Tamar Campaign that many participants keep.

To fill the gap, this research has conducted a contextual Bible study on the story of Abigail which was well received and from which many applications to peace-building discussed in this chapter were drawn.

From the story of Abigail, women have learned that it takes courage and boldness for a woman to rise up to the challenge of restoring peace in a situation of conflict. This may require at certain times a challenge to the hierarchical systems in the community or the church that hinder the implementation of peace processes. The story of Abigail provides Christian values that are crucial for peace-building. These include forgiveness, humility, valuing life, refraining from shedding blood and avenging oneself. Finally, using values drawn from the story of Abigail as a framework, I have set up a statement in the form of a creed which captures the vital elements of a theology of peace that Christian women can use in their meetings as a confession and affirmation of what they want to achieve — to become agents of peace-building in the DRC.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This study has now reached its end as I review the journey that aimed at defining, from a woman's perspective, an appropriate theology of peace, which could enable Christian women to contribute towards creating a sustainable and durable peace in the DRC. The study was carried out using qualitative research, which included written materials, in-depth interviews, and a contextual Bible study on Abigail's story in 1 Samuel 25:1-35, conducted with women's focus groups. To present this conclusion in an orderly manner I have organized this chapter in the following three sections. The first section summarizes each chapter as a separate unit but also shows its connection to the rest of the study. Each chapter was intended to achieve a certain objective within the overall final goal of the study. The second section discusses areas for further research to be done according to the limitations of this study and the gaps that were identified during this investigation. The last section serves as the general conclusion to the entire work and its findings, demonstrating how this study has achieved the aim defined at the beginning of this journey.

8.2 Summary

Chapter One was a general introduction to the entire study. It discussed the rationale behind this research, its historical and social backgrounds as well as the objectives to be achieved through this study. The chapter defined the two theoretical frameworks, namely: peace-building theory and feminist ecclesiology. It also introduced the different methodologies used to collect data which were developed in Chapter Four. The chapter set the stage for the process which leads to answering the question, what contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the Kivu region of DRC?

Chapter Two explored the situation of political unrest, civil wars and ethnic conflicts in the DRC especially, during the current war in the eastern DRC and its aftermaths. The chapter surveyed the misfortune of women in different epochs of the history of the country, from the Belgian

colonial era through the long dictatorial reign of the President Mobutu Sese Seko, until the current Congolese/African War. It demonstrated that women were easy prey when the army of the colonisers made punitive expeditions in rural areas; they became the objects of sexual pleasures for the dignitaries of the Mobutu regime and are now facing sexual atrocities and the violation of human rights from all armed groups operating in the current Congolese/African War, including from civilians. It noted that the current war which broke out in 1996 has already claimed more than five million deaths and an increasing number of survivors of rape and other assaults. The chapter concluded that unless durable peace is restored in the country women at the grassroots level will continue to bear the consequences of abject atrocities from dangerous masculinity.

Chapter Three explored various theories of peace in order to understand God's perspective on peace. This chapter is important to this study because biblical peace is one of the theoretical frameworks that guided this research. In addition, this study is intended to cast a theology of peace that may appropriately address the prevailing situation of conflict in the DRC. The discussion included the concept of a theology of peace and a number of meanings attached to it, a feminist perspective of peace and the pacifism theory as championed by the historic peace churches. Other alternative theories, such as just war and just peace-making, were also examined in this survey. In its conclusion the chapter attested that biblical peace constitutes the basis upon which women should lay their actions in order to prevent violence and cultivate a culture of sustainable peace in the DRC.

Chapter Four looked at feminist ecclesiology in the wider movement of feminist theology, especially African Women Theology. Feminist ecclesiology is not only a second theoretical framework to this study; it also provides tools that could empower women in the DRC to challenge the status quo and to participate actively in the social transformation of society. It discussed how women should learn to resist cultural practices and patriarchal traditions in the community and in church which serve to inhibit women from participating actively in bringing change. The chapter confirmed that Christian women in Africa are creating a space in the church where they can share their experience and participate in building the body of Christ in spite of being excluded from leadership positions in many churches.

Chapter Five was a further examination of the methodology adopted in this study to collect and analyse data. The chapter looked at all the techniques involved in the entire process; going from sampling to the collection and analysis of data. It recapitulated the different methods in order to substantiate and justify the use of each of them. It demonstrated that an eclectic methodology constituted of written documents, in-depth interviews with various actors in the region and a contextual bible study with women from a number of selected denominations was important in order to understand fully the social phenomenon behind conflicts in the DRC.

Chapter Six was the application of the above methodology as it brought together the findings of the analysis of data collected during the fieldwork. The aim of the chapter was to present the views of the respondents on issues that would lead this study to answer the research question. The resources from this analysis were grouped into themes: mainly, the role of the church in peace-building; women's involvement in peace-building and the challenges experienced by women. These resources have revealed that the church in the DRC has the potential to influence the situation of conflict in the region but internal divisions and lack of commitment to stand by Christian principles, among other weaknesses, have hampered its effort toward restoring peace. It has also demonstrated that women are not fully engaged in the peace process although they constitute a strong support system to survivors of violence in the region. To be efficient in their undertaking women need to overcome the exclusion, lack of education and incompetent leadership.

Chapter Seven is the continuation of the previous chapter, bringing the analysis of data to its completion. The chapter addressed the theme of a theology of peace as it emerged from a number of interviews, but mostly from the contextual Bible study. It has shown the difficulty that many Christians had to articulate a biblical foundation of their actions in addressing the issue of conflicts in society. The contextual Bible study has helped participants to appreciate female agency in making peace and also the role of the understanding of biblical principles in the discourse of peace. The contextual Bible study inspired participants who expressed the determination to join actions to words in their endeavour to bring change to their situation. As a result, the contextual Bible study provided Christian values that are the indispensable components of a theology of peace that can cut across all cultures and ethnic groups in order to restore durable peace to the DRC.

Chapter Eight now concludes the study by providing a summary of chapters and suggests a number of areas for further research and studies to fill the gaps identified in this study. It brings the entire study to its end by showing how the research question has been answered by this study.

