

The Other Side of the Ogoni Struggle:
Women Getting Equipped for Peace-Building

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Abstracts

This study focuses on the efforts of an NGO known as West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), towards enhancing women participation in peace and security issues in Nigeria, through one of its programs known as Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET). It specifically, examines the capacity building training scheme carried out through WIPNET among the Ogoni women group in Niger-Delta region of Nigerian, as well as how the women are making use of their newly acquired skills in their everyday life. The objective of this study is to provide an insight into the transformation processes taking place in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. To meet this objective, the study utilizes qualitative method, employing primary and secondary sources. The term empowerment was used as the analytical lens through which the data were analyzed.

The findings from the study indicate that WIPNET is working towards changing gender relations in Ogoni, with hope of domesticating the UNSCR1325 therein. Furthermore, the finding indicates that the women have gained basic knowledge and skills for community peace-building, and are making use of their new skill, to prevent conflict within their communities from escalating. They have also gained self-confidence, and are influencing changes in their communities.

Key words: Empowerment, community women, Consciousness, Ogoni, capacity building.

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List of Abbreviations

UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WANEP	West African Network for Peace-Building
WIPNET	Women in Peace-Building Network
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
UN	United Nations
FOWA	Federation Of Ogoni Women
ECOWAS	Economic Committee of West African States
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
NDPVF	Niger-Delta People Volunteer Force
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of Niger-Delta People
MOSOP	Movement for the Emancipation of Ogoni People
NNPC	National Petroleum Corporation
COTRA	Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers
NYCOP	National Youth council of Ogoni People
JTF	Joint Military Forces
OMPADEC	Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission
NDDC	Niger-Delta Development Commission
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
AU	African Union
NYSC	Nigeria Youth Service Corp
NAP's	National Action Plans
COP	Council of Ogoni Professionals
OCC	Council of Ogoni Churches

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Chapter 1

“.... A lasting peace cannot be achieved without the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives and participation in peace process” (Anwaru K. Chowdhury, 1999)

Introduction

Going by the impact of violent conflict on women and the roles women play during such situation, women equal participation during peace process becomes equally necessary. Evidence have shown that women and girls bear most of the burdens of violent conflicts as well as its aftermaths. However, according to Pankhurst (2008) this does not deny that men are also affected by warfare, rather it points out that the number of women that are affected by gender based violence, or victims of “serious diseases” during war and post war periods on the average, are larger than their male counterpart (p: 30), not to mention the extra responsibilities that women must assume during such periods. Women take up various roles during warfare or violence conflicts. They care for the wounded and children provide food for the family and assume decision making roles, while the men are away in battle (ibid). And when the conflict is over, women on many occasions are left in sorrow and grief for the death of their husbands and sons. For those who lost their husbands during the course of violent conflict, the burden of catering for the whole family becomes their sole responsibility.

Although, it would be incorrect to view women just as mere victims of war or violent conflict, there have been situations where women roles contributed to warfare, for example female soldiers, spies and weapon smugglers (El-Bushra, 2003:25). Also, the 1964 - 1979 liberation war in Zimbabwe saw women soldiers acquiring “higher military ranks” during the course of the war (Ramisetty & Muriu, 2013:493). Against this backdrop, the little or no representation of women in the official peace processes and peace building or equal contribution in deciding about issues affecting their lives in the aftermath, becomes a source of concern, because such condition can have a negative impact on “lasting peace and reconciliation” (UNSCR 1325 adopted in 2000).

Thus, in recognition of the challenges faced by women during warfare, and in addition to their exclusion during peace negotiations and post war reconstructions, the UN in October 2000, adopted a Security Council Resolution 1325(UNSCR 1325), on Women, Peace and Security. Among the specific aims of this resolution is to ensure a ‘gender perspective’ in

issues relating to peace negotiations and agreements (Bell & O'Rourke 2010:942). The resolution lays great emphasis, on the equal participation of women in all peace negotiation processes.

According to article 8 on the UNSCR 1325, Gender perspective in this sense means the consideration of the following:

“(a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;

(b) Measures that support local women’s initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements;

(c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary,.. “ (Bell & O’Rourke, 2011: 2)

This mandate was however made binding on all UN member states. And in response to it, many nations and NGO were encouraged to develop action plans towards achieving the goals therein.

Resolution 1325 has been in a existence for some years now, still, there is not much significant changes to the situation of things (Olonisakin et la, 2011: Preface). That is, women are still not properly represented in post –conflict peace negotiation processes and in peace-building in many African nations (see Meintjes et la 2001; 3)

Some attributes this to the very nature of the resolution which is viewed as universal, and broad in scope and usage; thus not having a specified mechanism of enforcement, which they argue can pose a great challenge to its full implementation (Westendorf, 2008:3). While others argue that, a society that structurally does not recognize the importance of women role at high decision making levels, or operates a structure that does not provide space for gendered share of power, for such the political will to fully implement the UNSCR 1325, might be lacking (ibid:4).

More so, that the existence of such structure in peace period may not automatically change during periods of war or conflict. But unfortunately, it gets worst during the periods of war *“after all, it is expected that those who see girls and women as inferiors to boys and men and*

accord them low priority in society during normal times would not suddenly elevate them to higher status in times of war” (Olonisakin 2010: 2).

1.1 The Ogoni Context

The Ogoni people are located within the Niger-Delta Regions of Nigeria. The crisis within this community rose to its peak in the early 1990’s and lasted for many years. The crisis is said to be deeply rooted in the desire for control of resources within these region.

Nigeria is among one of the largest exporters of crude oil, and its economy is largely dependent on the proceeds of oil. A great portion of this oil lies within the Niger-Delta Regions of Nigeria. However, while the country benefits economically from the income generated from the Oil, the indigenes of this regions felt neglected, because they believe that they were left with little or nothing in terms of economic development.

In addition, the region being located within the river-line areas, having fishing and farming as its main sources of income finds it difficult to fish or cultivate, because, both their seas and farmland are polluted as a result of spillage during oil extraction (Ukeje, 2004:607). This led to grievances and anger among the indigenes of the region towards the state and the oil companies. And when peaceful demonstrations did not make any change to their situation, the indigenes resorted to violence activities such as destruction of oil pipelines and kidnaping of staffs of Oil companies.

During the conflict, the Ogoni women supported the cause of the struggle and defied all gender roles while actively participating in the struggle. In response, the government resorted to use of force in order to suppress them. These led to loss of lives both men, women, children and youths. Valuable private properties and public infrastructures have also been destroyed.

The Ogoni struggle drew both national and international attention; many were against the role played by the Nigerian government. In an attempt, to bring about lasting peace and to transform the region, various human development projects are also being undertaken in the region. Just like many African women in post conflict situation, no adequate effort were made to carry the Ogoni women along in issues concerning peace building , neither were the women equally represented in the post conflict negotiations and peace agreements.

Although women warfare / armed conflict experiences may not be the same, the condition of Ogoni women seems similar to what is obtainable in many West African nations in post conflict situation. According to the “workshop on West African Women in the Aftermath of War, the conference on the Aftermath: Women in Post-war Reconstructions, meeting of African Women’s Anti-War coalition” it was discovered that “there is no aftermath for women”(Meintj2000; Pillay 2000; Turshen 1999; Turshen and Alidou 2000; cited in Meintjes et la 2001:3. Women continue to suffer, even when the conflict has ended.