8.3 Theological Conclusions

At the beginning of this study I indicated that the ongoing conflict in the DRC with its record of rape and the violation of human rights was the major motivation behind this research. I was particularly moved by the misery of women at the grassroots level who would like to live in peace with their neighbours for mutual support and were trading to earn a living, but were caught up in a circle of violence and abuse. Many of them had lost their husbands, children and relatives and a number of them were survivors of rape, together with their daughters. Since the majority of the population claim to be Christians (the DRC counts 70-80% of the population to be Christians), this study aimed at finding a driving force in their faith or belief that could enable Christian women to be involved in the process of peace-building, which is being negotiated among various actors in the country and internationally.

From a feminist perspective this study intended to answer the question: what contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the DRC? To unravel this question the study progressed step by step guided by a set of sub-questions defined in the first chapter. As I conclude this study, I would like to assess my inquiry by replying to those questions.

What is the theology of peace?

This study argued in Chapter Three that the theology of peace is a concept full of meaning which goes beyond the cessation of war. Based on the biblical terms for peace, *shalom* (Hebrew) and *eirene* (Greek), a theology of peace encompasses wellbeing, wellness and wholeness and being at peace with God, nature, other human beings and with oneself. In this study I have explored various ways of achieving biblical peace. This ranges from the historic peace churches with total pacifism, promoting non-participation in any form of violence including enrolment in the army, to moderate advocates for just war or just peace-making. Special attention was given to the feminist perspective on peace as it challenges patriarchal cultures of violence by promoting

equality and life-sustaining initiatives. Without overlooking any of the above ways of restoring peace in the DRC, the feminist approach is crucial since the war in the DRC is characterized by unprecedented sexual assaults against women and girls.

What does peace-building in the context of the eastern region of Congo entail?

The current conflict in the DRC is a very complex situation due to its multiple causes and an eclectic number of actors involved in it. This situation includes inter-tribal clashes, various local armed groups pursuing different agendas, war for minerals and the conflicts from neighbouring countries. That is why bringing peace in the DRC has been unsuccessful to date despite several peace-talks organized by African and international mediators, as well as the presence of a huge contingent of UN peacekeepers. The focus in this study has been put on local conflicts in which women at the grassroots level can make a significant difference. Peace between belligerent ethnic groups or tribes will have a demotivating impact on all other conflicts in the country, including external invasions.

Why should women be involved in peace-building? What kind of influence do Christian women have in the church and the society of the DRC?

These two questions can be dealt with together because they offer the opportunity to justify why this study has preferred to work with women. Since this study has been dealing with using women's fellowships as an ecumenical body of the *Eglise du Christ au Congo*, the National Council, it has demonstrated the important role played by the department of women in the Council. From the perspective of feminist ecclesiology, Christian women constitute the church by their number and the variety of activities they organize to sustain the church. This is an undeniable reality in all the churches, and more so in the DRC where the FFP is the backbone of the ECC.

On the other hand, one should not forget about women while seeking peace because women in the DRC have borne the consequences of the war more than men. Many of them have been struggling to raise their families alone, after having lost their husbands in the conflict. Women have been taking care of the elderly and the sick as well as other victims of violence during the

conflict. In the Kivu region a great number of women are survivors of rape. They would be therefore the first beneficiaries of peace should it become a reality one day.

It is important to underscore that the contextual Bible study has shown that as far as making peace is concerned, women have what it takes to reconcile enemies. The story of Abigail is not utopian, but there are women in the community able to do plead with the enemies for the cessation of hostility.

What strategies should women use to instil a theology of peace in their communities?

Building on what was discussed in Chapter Three about a theology of peace, this study has drawn important biblical values that need to be applied from the insights shared by participants in the contextual Bible study. It was argued that among the prerequisites to a theology of peace should be justice, avoiding the sin of avenging oneself and blood-guilt, valuing life, humility and forgiveness. This takes courage and boldness to challenge hierarchical structures in the community just as Abigail did. When these ethical or biblical values are displayed by peacemakers they end up by breaking resistance and arrogance in the heart of the opponent and by opening the door to reconciliation and mutual respect. This study has proposed that women should regularly recite the biblical values conducive to peace-making in the form of a creed and act upon these values in whatever they do.

What lesson can the church in the DRC learn from the results of this study?

There is much that can be learned from this study because it has made substantial contributions to the peace process in the DRC and to the scholarship at large.

This study has shown that religion, in this case theology, plays a vital role in the process of peace-building so that it should not be overlooked by those who design schemes for peacemaking. More than any socio-political or humanitarian reason, religion is a motivating factor that can lead people to confront perpetrators of violence with determination and wisdom, as Abigail did.

Another insight from this study is that women are key players in the process of making peace so that they should be called in numbers to participate in peace-talks to let their voices be heard and

be taken into consideration. They are not there to make up a quorum but are able to bring solutions where male counterparts have failed, as in the story of Abigail.

This study has enforced the significance of contextual Bible study to shape the mind and heart to motivate participants to action mainly among Christians at the grassroots level who do not have a theological education. They discover deep realities in biblical texts and, if well guided by appropriate questions, they draw action plans that they could carry out for the transformation of the society. The study of the story of Abigail has revealed the power of women's agency in peace-building.

In conclusion what answer has this study provided to the question, what contribution can Christian women make to foster a theology of peace in order to build sustainable peace in the DRC? First, Christian women should rise up and be aware that the church in the DRC and people who have endured much pain and suffering look for someone who can fix the pieces of broken peace caused by male arrogance and hegemony. Second, women should equip themselves with a theology based on the Christian core values of forgiveness, humility, justice, refraining from bloodshed and refusing to avenge oneself - in order to challenge the 70 - 80% of those who pretend to be Christians and yet are involved in killing, looting and raping women. Third, women, as the custodians of culture, should teach these values to their children in order to bring up a future generation free of violence so that sustainable peace in the DRC may be possible.

8.4 Further Research

From its inception this study was designed to cover a limited scope of the phenomenon of conflict and of ways of restoring peace through the agency of Christian women, members of *la Federation des Femmes Protestantes*. Moreover, during the investigation, this study has also revealed areas that require further research. In this section I mention a few, as part of my commitment to pursue this inquiry as an area of postdoctoral research or a project on its own which will continue empowering women for peace-building.

One suggestion that emerged from the contextual Bible study was that people need the story of Abigail to be taught regularly and expanded to a wider circle of Christian women in the entire country and even beyond. From the viewpoint of many participants this contextual Bible study

can become a complement to the Tamar Campaign as it leads women who have learnt to speak out about abuse and to resist dangerous masculinity, to become agents of the process of peace-making. By so doing, Christian women would be equipped to contribute to the transformation of the situation in their milieu.