For the Ogoni women, they were not only victim of land degradation (since majority of them depends economically on farming and fishing) they were also victims of violence that took place in the region. Furthermore, the women experienced various types “direct” and “indirect violence” during and after the Ogoni conflict. Those who were not physically attacked suffered other forms violence as they stood alongside the men in the conflict. According to Ibeanu (2002) at the end of the conflict, the reduction in the wide spread of violence against women by the Nigerian military and neighboring communities did not ameliorate the suffering of the women, rather there was noticeable increase in “structural violence” by heads of communities and other members of the communities in forms of discrimination (p:199-204) despite the significant contributions of the women to the Ogoni struggle.

While other post conflicts reconstructions, and developments projects are being implemented within the region, by the Nigeria government and the Oil companies, The West African Network for peace building channeled its own efforts on the aspect of human development, particularly in building the capacity of organized women network groups within these regions, so that they can fully participate in peace and security issues within their communities.

1.2 Problem Statement

Based on the above, this thesis examines the peace building training scheme of an NGO known as West African Network for Peace-building (WANEP) through one of its programs called Women in Peace-building Network (WIPNET) geared towards strengthening women’s social networking towards effective participation in formal peace processes in Ogoni, Niger-delta region of Nigeria. An effort geared towards the eventual domestication of (UNCRS

1325). Furthermore, it addresses how these women translate the acquired skills into practice in everyday life.

1.3 Research Objectives.

Much has been written about the resource based conflict within the Niger-delta regions of Nigeria. Mostly studies have focused particularly on the destruction of property, killing of youths, women and children, kidnapping of oil company workers, vandalization of government's oil pipelines amongst others, but not so much have been written about the efforts geared towards lasting peace, neither have much research been carried out, to examine the transformation processes going on within these regions, nor about women own effort towards enhancing security and prevention of conflict in Ogoni. This thesis is an effort to bridge this gap.

Furthermore, the thesis, aims to identify best practice or what needs to be done differently, towards the attainment of gender equality in peace and security issues.

1.4 Research Question

In the respect of the above, the main research question for this research is ;

1. What is WANEP doing in Ogoni?
2. How are the Ogoni women putting WANEP's idea into practice?

Under these two questions, I shall also address the following supplementary questions:

- a. What approach did WANEP adopt in their Program in Ogoniland?
- b. What social values do the women attribute to WANEP program?

1.5 Relevance to Peace Studies

Recent trends in peace studies views peace as “progressive” and “dialectical”, involving *active individual and collective self-determination and emancipatory empowerment*” (Webel & Galtung 2007:8), rather than mere absence of war. This notion of peace is referred to as the “positive peace”., While absence of war is viewed as “negative peace”. Although the attainment of world peace may sound ambiguous considering past histories of war and current

violent situations, however, certain action such as adherent to justice and equity can help to ameliorate the situation and reduce both “ structural” and “direct violence” (Barash 2000:129-130; Webel & Galtung 2007:8) Structural violence is often enshrined in “social and cultural institutions” (Barash 2000:129). In the Nigerian context, a socially ascribed difference (gender) determines access to political and economic power. And this powers in Nigerian societies lies mainly in the hands of men, leading to gender discrimination. That means , denying women the important opportunity of deciding on issues affecting their lives, is an act of violence, just like the case of Ogoni women of the Niger-delta region of Nigeria, and an attempt to study how such situation can be transformed through nonviolence means is highly relevance to peace study.

1.6 Structures of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic of study, research statement, research question, objective and relevance of the research to peace studies. Chapter two, accounts for the historical background of the study. The methodology and techniques used in collecting data, are outlined in chapter 3. Chapter 4 will present the conceptual frame work for the study. The qualitative data for this thesis will be presented and analyzed in chapter five. Finally, Chapter six will address the findings, in relation to the research question and make a concluding remark.

Chapter 2

Background.

“The notion that the oil-bearing areas can provide the revenue of the country and yet be denied a proper share of that revenue...[sic].. Therefore, the affected peoples must immediately gird their loins and demand without equivocation their rightful patrimony”

(Ken Saro-wiwa; 1995:63-64)

Introduction

To understand the activities of Women In peace building Networks (WIPNET) a branch of West African Network for Peace building (WANEP) vis –a- avis the Ogoni women group, it is equally important to understand the history behind the conflict in this region that necessitated WIPNET to carry out programs geared towards strengthening these women’s abilities to enable them to participate in issues relating to peace and security in their communities.

This chapter provides a background to the Ogoni Crisis. But first, it starts with a glimpse of Nigeria as a country, it then looks at the conflict in the Niger-delta region in general and then at the Ogoni crisis in particular, including the role of women in the Ogoni struggle. It also looks at efforts geared towards peace. In describing the efforts towards peace, it will focus on West African Network for Peace-building (WANEP), and particularly, its program known as Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET).

Conflict often arises when goals are “incompatible”. Goals are referred to as incompatible if for example two groups have different goals, and one group’s goals are achieved while that of the other are not (Webel & Galtung (ed); 2007:22). Incompatible goals often result to aggrieved groups demanding change. This is not far from the Ogoni situation. While Nigeria benefits economically from the proceeds of oil, extracted from Ogoniland, the indigenes of the region on the other hand feel that their environment which is their main source of livelihood is being destroyed. So they demanded the right to self-determination and political autonomy over their region in order to preserve their environment. These demands however, were not compatible with the goals of the federal government of Nigeria who is also

dependent on the resources coming from this region. The people started a mass protest, and the Nigerian government resorted to violence in order to repress them.

2.1 A brief view of Nigeria

Nigeria is situated in West Africa and shares border with countries such as Cameroon, Chad, Benin and Niger. After being colonized for many years by Britain, Nigeria obtained its independences in 1960. Shortly after Nigerian had its own share of civil war in 1967, when the eastern region declared itself the State of Biafra and attempted to secede. Today, Nigeria is the largest and most populous country in Africa. It occupies a space of , 923,768 sq.km, (Nigerian Embassy, 2015). Its population is estimated to be around 167 million (Nigerian National Population Commission: 2015), comprising many ethnic groups. Out of these ethnic groups, 3 are considered major groups, namely; Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa (Nigerian Embassy 2015).

Nigeria operates a federal system of government. The country Nigeria is made up of 36 states, of which the capital city is Abuja. The states are further divided into six geopolitical zones, namely: South-South, South-West, South-East, Central North, North-East, and North-West. Economically, Nigerian income is based on Oil extraction. Proceeds derived from petroleum are the mainstay of its economy; other sources of income such as agriculture were neglected after the discovery of oil.

Nigeria is among the top oil producing countries within the Organization of Petroleum exporting Countries (OPEC). In fact the Nigerian government earns about US\$ 20 million a day through Oil export, and these proceeds covers upto 70% of the nation's budgetary expenditure (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010:111). An estimate of over 80% of Nigerian revenue, and over 40% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is derived from the oil explored from the Niger delta region of Nigeria (Karl and Gary 2003:26). Furthermore, the region is equally endowed with large deposit of gas reserves.

2.2 Conflict in the Niger Delta Regions of Nigeria

For a better understanding of the Ogoni Crisis, it is equally important to take a look at the background of the Niger Delta conflict.

Indeed the Niger-delta conflict is quite difficult to analyse. There have been various views and counter views among researchers regarding the real factor responsible for the conflict in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. These arguments revolve around the “greed or grievance” dichotomy. Some of the often mentioned factors are; the issue of marginalization of minority ethnic group, the Nigerian federal system of government, the problem of unemployment, among others (Ibeanu 2000:23). While others argue that the inability of the indigene of this region to be satisfied by the monetary compensation made available to them, was responsible for the conflict (ibid). In the same vein another views, attributes it to the “rent seeking” tendencies of Nigerian government (Omeje 2005:324). In other words, it suggests that the high dependency of the nation on natural resources, led to its adaptations of policies to the detriment of its citizens. Omeje (2005:324), links his argument to the Federal Land Use Decrees of 1978. In brief, the decrees makes the federal government the owner of all lands, and gives governors of each state of the federations the sole authority for allocation of lands within urban areas of each state, and the local government the authority of lands in rural areas, but subject to the authority of the governor (Land Use Act 1978). In other words, the governor has the authority to revoke lands allocated by local government, and local government has no jurisdiction to allocate land more than 500 hectares (ibid). Lands are allocated for various purposes, both to individuals for use of agriculture or to corporate entities, and can be subjects to rent payments by individuals and issuance of “certificates of occupancy” by the government. Even when lands are allocated, the law allows such to be revoked for the purpose of mineral extractions such as mining or drilling of oil (ibid). In such situations, previous owners are either given another land or are paid compensations commensurate to the property for example farm crops. And when the land belongs to a community, the heads or elders of such community are paid the compensation to use for the “benefit of the community” (Ibid). According to Omeje, the 1978 law completely removed the benefits previously enjoyed by the locals, in which oil companies pay rents direct to lands owners, thereby making the government owners of rents, while the people only got compensations for destructions of properties(Omeje, 2005:324). Despite all these views, concerning the cause of the conflict, the question concerning lasting peace still remains.

The Niger-delta region consists of nine states out of the 36 states in Nigeria namely; Abia, Cross-River, Imo, Edo, Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Ondo, Bayelsa and Rivers (Ogoni is located in Rivers state) . Altogether, the region covers an area of around 70,000 squares kilometers. These states are referred to as the Niger-delta because of the discovery of crude oil in them. Most of them do not have similar cultural background; in fact over 200 different languages are spoken in this region (UNPO:7). Spread across these states is so many ethnic groups such as, Ijaw, Kalabari, Isoko, Igbo, Ogoni, Efik, Itsekiri to name a few. But, there is one major thing which this region share in common, and that is grievances against the federal government of Nigeria and the multinational oil companies operating within the region. The grievances are mainly feelings of being neglected and exploited. Despite all the economic benefits coming to the federal government of Nigeria from the Niger-Delta, the locals of the region expect that some of the revenue from oil could at least be invested in their region. But this has not been the case.

And as a result, there have been increased dissatisfaction among the people of the region because they feel that there is little or no social and economic development to show for the environmental degradation unleashed upon them through oil pollution of their land and seas. Also, being an agrarian society, the indigenes are dependent on farming, but this became difficult to carry out due to damages by oil spillages from broken pipelines, running through their farms and lands. Hence basic needs such as food, shelter, water and are also lacking . People of Oloibiri community, where oil was first discovered in Nigeria, claim that they still live in primitive conditions similar to that of the “stone age” with no access to clean water, and electricity. while the community of international oil workers whom they play host to have the latest “high tech and modern facilities” (Oviasuyi and Uwadiae, 2010:111).

In reaction to the perceived neglect and marginalization, the people within this region decided to take matters into their own hands and demanded change. They formed various organizations and protest groups in order to carry out their agitation. These protest groups consists of youths, leaders, women and various categories of indigenes within this region., for example, Niger Delta people’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger-Delta (MEND) Niger-Delta Liberation Front etc. And within the various ethnic groups, there exist also organization such as Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People

(MOSOP), and Movement for the Reparation of Ijaw Elders Forum etc (Ikelegbe 2005:247-248).

In the same vein, their outcry and protest also drew the attentions of other groups both local and international. Other active groups within this region are the Non-governmental organizations (NGO). For example Oil Watch Group, Institute of Human Right and Humanitarian Law, Amnesty international and Human Right Watch etc (Ikelegbe 2005:248) The NGOs in this region were particularly involved in issues related to the monitoring of human rights and environmental abuse, and the 'social, political and economic' empowerment of individuals and groups (ibid).

While some protest groups are interested in issues relating to development, protection of the environment, dialogue and negotiations, others are militant and violent in their approach (ibid).

So far there have been several violent clashes between the people of the region and the Nigerian government. Most times the indigenes resort to kidnapping of staffs of Oil industries and destructions of pipelines, while the governments respond with military action.

2.3 The Ogoni Struggle

The Ogonis are one of the many minority ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is also one of the many communities within the Niger-Delta region that is blessed with abundant oil reserves. The production of oil in commercial quantity in Ogoniland began in 1958 by Shell Petroleum Development Company (a subsidiary of the Royal Dutch/Shell) (Human Right Watch, 1997:7) . Although some multinational oil companies such as Elf, (a French company), Agip (an Italian company), are engaged in oil production in Nigeria, Shell operates the largest joint venture with Nigerian National petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and as such was responsible for the larger percentage of oil produced in Nigeria (Human Right Watch, 1995:7) and most of its major oil fields are located within various villages in Ogoniland. Many years of oil exploration and extraction without adequate cleanup or compensation, has taken its toll on Ogoniland just like on most oil producing communities in Niger-delta, thus posing a threat to livelihoods since they depend on land and water for survival.

According to Ibeanu (2002), when people's livelihoods are threatened, it arouses a feeling of deprivation, and anxiousness, thereby resulting in insecurity among such people (pp.196). He explains that, in the case of the Ogoni, it will require the "elimination of deprivation", in order to improve their "condition of security" (Ibid). In other words, being dependent on the environment which have now been degraded, thereby making resources scarce, plus the absence of tangible compensation from the Nigerian government, the Ogoni were left with no choice but to seek for means of eliminating their source of deprivation, and one of such means was their demand for change.

In expressing their displeasure, the people came together and formed an organization known as Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) through which they initially carried out various non-violent means of protest. MOSOP was formed in 1990, shortly after the Ogoni people presented the Ogoni Bill of Right to the government of Nigeria under the Military regime of Ibrahim Babangida. The Bill demanded that "the people of Ogoni be granted political Autonomy to participate in the affairs of the republic as a distinct and separate unit" including control over use of the economic resources gotten from Ogoni for the development of Ogoni amongst others (Saro- Wiwa, 1995:69).

In search for a suitable organization to bring forward this demand, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) was established (Ibid: 78). MOSOP provided a platform for many groups in Ogoni such as Federation of Ogoni Women (FOWA), Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers (COTRA), National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), Ogoni Student Union (OSU), Council of Ogoni Professionals (COP), and Ogoni Council of Churches (OCC), to participate in the ogoni struggle. Being an affiliate of MOSOP gave the majority of these groups an opportunity to have a say in the issue at hand.

But, unfortunately, their demand for a "Bill of Right" was not accepted by the then government of Nigeria, and instead of finding a path through the conflict, the government succumbed to violence. As Hugh Miall (2007: 14-15) notes, "The capacity to manage conflict is well-developed in modern societies and includes flexible and legitimate institutions, forms of governance that allows representation and change..." This was not the case of Nigeria. During the period 1990-1998, Nigeria was under the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida, issues such as human right and freedom of speech were not respected. According to Human Right Watch (1995), prodemocracy and human activists were often arrested, and

various newspaper outlets were banned from publications. In addition, a free and fair election meant to usher in democracy, within that same period (the year 1993), was also annulled by the ruling military administration (Ibid).