The above request requires a deepening of the contextual Bible study on Abigail. It is important to establish a network of biblical scholars to provide expertise in working with biblical texts so that this preliminary work may be polished. More insights and analysis that take into account different hermeneutical approaches are needed to get a better understanding of the text. I am currently thinking of how to integrate the last section of the text (1 Samuel 25:36-44), which recounts the death of Nabal followed by David marrying Abigail, into a more comprehensive Bible study for a broader application.

Another area that needs further investigation is to use the action plan of the current contextual Bible study to include women from assemblies and denominations which are not affiliated to the ECC, as well as those who are not believers. Although they may not all attend a Bible study, women in the DRC are able to back up the movement because they share the same experience of violence, both inside and outside of their homes. It is therefore crucial that many women, regardless of their affiliation or faith, act as one body for change. When women in the country speak with one voice, they can challenge the abuses, discrimination and marginalization which they face in patriarchal societies. Once further research is set in motion, one can expect scholars interested in this topic to join hands and broaden the study.

Bibliography

- Abbey, Rose Teteki. 2001. "Rediscovering Ataa Naa Nyonmo-The Father-Mother God," in Njoroge, N. and Musa W Dube, eds. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, 140-159. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Ackermann, Denise. 1998. "Becoming Fully Human: An Ethic of Relationship and Otherness." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. 102 (November), 13-27.
- Adcock, Cynthia. 1982. "Fear of 'Other': The Common Root of Sexism and Militarism." In: Pam McAllister. ed. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, 209-219. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Akintunde, Dorcas Olubande. 2005. "Partnership and the Exercise of Power in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria," in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, 80-95. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Ammba, Mike Benedi Sudi. 2008. *How to Build a Lasting Peace in DRC: Make a Five Million History*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.
- Anderson, Neil T, and Miller, Rich. 2000. *Freedom From Fear: Overcoming Worry and Anxiety*. Vereeniging, SA: Christian Art Publishers.
- Ascherson, Neal. 1999. *The King Incorporated: Leopold the Second and the Congo*. London: Granta Books,
- Autesserre, Séverine. 2007. "D.R Congo: Explaining Peace Building Failures 2003-2006." *Review of African Political Economy*. Vol. 34, issue 113, 423-441.
- Bainton, Roland H. 1960. *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation*. Nashville: Abington.
- Bam, Brigalia. 1991. "Seizing the Moment: Women and the New South Africa," in Denise Ackermann et al, eds. *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*, 363-368. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- _____. 2005. "Women and the Church in (South) Africa: Women are the Church in (South) Africa. In Isabel Apawo Phiri and S. Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, 8-15. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Bikmore, Katy. 1982. "Feminism and Peace: The Issues We Work On". In Pam McAllister, ed. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, 162-164. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publisher.

- Bouma-Prediger, Steven. 2001. *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Brock-Utne, Birgit. 1989. *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Bryman, Alan. 2008. *Social Research Methods*, Third edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Case-Winters, Anna. 2007. *Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature: Down to Earth*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Cejka, Mary Ann and Bamat, Thomas. (eds.), 2003. *Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Clifford, Anne M. 2005. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Cochrane, Renate. 1991. "Equal Discipleship of Women and Men: Reading the New Testament from a Feminist Perspective," in Denise Ackermann et al, eds. *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church In Southern Africa*, 21-36. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Communauté Méthodiste Libre au Congo 2012. "Minutes of the General Conference of the Free Methodist Church in Congo" held in Bukavu 20-24 November 2012.
- Culver, Robert Duncan. 1985. *The Peace-Mongers: A Biblical Answer to Pacifism and Nuclear Disarmament*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Daly, Mary. 1973. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press.
- _____ 1996. "The Looking Glass Society" in Ann Loades (ed.) *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, 189-194. London: SPCK.
- Daneel, Marthinus L. 1999. *African Earthkeepers: Environmental Mission and Liberation in Christian Perspective*. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Dear, John. 1994. *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- De Gruchy, Steve. 2009. "Reflection on the Methodology of Vital Theology." Unpublished paper, School of Religion and Theology. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Deifelt, Wanda. 2003 "The Recovery of the Body: Jesus in a Feminist and Latin-American Perspective," in Sturla J Stålsett, ed. *Discovering Jesus in Our Place: Contextual Christologies in a Globalised World*, 24-44. Delhi: ISPCK.

- Desjardins, Michel. 1997. *Peace, Violence and the New Testament*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- De Vos, AS, Strydom H, Fouche CB and Delport CSL. 2011. *Research at Grassroots: For the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. Fourth edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Dinkler, Erich 1992. "Eirene—The Early Christian Concept of Peace," in Perry B Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 164-212. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Dlamini, Olga Thobile 1999. "Wrestling With the Church: Called by God To Be a Woman Minister." *Journal of Constructive Theology* Vol. 5, no 1 (1999), 49-70.
- Duchrow, Ulrich & Liedke, Gerhard. 1987. *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace*. Geneva: WCC Publication.
- Durnbaugh, Donald F and Charles W. Brokwell, Jr. 1994. "The Historic Peace Churches: From Sectarian Origins to Ecumenical Witness," in Marlin E. Miller and Barbara Nelson Gingerich, eds. *The Church's Peace Witness*, 182-195. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Durrheim, Kevin. 2006. "Research Design." In: M.T. Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter, eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*, 33-59. Second edition. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Eagle, Gill; Hayes, Grahame and Sibanda, Thabane. 2006 "Standpoint Methodologies: Marxist, Feminist, and Black Scholarship Perspectives" in: MT Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter, eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for Social Sciences*, 499-522. Second edition, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Estep, William R. 2006. *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Fatuma, Ngongo Kilongo. 2009. *Femme et Paix dans la ville de Bukavu de 1996 à 2006 : Réflexion Théologique*. Kinshasa : Editions de l'Université Protestante au Congo.
- Ferris, Elizabeth G. 1996. "Women as Peacemakers," in A. Gnanadason, M. Kanyoro and L.A McSpadden, eds. *Women Violence and Non-violent Change*, 2-28, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications.
- Fouché, C.B and Schurink, W. 2008. "Qualitative Research Designs," in: A.S de Vos et al, eds. *Research at Grassroots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 307-327. Fourth Edition, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers,