The Ogoni struggle gained international awareness in the early 1990s, during this period, great degrees of human right abuse were carried out by the Nigerian military government in order to suppress the voice of the Ogoni people and to further discourage other oil producing communities from attempting similar protests (Ibid). The chief spokesperson of MOSOB, (Ken Saro-wiwa) and 8 other Ogoni indigenes were arrested, and executed by the Nigerian government, without following any due judicial process; an action, which brought international condemnation against the then Nigerian government (.

The Joint Military Forces (JTF) carried out their actions with ruthlessness and reckless abundance (HRW, 1995). There were numerous reported cases of extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate shooting, floggings, rapes, lootings etc (ibid:). Properties, houses and some villages were burnt down, and the Ogonis became refugees in their own land.

2.4 Women and the Ogoni Struggle

The nature of the “domestic and reproductive roles” of women in African society makes them dependent on the environment, (Obi, 2005: 2). The social status of Ogoni women, were just like what is obtainable within the “patriarchal” structure of Nigerian society, where the “social, political and economic rights and opportunities” are not equally distributed (Ibeanu 2002:207) . In the case of the Ogoni women, majority of them are house wives and subsistence farmers and depend on farming and fishing as sources of livelihood. However, the oil economy in Nigeria has made access to these resources difficult as a result of many years of oil pollution of their land. In addition to loss of farmland, drinking water and fishing ponds, women were also burdened by the lack of employment opportunity of family members (Ikelegbe 2005:264) So having been pushed to the wall by hunger and poverty, the women were left with no option but to revolt against the source of their hardship.

The history of the Ogoni struggle would not be complete without mentioning the role played by Ogoni women, under the Federation of Ogoni Women (FOWA). FOWA is the Women wing of MOSOP, established in 1990 (source: interviews). Its membership consists of various categories of Ogoni women. Most of their activities are carried out through protest and demonstrations which are nonviolent in nature (ibid). They were also involved in providing

sex education to younger women, an attempt to reduce the level of sexually transmitted diseases, which was rampant among the youths during that period (Source: interviews).

FOWA came into limelight as a result of their significant role during the Ogoni struggles in the 1990s, where many women risked their lives to be in the front line of the protest alongside the men (Ibeanu, 2002:207). On some occasions they were arrested , beaten and wounded by the soldiers (Human Right Watch,1995 and UNPO, 1995). Many were raped both by the soldiers and the neighboring communities (Ibid).

Table 1: Categories of violence experience by Ogoni Women during the conflict (between 1993-1995).

Type of Violence	Number of cases
Systematic rape	98
Shootings and killings	148
Sexual slavery	99
Forced pregnancy	91

(figures taken from , Ibeanu 2002:199)

The women also played a very significant role in the massive protest of 1993, which witnessed the participation of hundreds of thousands of Ogonis indigenes(Ibeanu 2002:207). They were responsible for mobilizing and raising funds for most MOSOP activities for example, it was noted that they themselves where the major contributor of the “the One Naira per Ogoni campaign” (Ibeanu, 2002: 207) were every Ogoni indigene both men and women, were to contribute One Naira (0.037 NOK) each to enhance the Ogoni struggle. More so, their strong participation in various protests also led to the withdrawal and suspension of production by Shell Oil Company in Ogoni during that period (Human right Watch, 1995).

Ogoni women became very popular during this period, majority of Ogoni indigene widely praised the women for the tremendous impact they made to the Ogoni struggle (Ibeanu:2002:207), however, after the conflict, women’s social-cultural status returned back to where it was before the conflict. Ogoni women found themselves in many tragedies; faced with limited lack of access to source of livelihood such as , land, water or job, they were not

only affected by direct violence as a result of the conflict, they also faced indirect violence in form of discriminations. As rightly put by Nkoyo (2002), “they were even neglected even in the face of the so called development” (cited in Ako- Nai, 2003: 305). Not enough provisions was made to include them in the human development project initiated in their community by the Nigerian government, even though they appear to be the most affected.

2.5 Efforts Towards Peace

Presently, the insecurity in Ogoni and the Niger –delta at large have not been completely eliminated (UNDP, 2006:iii). The “(..) *result of the poor development have been disillusionment, frustration among the people about their increasing deprivation and deep-rooted mistrust*” (Ibid). Nonetheless, various efforts are still being geared towards improving the living condition of the people and to restore lasting peace within the region. Among such is the development of both the human and environmental aspect of these regions. The first attempt was made in 1990 when a body known as Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was established. Unfortunately, the project did not achieve its aim, it was characterized by lack of planning and funds, and folded up (Ibid: 13). Another attempt saw the establishment of the Niger-Delta development commission (NDDC) in the year 2000, by the Nigerian government with the aim of further development of these regions.

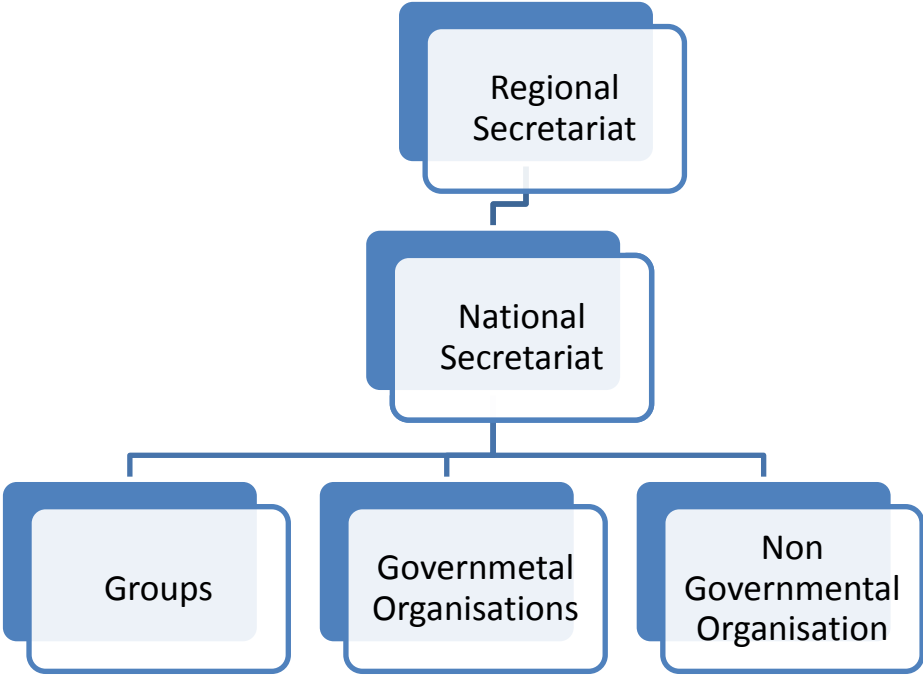
Also in 2009, the late former Nigerian president Musa Yar- adua, in bid for sustainable peace, approved an amnesty program encouraging fighters to hand in their weapons and participate in the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) program offered by the Nigerian government. A total of about 20,000 militants surrendered their weapons (Davidheiser & Nyiayaana 2011:51).

In addition to Nigerian government contribution, some national and international civil society organizations, were also involved in carrying out various projects within the region, among those was WANEP.

2.5.1 WANEP

West African Network for Peace building (WANEP) is a non- governmental organization whose membership comprises all West African countries that are members of Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS). for example, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone . It was established in 1998 basically to address the issues of war and ‘civil based violence in West Africa Regions, and to achieve its objectives, WANEP adopts various programs both at regional and national levels. Programs at regional levels are also available at the national levels, but are owned and managed by national secretaries of each member nation, while getting technical support from the regional secretariat located in Accra- Ghana (WANEP, 2013). According to the organization’s point of view, the idea behind this method of operation is to enhance ownership of peace building processes. WANEP’s operation principle rests on the tenet that those who are directly or indirectly affected by conflict, should own and manage peace building processes relating to them (ibid). In general, WANEP’s operation tactics is mainly to “locate, empower, and support local actors” (ibid).

Figure 1: Showing WANEP’s Organization structures.



WANEP's interaction cuts across both international, national and grassroots levels as indicated by the above diagram. Through national secretariats WANEP interacts with various Organizations, groups and communities, and through the regional secretariats, it reaches out to international communities such as ECOWAS, African Union (AU) and other partners.

As various peace-building NGO's respond to conflict and violence in West Africa, the mission of WANEP is to provide a platform upon which this NGOs, can exchange their experiences on issues regarding peace-building, conflict transformation, and political reconciliation. (ibid).

2.5.2 WANEP-Nigeria

Based on the above frame-work, WANEP-Nigeria was established in 2001. Its main focus was to provide a structured platform for collaboration among various peace related non-governmental organizations in Nigeria. WANEP-Nigeria is engaged in various activities such as, promoting non-violence means of resolving conflict in Nigeria, through one of its intervention program known as Active Non-violence and Peace Education. Others programs includes, Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET); Conflict Prevention; Democracy and Good Governance.

WANEP-Nigeria membership is made up of indigenous non- governmental organizations operating within the various geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Through the involvement of over 200 members, WANEPs, activities are spread across the 36 states of Nigeria (ibid).

Active Non-violence and Peace Education

The peace education program was designed to reduce the involvement of youths in violence conflicts, through equipping them with conflict resolution skills. The aim of the program is to imbibe the culture of non-violence and tolerance among the youths in target communities. The peace education project is administered in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, and often designed in accordance with the special needs of the benefitting student as well as the nature of existing conflicts within the target communities.

Conflict Prevent

The main idea behind the conflict prevention program of WANEP is basically to prevent conflict in Nigeria through early "warning mechanism", in line with ECOWAS conflict

prevention procedures obtainable at the regional secretariat of WANEP. The Intention of the program is to encourage a “preemptive/proactive approach” to conflict prevention and peace building. So, upon detections of situations that could resort to conflict, WANEP sends warning to critical stakeholders, thereby accelerating early response to such situation to avoid outbreak of violence.

2.5.3 WIPNET

Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET) a program under WANEP was established in Nigeria in 2002, with the main aim of bridging the gap between women and men, in issues related to peace and security (WIPNET: 2011). This procedure is geared towards the “eventual domestication of the UNSCR 1325” which stresses the importance of the equal participation and involvement of women in all efforts regarding to peace building and conflict preventions, and to make this legal instrument to be effective in Nigeria (Ibid). WANEP believes that by providing a platform upon which women groups living in conflict environment can work in partnership with one another regarding issues related to peace and security the above aim would be achieved (WIPNET, 2006).

The Project WIPNET is supported by a Netherlands based NGO known as Oxfam Novib and receives funding from same to accomplish its activities. The NGO Oxfam Novib itself is an offshoot of another NGO called Oxfam international, whose mission is to eliminate poverty through stimulating individuals collective power, so that their “voices can influence” local and international stakeholders to adopt decision that can bring a “change” to their situation (Oxfam: 2014). Through founding’s from OXFAM Novib, WIPNET has been involved in various peace and security awareness activities, in collaboration with women groups within different regions of the geopolitical zones in Nigeria including and especially in Niger-delta region.

In Ogoni, WIPNET works in collaboration with its member organization known as Kebetkache Women Development and Resource center. The executive director of this grassroots NGO serves as WIPNET focal person in the South-south geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Through Kebetkache, WIPNET is able to carry all its activities among the women groups living withn these zones. The NGO was established in 2003, and with focus on issues that affects women and children.

So far WIPNET has carried about 3 projects in this region, the first one was implemented between 2004-2007 and was centered around “Strengthening the Capacity of Women’s groups in Nigeria to Participate in Peace Advocacy and Conflict Prevention” (WIPNET’s internal Reports,). Another project which focused on “Institutional Mechanisms for Sustainable Participation of Women in Peace Processes in Nigeria” was also carried out between 2007-2010, as a follow up of the first project (ibid). In an attempt to increase the effectiveness of previous projects, WIPNET have been engaged in a project aimed at “Strengthening Women Social Network for Effective Participation in Peace and Human Security in the Niger Delta Regions of Nigeria” (ibid). In accordance with WANEP’s principles, all WIPNET’s operations are designed to encourage local ownership of peace building processes.

So far WIPNET have succeeded in translating the UNSCR 1325 into indigenous languages in Nigeria. in the same vein, the peace building training manual, have also been translated 20 local languages among four geopolitical zones in Nigeria (Moussa et al, 2007). It has been involved in many media presentations to educate the public on gendered balanced peace and security. Furthermore, WIPNET have recorded increase number in membership. So far eighty women groups in four geographical zones in Nigeria have become members of the network between 2004- 2007 (Ibid, WIPNET’s internal Report 2007). There is also recorded increase in women’s participation in campaigning on peace and security issues, as mass number of community women are being trained by WIPNET (ibid). Through the training received from WIPNET women in Enugu state, the south-south geopolitical in zone in Nigeria, are reported to have been able to influence the states Ministry of Women’s Affairs to establish a policy to promote the rights of women in public transports in the state (Ibid).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown , some of the reasons behind the conflict in Ogoni and the Niger-Delta in general. A grievance against neglect by the government of Nigeria was identified as the major cause of the conflict. Many parties were noted to have been involved in the conflict ranging from the government, the oil industries and various protest groups.

Furthermore, the chapter outlined the impact women made on the conflict as well as the impact of the conflict on women, plus the exclusion of Ogoni women in the aftermath of the

conflict. Finally, it examined the efforts towards sustainable peace, and in so doing, WANEP's operational method were outline especially its Women in Peace Network Program, geared towards enhancing women inclusion in peace and security issues.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methods adopted in conducting this research. In general, it looks at the overall strategy and the instruments used for the purpose of this research as well as the reasons for such decision.

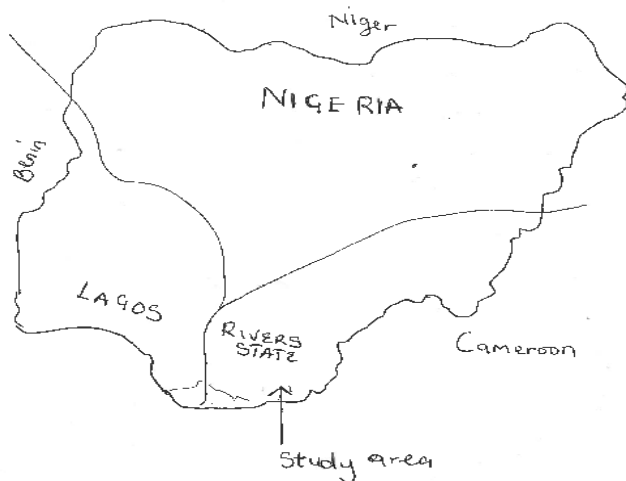
3.1 Study Area

The main fieldwork was conducted in Nigeria from July - August 2011. Two different cities in Nigeria were involved namely, Lagos state and Rivers state. The first part of the work took place in Lagos, at the head office of WANEP Nigeria while the second part took place in Ogoni, Rivers State.