- Frankemölle, Hubert. 1992. "Peace and the Sword in the New Testament," in Perry B Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 213-233. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Free Methodist Church 1999. *Book of Discipline*. Indianapolis: The Free Methodist Publishing House.
- Gebara, Ivone 1994. "Women Doing Theology in Latin America," in Ursula King (Ed). *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, 47-59 .London: SPCK.
- Gnanadason, Aruna; Kanyoro, Musimbi and McSpadden, Lucia, eds. 1996. *Women, Violence and Non-Violent Change*. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Grassi, Joseph A. 2006. *Jesus is Shalom: A Vision of Peace from the Gospel*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press. Google book.
- Gwyn, Douglas; Hunsinger, George; Roop, Eugene F; and Yoder, John Howard, eds. 1991. *A Declaration on Peace: In God's people the World's Renewal Has Begun*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Hendrickx, Herman 1986. *A Time For Peace: Reflection of the Meaning of Peace and Violence in the Bible*. London: SPCK.
- Hochschild, Adam 1999. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. London: MacMillan.
- House, Arthur. H. 1978. *The U.N. in The Congo: The Political and Civilian Efforts*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María 1994. "The Task of Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology—Mujeritas: Who We Are and What We Are About," in Ursula King, ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, 88-102. London: SPCK.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada-María and Tarango, Yolanda. 1992. *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Joseph, Richard 1999. "The Reconfiguration of Power in Late Twentieth Century Africa" in Richard Joseph, ed, *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, 57-79. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Kadima, Denis and Kabemba, Claude 2000. *Whither Regional Peace and Security: The Democratic Republic of Congo after War*. Pretoria: African Institute of South Africa.

- Kanjee, Anil. 2006. "Assessment research," in: MT Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter, eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for Social Sciences*, 476-498. Second edition, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi 1996. "African Women's Quest for Justice: A Review of African Women's Theology." *Journal of Constructive Theology*. Vol.2, No 2 (1996), 5.
- _____. 2001. Engendered Communal Theology: Women's contribution to Theology in the 21st Century. In Nyambura J Njoroge and Musa W. Dube, eds. *Thalitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, 158-180. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- _____. 2002. *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics: An African Perspective*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Kanza, Thomas. 1972. *Conflict in the Congo: Rise and Fall of Lumumba*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Katongole, Emmanuel. 2011. *The Sacrifice: A Political Theology for Africa*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Kelly, Kevin. 2006a. "Call it a Day: Reaching Conclusions in Qualitative Research," in MT Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter (eds). *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for Social Sciences*, 370-386. Second edition, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- _____. 2006b. "From Encounter to Text: Collecting Data in Qualitative Research," in: MT Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter (eds). *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for Social Sciences*, 285-319. Second edition, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- King, Ursula. 1994. "Women in Dialogue: A New Vision of Ecumenism" in Ursula King, ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, 275-279. London: SPCK.
- Kinoti, Hannah Wangeci. 2010. *African Ethics: Gikuyu Traditional Morality*. Amsterdam: Radopi B.V.
- Klaassen, Walter 2001. *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*, 3rd edition. North Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press.
- Kokopeli, Bruce and Lakey, George. 1982 "More Power Than Want: Masculine Sexuality and Violence," in Pam McAllister (ed), *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, 231-240. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Kremer, Gregory Jacob 1992. "Peace-God's Gift: Biblical-Theological Considerations," in Perry B Yoder and Williams M Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 133-147. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

- Kretzschmar, Louise 1991. "The Relevance of Feminist Theology Within the South African Context," in Denise Ackermann et.al, eds. *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*, 106-121. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications,.
- Kubai, Anne 2005. "Being Church in Post-Genocide, Rwanda: The Challenge of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, 96-126. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Labeodan, Kunbi. 2007. "Are Women their Own Enemies?," in M .A. Oduyoye (ed). *Women in Religion and Culture: Essays in Honour of Constance Buchanan*, 112-127. Ibadan: Sefer Books.
- Landman, Christina. 1999. "African Women's Theology," in Simon Maimela and Adrio König eds. *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics*, 137-140. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Lemarchand, René 2009. *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Loades, Ann, ed. 1990. *Feminist Theology: A reader*. London: SPCK.
- Longwe, Molly. 2013. "A Paradox in a Theology of Freedom and Equality: The Experiences of Pastors' Wives (Amayi Busa) in the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA)." PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Luz, Ulrich. 1992. "The Significance of Biblical Witness for Church Peace Action," in Perry B Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 234-253. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Macdonald, Sharon; Holder, Pat and Ardner, Shirley, eds. 1987. *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives*. London: MacMillan Education.
- Madge, John 1965. *The Tools of Social Science*. London: Longmans.
- Marshall, Catherine and Rosman, Gretchen B. 2011, *Designing Qualitative Research*. Fifth edition. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Masenya, Madipoane 2005. "The Sword that Heals! The Bible and African Women in African-South African Pentecostal Churches," in Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, 47-59. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Mausser, Ulrich 1992. *The Gospel of Peace: A Scriptural Message for Today's World*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

- May, Melanie 1997. *Women and the Church: the Challenge of Ecumenical Solidarity in an Age of Alienation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mbuy Beya, Bernadette 2001 “Women in the Church in Africa: Possibilities for Presence and Promises,” in Nyambura Njoroge and Musa Dube, eds. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*, 183-198. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- McAllister, Pam, ed. 1982. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Meyer, Art & Meyer, Jocene 1991. *Earthkeepers: Environmental Perspectives on Hunger, Poverty and Injustice*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Miller, Marlin E and Gingerich, Barbara Nelson, eds. 2000. *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contribution to International Peacebuilding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moyo, Fulata 2005. “When the Telling Itself is a Taboo: The Phoebe Practice,” in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *On Being Church: African Women’s Voices and Visions*, 184-200. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Mpumlwana, Thoko, 1991. “My Perspective on Women and their Role in Church and Society,” in Denise Ackermann, Jonathan A. Draper and Emma Mashini, eds. *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*. 369-385. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Mthembu, Msinga 1996 “Elements of Grassroots Theology in the South African Context” *Journal of Constructive Theology*. Vol. 2, No.2 (1996), 61-84.
- Muriithi, Sicily Mbura. 2008. “Vulnerability and Capability in Kenya: Towards an African Women’s Public Theology.” PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Murove, Munyaradzi, ed. 2009. *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Murove, Munyaradzi. 2011. *African Moral Consciousness: An Inquiry into the Evolution of Prospects and Perspectives*. Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Nasimuye-Wasike, Anne. 1992. “Christology and an African Woman’s Experience,” in Robert J Schreiter, ed. *Faces of Africa*, 70-83. London: SCM Press.
- Nest, Michael 2006. *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Economic Dimensions of War and Peace*. London: Lynner Rienner Publishers.
- Nkashama, Pius Ngandu 1995. *Citadelle d’Espoir*. Paris: L’Harmattan.

- Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. 2002. *The Congo From Leopold II to Kabila: A People's History*. London: Zeds Books.
- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba 1996. "Spirituality of Resistance and Reconstruction," in M J Mananzan, M A Oduyoye, E Tamez, J S Clarkson, M C Gray and L M Russell, eds. *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, 161-171. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- _____. 2001. *Introducing African Women's Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Ofei-Aboagye, Esther O. 2007. "Women's Wisdom and the Challenge of Religion in Africa," in M .A. Oduyoye, ed. *Women in Religion and Culture: Essays in Honour of Constance Buchanan*. 48-76. Ibadan: Sefer Books.
- Perera, Marlene 1996. "Militarism: A Thrust Towards Globalization," in M J Mananzan, M A Oduyoye, E Tamez, J S Clarkson, M C Gray and L M Russell, eds. *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, 109-118. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo. 2005. "Peace-making and Reconciliation: The Contribution of African Indigenous Religious Women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 123 (November 2005), 84-92.
- _____. and Nadar, Sarojini. eds. 2006a. *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- _____. and Nadar, Sarojini. 2006b. "What's in a name? – Forging a Theoretical Framework for African Women's Theologies." *Journal of Constructive Theology: Gender, Religion and Theology in Africa*. Vol. 12 no. 2 (2006), 5-24.
- Prunier, Gerard. 2009. *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwanda Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pui-lan, Kwok. 1994. "The Future of Feminist Theology: An Asian Perspective," in Ursula King, ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, 63-76. London: SPCK.
- Rakoczy, Susan 2004. *In her name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications
- _____. 2006. "Women and Peacemaking: The Challenge of Non-Violent Life" in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, eds. *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*, 187-207. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Reardon, Betty A. 1993. *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security*. New York: State University of New York.

- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. London: SCM Press.
- _____. 1996. "Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy" in Ann Loades, ed. *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, 138-148. London: SPCK.
- Russell, Letty M. 1993. *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*. Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster/ John Knox Press.
- _____. 1996. "God Housekeeping" in Ann Loades, ed. *Feminist Theology: A Reader* 225-238. London: SPCK.
- Ruth-Heffelbower, Duane 1991. *The Anabaptists Are Back: Making Peace in a Dangerous World*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.
- Rutikanga, Bernard Noel. 2003. "Struggle for Healing at the Grassroots," in Mary Ann Cejka and Thomas Bamat (eds), *Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities*, 132-165. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Sampson, Cynthia and Lederach, John Paul, eds. 2000. *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contribution to International Peacebuilding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schottroff, Luise. 1992. "The Dual Concept of Peace," in Perry B Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 156-163. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Schurink W, Fouché CB, and De Vos AS, 2011. "Qualitative Data Analysis and Interpretation," in A.S de Vos et al, eds. *Research at Grassroots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 397-424. Fourth Edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Schwab, Peter 2001. *Africa: A continent Self-Destructs*. New York: Palgrave.
- Schwahn, Charles J. and Spady, William G. 2002. *Total Leaders: Applying the Best Future-Focused Change Strategies to Education*. Lanham, MA: Scarecrow Education.
- Simons, Menno. 1975. "Two Kingdoms," in Arthur F Holmes, ed. *War and Christian Ethics*, 185-189. Grand Rapids: Baker House.
- Sjoberg, Laura 2006. *Gender, Justice, and the Wars in Iraq: A Feminist Reformulation of Just War Theory*. Oxford: Lexington Books.
- Stackhouse, John G. Jr. 2005. *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

- Stassen, Glen H. 1992. *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.
- Strydom, H. and Delport, C.S.L. 2011. "Information collection: Document Study and Secondary Analysis," in A.S de Vos et al. (eds) *Research at Grass Roots for the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 376-389. Fourth Edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Tamez, Elsa 1996. "Cultural Violence Against Women in Latin America," in M J Mananzan, M A Oduyoye, E Tamez, J S Clarkson, M C Gray and L M Russell, eds. *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, 11-19. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks, ed. 2012. *Interfaith Just Peace-making: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Trible, Phyllis. 1984. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Turner, Thomas. 2007. *Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*. London: Zed Books.
- Tusabe, G. 2002. "Ethnicities and the Challenge of Social Cohesion in Contemporary Africa," in A.T. Dolfoyo et al, eds. *Ethics, Human Rights and Development in Africa: Ugandan Philosophical Studies III*. 83-100, Washington, D. C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Twain, Mark. 2004. *Le Soliloque du Roi Léopold –Satire*. Translated by Jean-Pierre Orban. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Ulrich, Duchrow & Liedke, Gerhard 1987. *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace*. Geneva: WCC Publications.
- Warnock, Donna 1982. "Patriarchy Is Killer: What People Concerned About Peace and Justice Should Know," in: Pam McAllister, ed. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, 20-29. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Watson, Natalie K. 2002. *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press.
- Weiss, Herbert 2000. *War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Current African Issues series, No 22. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Wenger, J.C. 1991. *What Mennonites Believe*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.
- West, Gerald, 1993. *Contextual Bible Study*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

- Westermann, Claus 1992. "Peace (*Shalom*) in the Old Testament" in Perry B Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*, 16-48. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Whitman, Shelly L. 2007. "Women and Peace-building in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: An Assessment of Their Role in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 29-48. UKZN e-text.
- Williams, Chris; Richards, Paul and Whitton, Ingrid. 2000. *I'm Not Supposed to Feel Like This: A Christian Self-help Approach to Depression and Anxiety*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Williams, Dolores S. 1994. "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices" in Ursula King, ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, 77-87. London: SPCK.
- Wink, Walter 1992. "Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third way (Matt. 5:38-42)," in Willard M. Swartley, ed. *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, 104-125. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas 1987. *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Google-books.
- World Council of Churches, 2001. *Just Peace Companion*. Geneva: WCC.
- Yoder, John Howard. 1972. *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company
- _____. 2003. *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.
- _____. 2004. *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogue Between Anabaptists and Reformers*. Kitchner, ON: Pandora Press.
- _____. 2009. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.
- Yoder, Perry B. 1992. "Introductory Essay to the Old Testament Chapters: *Shalom* Revisited," in Perry B. Yoder and Willard M. Swartley, eds. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*. 3-15. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Yoder, Perry B. and Swartley, Willard M. eds. 1992. *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Young, Crawford 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Internet Resources

Adetunji, Jo “Forty-eight Women Raped Every Hour in Congo, Study Finds.”