Lagos is considered to be the largest city in Nigeria, being the former capital of Nigeria, it is a leading industrial and commercial city, notwithstanding the relocation of the presidency and other government institution to the new federal capital city in Abuja, Lagos still maintains its position as the most popular city in Nigeria. Being a multicultural and international city, Lagos has a good representation of all the races, religions and languages from different parts of Nigeria and the world at large. Hence it is home for many indigenous companies, NGO's and multi-national organizations.

While WANEP office is situated in Lagos, it also carries out some of its official activities within different part of the country. For example, and regarding their project in Ogoni, officers involved in WIPNET activities usually shuttle between Lagos and Rivers state, to carry out various assignments if there is need, otherwise, the member organization known as Kebetkache Women development and Resource Center, manages WIPNET's activities in Rivers state.

Figure 2: Map of Nigeria Showing Lagos and Rivers state.

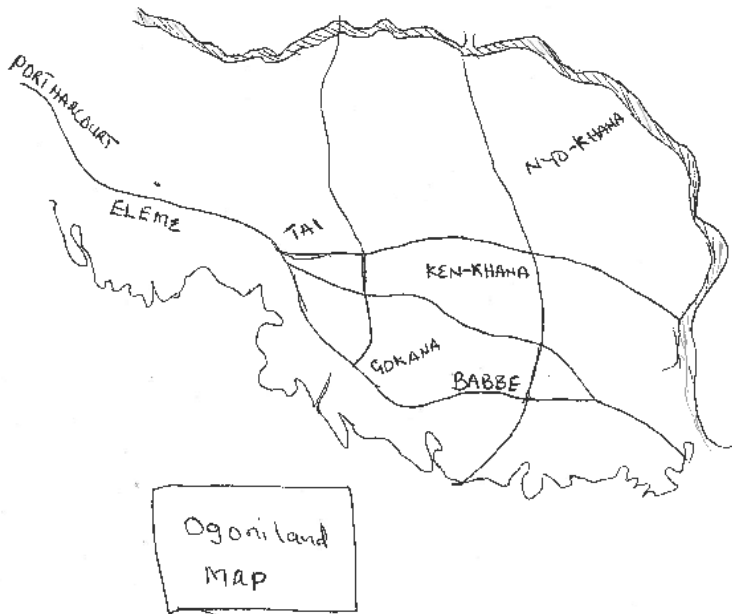


The Second part of my fieldwork was conducted in Ogoni, located in Rivers state. Rivers is one the 36 states in Nigeria and is situated within the southern part. It is approximately 1hour 15 minutes by air from Lagos to Port Harcourt (the capital of Rivers state) and about 8 hours by road, depending on the road condition. The State is known for its important contribution towards crude oil production in Nigeria. It consists of twenty local government areas, it's capital city Port Harcourt is among the very large cities in Nigeria. Spread across these local governments, are various ethnic groups such as Okrika, Ogoni, Ikwere, Kalabari, amongst others. The Ogonis (as they call themselves) occupies four out of these twenty local governments namely; Eleme, Gokana, Tai, and khana (Nigerian Population Commission: 2010). But by tradition, Ogoniland is categorized into six kingdoms of Babbe, Eleme,

Gokana, Tai, Ken-khana and Nyo-khana, each headed by a traditional ruler (UNPO: 7). each of these kingdoms consists of various communities, head by chiefs or community leader.

Based on the Nigerian 2006 national census, there are about 837,239 people living in Ogoniland (Ibid). Like many of the lands in the Niger-Delta region, it is enriched with natural resources like crude oil, which have contributed to Nigerian income in oil exportation. Farming, Fishing and trading are their people’s main source of sustenance. These economic activities are predominately carried out by the women. But the damages done to their lands and seas as a result of crude oil extraction have affected these activities negatively, thereby making the women major victims of land and water pollution. Majority of the Ogoni people are Christians by religion.

Figure 3: map of Ogoniland, showing part of Port-Harcourt and the six kingdoms of Ogoni.



I chose Ogoni as my study area because I was concern about the situation of the ogoni women with regards to the Ogoni Struggle. This concern arose due to my living and working experience in Ogoni as a Nigerian Youth Service Corp (NYSC) years back in 2003 to 2004. In brief, NYSC is a scheme developed by the Nigerian government in the early seventies, after the Nigerian civil war, with a mandate that every university graduate must serve the

nation for a year outside their own state of origin, with the aim that such exposure would result in tolerance, selflessness and oneness among Nigerian youths, thereby promoting national unity. Youth Service is regarded as a noble course and one's identity as a Corps member, provides a kind of immunity against any form of harm or suspicion by the host community or state. Before my youth service days, I had some knowledge about the conflict in Ogoniland which was gained through mass media, but the period of my service year enabled me to gain direct knowledge about the Ogoni struggle. So during the course of studies in Norway, I later learnt about the UNRSC 1325 (adopted in the year 2000) which advocates the engendering of peace and security issues, it simulated my memories about the Ogoni women. Particularly so because I assumed they are the main victims of land degradation in their community, but are less represented in community meetings, where local issues are deliberated, especially issues of welfare, probably due to the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, which ascribes official decision-making roles to men. Luckily, and upon further investigation, I found out that an NGO called WANEP is engaged in a program WIPNET established towards helping Ogoni women to acquire the necessary skills to assume this important role. So I became curious and wanted to know more about this. Based on the above it became necessary to carry out my field work in Ogoniland, a dwelling place for the majority of these women.

3.2 Gaining access

To many researchers, gaining access to informants or certain information sometimes, poses a great deal of challenges. This was my initial fear at the earlier stage of this research because I knew I was going to contend with two major gatekeepers namely; the NGO WANEP and community leaders in Ogoniland. But surprisingly, the reverse became the case, gaining access turned out not to be the problem I had earlier imagined. After I made the conclusion that I was going to write about the program WIPNET in Nigeria vis-à-vis the Ogoni women group, I contacted the national coordinator of WANEP, and explained my intentions, and to my surprise, I was given a go-ahead without any pre-conditions or restrictions. I was made to understand that they operate an open organization, and are open to criticisms, whether good or bad. And as a result, all information or data I needed as regard to my research was made available to me. Furthermore, through the national coordinator, I got introduced to the program manager of WIPNET who was at first, a bit skeptical as to why I wanted to do a

study of their program, but later consented after I clarified the purpose of my intended research, and went ahead to give me the contact information of the women group leader in Ogoni. However, when the manager further offered to provide me with some escorts to help guide me through the difficult terrains of the region, I declined since am already familiar with the routes; moreover, I also felt that their presence may also influence the views of my informants. Through the women leader, I gained further access to other members of the group. So with access gained through the NGO (WANEP), I decided not to seek further access through the community leaders after I was told that such process requires some financial reward.