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/12/48-women-raped-hour-congo> , accessed on 10/04/2013.

Bucket, Stephen, “Rwandan Involvement Seen in Zaire Refugee Camp.” Washington Post, October 29, 1996.< <http://tech.mit.edu/V116/N54/rwandan.54w.html> >, accessed on 23/09/2012

Congo (DRC) <http://www.winne.com/congo/bf08.html>

Conversations for a Better World, “Rape Epidemic Fuels Fistula Cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo” <http://www.conversationsforabetterworld.com/2010/01/rape-epidemic-fuels-fistula-cases-in-the-democratic-republic-of-congo/> accessed on 11/04/2013.

Cookson, John. “In Congo, A dead Rat Is Worth More Than the Body of a Woman” *Big Think* October 27, 2010. < <http://bigthink.com/women-and-power/in-congo-a-dead-rat-is-worth-than-the-body-of-a-woman>>, accessed on 15/10/2012.

Cooney, Daniel, “Deforestation in the Congo Basin. <<http://blog.cifor.org/8019/deforestation-rates-double-in-the-congo-basin-report/>> , accessed on 03/05/2013.

Custers, Raf . “Africa - The Coltan Speculators: Down with the Congo” Jan 18, http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article_62048.shtml accessed on 26/05/2011

Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa: “Current Rhino Poaching Stats.” Published on 23 November 2014.< <http://wessa.org.za/get-involved/rhino-initiative/current-rhino-poaching-stats.html>> accessed on 4/01/2015.

Egeland, Jan. “Eastern DR of Congo Surpasses Darfur as Biggest, Most Neglected Emergency-UN Relief Official” March 16, 2005.
<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=13675&Cr=democratic&Cr1=congo>>, accessed on 24/04/2011.

Eichstaedt, Peter. Consuming the Congo: War and Conflict Minerals in the World’s Deadliest Place.
http://failuremag.com/feature/article/conflict_minerals_and_war_in_eastern_congo/#ixz2RI61zm1Z , accessed on 25 October 2013.

- Farr, Kathryn 2010, “No Escape: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Central and Eastern African Armed Conflicts”, 91. http://www.unive.it/media/allegato/dep/n13-14-2010/Ricerche/casi/5_Farr.pdf, accessed on 13/04/2013.
- Forest, Jim. “Servant of God Dorothy Day”
<http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/ddbiographytext.cfm?Number=72>, accessed 12/03/2015.
- Foundation for Self-Sufficiency in Central America (FSSCA) “What is the Theology of Peace? In Culture, Spirituality & Theology of Peace
<http://fssca.net/peace/project/general/theology.html>, accessed on 10/02/2010
- Guardian: Leaked UN Report Accuses Rwanda of Possible Genocide in Congo
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/aug/26/un-report-rwanda-congo-hutus>, accessed on 15/04/2013.
- Human Rights Watch, “[Rwanda: Justice After Genocide—20 Years On](http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/rwanda-justice-after-genocide-20-years)”, March 28, 2014.
<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/rwanda-justice-after-genocide-20-years>, accessed on 31 October 2014.
- Kisangani, Emizet Francois and Bobb, Scott F. 2010. *Historical Dictionary of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Third edition. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Google Book online.
<http://books.google.co.za/books?id=FvAWPTaRvFYC&pg=PA153&lpg=PA153&dq=eglise+du+christ+au+congo&source=bl&ots=T5ppNfXOxf&sig=KCXIcnANzvzDWXx272v00qEp_KM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=RWbdUuXTN4mVhQfA54DYCA&ved=0CGMQ6AEwBDgK#v=onepage&q=eglise%20du%20christ%20au%20congo&f=false>, accessed on 31/ 12/ 2013.
- Leonard, Ellen . THEOLOGICAL TRENDS. Ecclesiology, I: Differing Gifts. <<http://www.theway.org.Uk/Back/28leonard.pdf>>, accessed on the 21/06/2011.
- Leskin A and Sheikh, Javaid I “Gender Differences in Panic Disorder” *Psychiatric Times*. <<http://www.psychiatristimes.com/articles/gender-differences-panic-disorder#sthash.X9bKZmEP.dpuf>>, accessed on 20/07/2013]
- Ma, Tiffany. “China and Congo’s Coltan Connection.”
<http://www.project2049.net/documents/china_and_congos_coltan_connection.pdf> accessed 26/05/2011.
- Malokele Nanivazo. “Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” United Nations University <<http://unu.edu/publications/articles/sexula-violence-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>>, accessed on 24/05/ 2012.

Medecins Sans Frontiers . MSF Report, July 20 1995 “Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Repatriation Virtually at a Standstill.”
<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/article.cfm?id=1467>, accessed on 26/05/2012.

MONUSCO’s report, “Bukavu: World March of Women,” 18 October 2010.
<http://monusco.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=10927&mid=14594&ItemID=18270>, accessed 14/09/2013.

Mugisho, Theophile “ Why They Rape: A Former Child Soldier Speaks Out”
<<http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/partners-in-africa/partners-in-drc/cofapri/cofapri-blogs/3031-former-child-soldier.html>>, accessed on 13/04/2013.

Mukwege, Denis Mukengere and Nangini, Cathy 2009 “Rape with Extreme Violence: The New Pathology in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo.” *PlosMedecine* 6 (12). Available from:
<<http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1000204>>, accessed on 15/09/2012.

Nanivazo, Malokele. “Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” United Nations University.
<<http://unu.edu/publications/articles/sexual-violence-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>>, accessed on 24/05/2012.

Pax Christi, <http://paxchristiusa.org/resources/vow-of-nonviolence/>, accessed on 12/03/2015.

Plos Medecine, “Rape with Extreme Violence: The New Pathology in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo” <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2791171/>>, accessed on 11/04/2013.

Pratt, M.; Werchick L.; Bewa A.; Eagleton, M-L.; Lumumba C.; Nichols K. and Piripiri, L. “Sexual Terrorism: Rape as a Weapon of War in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: An Assessment of Programmatic Responses to Sexual Violence in North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Orientale Provinces.” USAID/DCHA Assessment Report (9-16 January 2004). Available at: <http://m.idasa.org/media/uploads/outputs/files/Rape%20in%20DRC%20Report.pdf/>, accessed on 18/02/2013.

Reid, Timothy B. “Killing Them Softly: Has Foreign Aid to Rwanda and Uganda Contributed to the Humanitarian Tragedy in the DRC.” *Africa Policy Journal*, Spring 2006, Vol. 1
http://www.conflictminerals.org/pdf/how_aid_to_rwanda_and_uganda_fuels_war.pdf
accessed on 20/04/2013.

Shure, Teri 2010. “Blood Diamonds, Still Bloody” World Press, May 14.
<http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/3543.cfm>, accessed on 20/04/2013.

- Solhjell, Randi 2009 “Combating Sexual Violence in the DRC: Towards a Comprehensive Approach? NUPI Report. Available from: <http://www.nupi.no/content9/download/10054/101692/version/3/file/Report-Solhjell.pdf>., accessed on 25/11/2012.
- Theology of Peace. “What is the Theology of Peace? In Culture, Spirituality & Theology of Peace.” <http://fssca.net/peace/project/general/theology.html>, accessed on 10/02/2010
- UNHCHR 2010, “Report of the Panel on Remedies and Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo to the High Commissioner for Human Rights,” p13.
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/ZR/DRC_Reparations_Report_en.pdf
[accessed 12/04/2013](#)>., accessed on 14/05/2013.
- United Nations Report: Natural Resources and Conflicts in Africa: Transforming a Peace Liability into a Peace Asset, Cairo 2006.
<http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/reports/Natural%20Resources%20and%20Conflict%20in%20Africa%20Cairo%20Conference%20ReportwAnnexes%20Nov%2017.pdf>,
accessed on 23/06/2013.
- United Nations: UN Documents Cooperation Circles Gathering a Body of Global Agreements, A/Conf.116/28/Rev. <<http://www.un-documents.net/nflsaw.htm>>, accessed on 13/01/2009.
- United Nations, <<http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2011/07/men-and-boys-among-rape-victims-in-dr-congo/>>, accessed on 5/04/2013.
- United Nations: “Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations” <<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/education/rwandagenocide.shtml>>,
accessed on 31 October 2014.
- Voice of America. “Congo Story: Interview with Dr. Denis Mukwege, Panzi Hospital, Bukavu, DRC” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0skN_g4Veo>, accessed on 15/07/2011.
- Ware, Natalie D. 2001.” Congo War and the Role of Coltan.”
<http://www1.american.edu/ted/ice/congo-coltan.htm>, accessed 08/05/2013
- Watts, John 2008. *Women and the Word: What We Are Not Told*. SPD and Avondale College. Google Books: PatriarchyLeadershipHeroineWomensRetreat2.doc. Accessed on 23/09/2012.
- World Council of Churches. “WCC Statement on Rwanda, Uganda and the DR Congo” <<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/1->

[statements-documents-adopted/international-affairs/report-from-the-public-issues-committee/responsibility-to-protect?set_language=en](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/07/20140724.statement.doc.htm), accessed on 24/072014.

Zaski, Jason. "Conflict Minerals and War in Eastern Congo."
<http://failuremag.com/feature/article/conflict_minerals_and_war_in_eastern_congo/> ,
accessed on 22/04/2013.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1⁸⁴

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: FOR LEADERS OF WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIPS (FOCUS GROUP)

Name of the association.....

Name of the Church/denomination

Location.....

Date.....

1. What are the effects of war in the society and the church?
2. What experience (s) of war do Christian women share in the region?
3. What can be done to bring peace?
4. What do you think is the role of the Church in the process of bringing peace?
5. What contribution do/can women associations make towards the effort of peace?
6. In what way does the Christian belief/doctrine of your church/denomination stimulate your involvement in peace-building?
7. What can be the implication if more women associations work together in peace-building?
8. What is your vision of being Christian women in a time of peace-building?
9. What doctrinal or theological teaching is able to sustain women’s efforts in peace-building?

⁸⁴ Appendix 1, 2 and 3 are presented here in English for this proposal but in the field, they were translated either into Swahili or French, languages spoken by the respondents.

APPENDIX 2

RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS/CHURCH LEADERS

Name of church/denomination.....

Position held in the church/denomination.....

Male/Female leader.....

Date.....

1. What is your understanding of being the church of Christ in a war-torn region?
2. What role can the Church play in bringing peace?
3. What biblical teaching guides your action in the process of peace-building?
4. What does it take to make this teaching a driving force for a wider community of believers to work for peace-building?
5. What is your perception of women's agency in the church?
6. What is your vision of women's involvement in peace process?
7. What kind of support do women need to impart the vision of peace to their offspring?

APPENDIX 3

Contextual Bible Study guideline for Women Focus Groups, members of *La Fédération des Femmes Protestantes* in the DRC

Bible reading: 1 Samuel 25:2-35

1. What is this text all about?
2. Who are the main characters in the story and what do you learn about them?
3. What is the cause of the conflict in this story?
4. How did Abigail know about the conflict?
5. Why was not Abigail called to the negotiation at first?
6. What measures/strategies did Abigail take to solve the problem?
7. What is Abigail's understanding of God/Theology?
8. What parallels do you make between this story and the situation in the DRC?
9. How can this story empower women in the DRC?
10. Develop a plan of action that will help women address the issue of conflicts in the DRC.

APPENDIX 4

CONSENT FORM FOR CHURCH LEADERS TO BE INTERVIEWED

Study topic: Contribution of the Federation of Women to Peace-building in Kivu Region (DRC).