3.3 Sampling

Sampling is referred to as the act of selecting a subset of a group, in order to get information about the whole group. Generally, sampling is categorized into two, namely probability and non-probability sampling. The probability sampling involves selections of sample through the process of random, it is mostly used in survey research or where statistical inference is required, while non-probability sampling refers to the use of non-random method in the selection of samples (Walliman 2006: 76-78). Non-random method is known to work well, when generalization to a larger population or statistical inference are not highly significant in the research. It is more appropriate with qualitative research especially an interview based research, and to also avoid the difficulties associated with probability sampling which requires the mapping out of the population from which the random sampling might be obtained also known as “sampling frame” (see Bryman 2008:414).

The sampling size of this research is relatively small compared to the numbers of entire members of the women group (also known as Federation of Ogoni Women) whom are estimated to be over 30 000 in number across the entire Ogoni land. That notwithstanding, the sample size served the purpose of the study because the population in question is very homogeneous in nature, and in such situation, a small sample is proved to give an adequate “representative view of the whole group” (Walliman 2006:80). My informants were selected by non-probability method through a technique known as Snow-ball sampling. The objective of this techniques is to select participants who have direct bearing to the “research question” and to further establish contacts with the others through them (Bryman 2008: 184) I choose the above method because of the low level of trust within the region as a result of many years of oppression. Research in conflict zone requires some level of trust, even though I have once

lived in this community, the fact that I am not an indigene of this region remains, therefore, still makes me an outsider so to say, more so, living among them for a year as a secondary school teacher, and returning back after many years as a researcher, will definitely require regaining familiarity all over again with the research population. I was looking for respondents who have deep knowledge of the main topic of research, mostly those who directly or indirectly participated in WIPNET's program or got trained by the trainers. Altogether, women from different communities in Ogoni were selected for the focus group interview. The women are between the ages of 35 - 59 and displayed a high level of literacy.

3.4 Data collection techniques

Data can be collected through different methods, for example qualitative or quantitative. However, the differences lie in the level of flexibility, *structure*, *sequential order* and *freedom* that the researcher is disposed to during research, (kumar 2011:138). In brief, qualitative research “tends to study how phenomena are experienced or constructed in people’s everyday activities” (Silverman 2013:103). It attempts to answer question that lays special emphasis on “how social experiences is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln; (ed) 1994:4) . Whereas quantitative research is very structured in nature, and attaches great significance on “measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables...” (ibid). So, in my attempt to understand the experiences of the Ogoni women group, (also known as Federation of Ogoni Women) vis a vis the capacity building program of Women in peace building Network (WIPNET) of West African Network for Peace building (WANEP) geared towards equipping women with the necessary skills that will enable them to participate in decision making in issues relating to peace and security within their locality, I found the qualitative method useful for my purpose.

I choose the above method because the nature of my research seeks to understand the meaning my participants ascribes to WIPNET's program and how are they are making use of their new skills in their everyday life. Beside, studying women empowerment requires obtaining the subjective views of the women, since empowerment is measured by the meanings women attributes to it (Kabeer, 1997,1998; cited in Malhotra & Shuler, 2005:80). This off course might not be efficiently captured through quantitative method.

In collecting the data for this research, my primary tool was interview, I conducted interviews at both individual and group level; among WANEP officials, I made use of semi structured interview, and with the Ogoni women I carried out focus group interview and telephone Interviews, plus another telephone interview with Kebetkache.

3.4.1 Interviews

“..An interview is a verbal interchange, often face to face,...in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person.” It can also take place through other means such as telephone, and “between two or more individuals” (Burns 1997, cited in Kumar 2011:144). Interviews can be structured or semi-structured. A structured interview follows a predetermined pattern both in wording and order of questions (ibid:145), while semi-structured interview is less structured, it gives room for flexibility and does not necessarily follow a pre-determined pattern.

Upon my arrival in Nigeria, my first point of contact was at the head office of WANAP situated in Lagos the western part of Nigeria. While in Lagos I conducted an interview with the national coordinator of WANAP as well as the Program manager of WIPNET. The objective of the interview was to enable me gather information about the activities of WIPNET in Ogoni. Although I had a list of question on my interview guide, the interview itself was semi-structured in nature. That is, the questions were not taken in a pre-determined order. Some of the questions are open- ended in nature, and this gave room for flexibility and openness to probe for more details. I choose semi-structured interview basically for the purpose of its flexibility. Also, I wanted to get the whole picture of WANEPs activities in Ogoni, not only from my own point of views, or from the information in the secondary data, but also from the view point of WANAPs officials, most importantly the program coordinators. This method also enabled me to seek clarifications on some issues that I found contradictory in the official documents.

3.4.2 Focus group interview

After my interview with WANEP officials, I left Lagos for Port Harcourt, the capital city of River state. While in Rivers state, I had wanted to interview the founder/coordinator of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Center, to get her perspectives regarding, the peace-building training skills vis-à-vis the Ogoni women, since she was the facilitator of WIPNET's training among the women group, and the link between WANEP and them. But, I was not able to establish a face to face contact with her. However, the interview was conducted by phone, after I had returned back to Norway. The interview was also semi-structured in nature.

Before departing Lagos, I had already fixed a time and venue of the meeting with the women group through one of their leaders. I did not have any problem in locating my destination, because of my previous knowledge of most of the routes within Ogoni. From Port Harcourt, I headed for Gokhana, where the focus group interview took place.

Patton defined Focus group interview as “an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are typically six to eight people with similar backgrounds who participate in the interview for one to two hours”(Patton 2002:385). The major advantage of focus group over “one-on-one interview” lies in the sense that the setting in a focus group interview allows participants to hear each other's responses and by so doing, they become influenced and make more contribution than they originally would have made “on a one-on-one interview” (ibid:386). In addition, data gotten from such a method can be quite rich and refined in nature. Krueger attributes this to the tendency of “participant to provide checks and balances on each other, and thereby weeding out false or extreme views” (Krueger & Casey 2000, sited in Patton 2002:386).

Another reason I chose focus group was because it offered an ideal environment for gathering view points from the collective\shared experiences of the Ogoni women, considering that these women carry out their activity as a group. So using focus group was to enable me assess their relatively shared views. More so, among feminist researchers, focus group is said to be empowering in the sense that, it is helpful for interviewees who may be shy, because focus group provides a “safety in number” kind of atmosphere that may enable them to open up. According to Esther Madriz (2002) in her highlights of the emergence of focus group as “a collaborative and empowering approach to feminist research”, she argues that:

“Focus groups allow access to research participants who may find one-on-one, face-to-face interaction “scary” or “intimidating.” By creating multiple lines of communication, the group interview offers participants.....a safe environment where they can share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of people from the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds.....” (cited in Patton 2002:385)

Good as it may be, focus group also has some limitations, for example limited time and the tendencies for the more reserved group members not making contributions to the discussion (Ibid). These situations were well managed and the discussion was productive. To begin with, the issue under discussion was not sensitive in nature, therefore the women were at ease and more open and willing to talk. I believe my gender as a woman also made the atmosphere more relaxed. I was able to interact freely and respectfully with them, and encourage equal contribution from each one of them to the interview. The interview was semi-structure, I had a specific set of question as a guide, and there was also room for new ones. Questions were open-ended, clear and easy to understand, hence avoiding unnecessary rephrasing or repeating which gave room for judicious use of time.

Nonetheless, certain important condition such as “formatting”, which are also known to affect the outcome of a focus group was also taken into consideration for example, and according to Kumar, “special consideration must be given when formatting a focus group in order to achieve the best out of the discussion(2011:128)” because there is a direct link between the quantity of the group in relation to the quality of the outcome of the discussion. In other words, to have a meaningful discussion, it is required that group should neither be “too small or too large”. So with this knowledge at the back of my mind, and in order to get a balanced outcome, as well as manageable size of correspondents during the period of my data collection at Ogoni, I carried out a focus group interview with 8 members of FOWA, comprising of women from various communities within Ogoni land for two hours.