Investigator: Esther Lubunga Kenge, BTh, BTh Honors, MTh

Affiliation: Free Methodist Church. In Congo: 26 COMMUNAUTE METHODITE LIBRE. B.P 2110 Bukavu; BP 150 Cyangugu/Rwanda. Fmccongo2002@yahoo.fr . In South Africa: UBUNYE FREE METHODISTE CHURCH, 80 Pietermaritz Street, PMB 3201.

Contact: P O Box 1018 Pietermaritzburg 3200 /School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. Email: estherlubunga@hotmail.com

Project aims:

I am grateful for your participation in this research study which aims at exploring and analyzing the contribution of the Federation of Women to peace-building in Kivu. This topic is chosen because of the consequences of tribal conflicts and civil war in the Eastern Dr Congo that have affected many people, mainly women and children. Wounded women should participate in peace making so that a lasting solution may be reached.

In order to give your informed consent, please read the explanations here below concerning the procedures, risks and benefits that will help you make a decision as to whether or not you wish to go ahead and be part of this research study.

Description of procedures

I will meet you at your desired time and place for a meeting which does not exceed an hour. What is required from you is your contribution on how women of faith can use their influence in the society to start a culture of peace in order to avert recurrent conflicts in the region. I will either use my note book or a tape recorder to collect your story and views. We will agree that ethical rules are respected, so that your name remains anonymous in the data and any other confidential information you share does not be revealed to the public.

I will use a set of guiding questions to which you are free to respond or not if you are not willing to. Our focus is to use Women Federations at different levels as a forum for fostering the involvement of women in the process of peace-building. You will be asked to share your personal opinion on this strategy.

Risks and benefits

The story of war in the Eastern DR Congo includes rape and violence to the extreme. You should not feel obliged to share your painful experience if you do not want to. In case you are willing to expose some wrongdoings in order to draw the attention of others to this disaster, I will make sure that nothing beyond what we have agreed appears in the written document.

On the other hand your participation can be of great benefit as you become part of a process which can bring lasting peace in the region. Stopping war in the region will reduce the abuse and violence perpetrated against women and even curb the rate of HIV infection. You will therefore contribute to paving the way for peace-building at the grassroots level using women and their faith in Christ.

Confidentiality

Since this study is designed to explore the involvement of women in peace-building, you may be required to share information about your personal experience with conflict and war. I promise to keep your story confidential and will never mention your name in this study. If need be I may use a substitute name. Once the writing is over I will make sure that any record or note related to your story is destroyed.

Voluntary participation

This study is conducted on a voluntary basis and does not entail any fees of participation nor any payment from the researcher. I therefore count on your willingness to participate in this study knowing that you are free to part of the exercise or withdraw any time and for any reason as you feel it necessary.

Further Inquiry

Should you need more information about me and the project feel free to contact me on one of the addresses given here above under contacts.

Agreement to participate

I _____ hereby confirm that I have read and understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study, and I agree to participate in this study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX 5

CONSENT FORM FOR MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S FEDERATION TO BE INTERVIEWED

Study topic: Contribution of the Federation of Women to Peace-building in Kivu Region (DRC).

Investigator: Esther Lubunga Kenge, BTh, BTh Honors, MTh

Affiliation: Free Methodist Church. In Congo: 26 COMMUNAUTE METHODITE LIBRE. B.P 2110 Bukavu; BP 150 Cyangugu/Rwanda. Fmccongo2002@yahoo.fr . In South Africa: UBUNYE FREE METHODISTE CHURCH, 80 Pietermaritz Street, PMB 3201.

Contact: P O Box 1018 Pietermaritzburg 3200 /School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. Email: estherlubunga@hotmail.com

Project aims:

I am grateful for your participation in this research study which aims at exploring and analyzing the contribution of the Federation of Women to peace-building in Kivu. This topic is chosen because of the consequences of tribal conflicts and civil war in the Eastern Dr Congo that have affected many people, mainly women and children. Wounded women should participate in peace making so that a lasting solution may be reached.

In order to allow you make an informed consent, please read the explanations here below concerning the procedures, risks and benefits that will help you make a decision as to whether or not you wish to go ahead and be part of this research study.

Description of procedures

I will meet you at your desired time and place for a meeting which does not exceed an hour. What is required from you is your contribution on how women of faith can use their influence in the society to start a culture of peace in order to avert recurrent conflicts in the region. I will either use my note book or a tape recorder to collect your story and views. We will agree that ethical rules are respected, so that your name remains anonymous in the data and any other confidential information you share does not be revealed to the public.

I will use a set of guiding questions to which you are free to respond or not if you are not willing to. Our focus is to use Women Federations at different levels as a forum for fostering the involvement of women in the process of peace-building. You will be asked to share your personal opinion on this strategy.

Risks and benefits

The story of war in the Eastern DR Congo includes rape and violence to the extreme. You should not feel obliged to share your painful experience if you do not want to. In case you are willing to expose some wrongdoings in order to draw the attention of others to this disaster, I will make sure that nothing beyond what we have agreed appears in the written document.

On the other hand your participation can be of great benefit as you become part of a process which can bring lasting peace in the region. Stopping war in the region will reduce the abuse and violence perpetrated against women and even curb the rate of HIV infection. You will therefore contribute to paving the way for peace-building at the grassroots level using women and their faith in Christ.

Confidentiality

Since this study is designed to explore the involvement of women in peace-building, you may be required to share information about your personal experience with conflict and war. I promise to keep your story confidential and will never mention your name in this study. If need be I may use a substitute name. Once the writing is over I will make sure that any record or note related to your story is destroyed.

Voluntary participation

This study is conducted on voluntary basis and does not entail any fees of participation nor any payment from the researcher. I therefore count on your willingness to participate in this study knowing that you are free to part of the exercise or withdraw any time and for any reason as you feel it necessary.

Further Inquiry

Should you need more information about me and the project feel free to contact me on one of the addresses given here above under contacts.

Agreement to participate

I _____ hereby confirm that I have read and understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research study, and I agree to participate in this study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____



University of KwaZulu-Natal
Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN
4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
sshrec@ukzn.ac.za

17 MARCH 2010

Mrs. EL Kenge
Religion and Theology
PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS

Dear Mrs. Kenge

ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0121/10D
PROJECT TITLE: "Post-Conflict Peace Building in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A contribution of Women Federation towards a Theology of Peace"

In response to your application dated 13 March 2010, Student Number 204505551 the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Prof. I Phiri)
cc. Mrs. B Jacobsen