Having in mind the challenges that are associated with taking adequate notes while conducting a focus group interview, I relied on the tape recording facility of my laptop, and off course with the consent of my informants. Thus I did not have to worry about missing out any important details while facilitating and listening attentively to their responses and taking notes of key points only. The focus group interview took place in a class room of one of the primary schools located in Gokhana. My informants choose the venue because it was closer to the main road and easily accessible to all either by foot, car or bicycles.

Other factors that influenced my desire for focus group were limited time and resources. So by choosing Focus group interview, I had hoped to interview 8 people within the same frame of time I would have used for one person.

However, the issue of security made me cut down on the number of focus group discussion I had intended to carry out. Having lived outside Nigerian for some years, I realized that I lacked the up-to-date situation of security therein, so after I arrived Port Harcourt (capital city of Rivers state), I contacted some of ex Youth Corps member who lived in Port-Harcourt. And they warned me about the internal security challenges, particularly in the eastern and southern state and its environs; I decided to keep a low profile and operated from the capital city (Port Harcourt) instead of staying in the study area. My initial plan was to do three sets of focus group interview, but when I got hinted about the risk of attracting unwelcomed attention through such a gatherings, I ended up doing just one in order not to subject my informants to any form of stigmatizations. Ogoni is a community where virtually everybody knows each other, any gathering with a stranger usually raises suspicions among the youths, who may mistake such gathering as an attempt to secretly collect monetary compensations from either government officials or oil companies. This can make researching in conflicts environments quite challenging, owing to a “common attitude of distrust and suspicion” (Cohen & Arieli 2011).

Nonetheless the rest of the interview was carried out via telephone. Although telephone interview is not quite popular among qualitative researchers, however research evidence has proved that there is little or no difference between face to face interview and telephone interview (Surges and Hanrahan-2004; cited in Bryman 2008:457) It is not only cost efficient, it is also favorable when the issue of safety is in question (ibid). Not being able to observe the body language of the interviewee, likelihood of poor telecommunication network, and not being able to reach those who do not own a telephone, are some of the limitations of telephone interview (ibid). I conducted 2 in-depth interviews via telephone, but stopped interviewing, when I realized that the additional data I got, did not provide any new information. (Kumar 2011:208)

3.4.3 Secondary sources

In other to buttress the data I collected during interview with WANEP officials and Ogoni Women, I also made use of , WANEP's organizational sites, journals, minutes of meetings, articles and various report on its activities within the theme of research. The minutes of meetings provided me with internal information which have never been studied before. Since the research itself was not sensitive in nature, and in other to describes some of the impacts the conflict had on Ogoni women, I relied on earlier researches done by other authors.

3.5 Reflections

3.5.1 Language

All the interviews including the focus group interview were conducted in English, although, the Ogonis have their own indigenous language. However there was no need to make use of an interpreter, since the average Nigerian speaks English or Pidgin English (a local form of English), because English is the official language in Nigeria. My informants have a higher level of education, they were quite fluent in English and communication was not an issue.

3.5.2 Age difference

Since doing qualitative research involved in most part, obtaining the lived experiences of participants, it becomes therefore necessary to minimize degree of "status hierarchy between the researcher and the researched, (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2011:105). In my own case, I sensed that the age difference between me and most of my informants was quite wide, the youngest among my informants was 35years old and the rest are between 40-59 years. In most Nigeria traditional societies, age plays a very important role in interactions among individuals. Elders are treated with respect, and youths are expected to comport themselves in a respectful manner, while interacting with those older than them, even when the age differences are not much. Conducting focus group interviews itself is not so simple, in the sense that it requires the interviewer's ability to properly facilitate the discussion, to encourage equal contribution, talk less of when participants are much older than the interviewer, in the Nigerian context. So I knew I had to tread cautiously in order not to act in a manner that may appear disrespectful, while achieving the aim of the interview. From my own experiences, back home in Nigeria, I have learned that the way one dresses determines the way one would be addressed. First, I made sure that my dressing was appropriate and line with the general acceptable ways of dressing for women in rural communities in Nigeria

especially in Ogoni, based on my previous stay. Interestingly, I noticed that some of my participants came dressed in denim jeans skirt and beautiful tops to match, instead of the normal native wears such as wrappers and traditional gowns, this got me thinking if this could be another dimension of empowerment. Nonetheless, I do not think my dressing may have affected the interview, maybe it may have, if it was the other way round. However, I interpreted their dressing as a positive sign with regards to the area of my study.

Furthermore, I addressed each of my participants with respects, using prefix such as “Ma” (short form for madam) before their names. In Nigeria, this is a generally acceptable way of addressing people, who are older in age. Also, prior to the interview, I began by sharing about my experience as a former teacher in one of the secondary schools in Ogoni, and this made the atmosphere quite comfortable (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:105), for my informants since some of them are teachers by profession.

3.5.3 Insider/Outsider

I believe that my insider status as a woman and as a former resident in Ogoni, made a positive influence on the study. I saw what it felt like for the women to walk the long distance to farmlands, because spillages from pipelines have made useless major parts of their lands, and how expensive it was to buy a bucket of drinkable water, from private individual who sell water in the area, because there was no other save source of water. While living in Ogoni, I also observed that it was mainly the men that are present during meetings where community issues are deliberated. Especially on issues regarding how much or who gets compensated I also observed that women, did not publicly discuss much about their interest in being involved in such activities. Even among the students, only the boys talked about such issues.

Being a woman, may not always be enough in really capturing the nuanced experiences of the interviewees, sometimes it requires ,that the interviewer and participants shares the same cultural experiences to be able to captures this (Ibid:118). As a Nigerian women, I had grown up in a patriarchal environment where women are meant to be seen and not heard, however, I found out that my own situation is not as complicated as that of the Ogoni women, because, in my own side of the country, women sources of livelihood, were not affected like that of the Ogoni women. Being an insider and an outsider enabled me to understand better the plight of the Ogoni women. Furthermore, the knowledge also guided me in my research question, and

in formulating interview question, in the sense that I was able to identify differences from what I already know before hand, and what the present condition now is.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration requires that researchers should take precautions against “consequences” and situation that may be harmful to their participants (Bryman 2008:118). Although, it may appear difficult to identify the likelihood of harm in all circumstances, the importance of protecting them outweighs risking the situation (ibid: 120), especially when the participants live in a conflict torn zone and have been exposed to different forms of harm already. Before the collection of data, I made sure I had the consent of my informants. I introduced myself as a student to my informants and clearly explained to them what my research was all about. I informed them that their identities will be confidential (Ibid), and ensured that by using pseudonym names. They were also aware that participation in the interviews is optional, and have the right to discontinue with the discussion, at any point.

Throughout every stage of the research, I was conscious of about my ethical obligations (Hesse-Biber & Levy 2011:77) to protect my informant from any form of danger. Thus, in order to avoid drawing unnecessary attention to my informants, as a result of our gathering, I decided to cut down on the number of group meetings and the rest of the interviews were done via telephone. I see this also as a limitation to the research. In the sense that the views of those who do not own mobile telephones where not heard.

Summary.

This chapter looked at the techniques adopted in gathering the necessary data for this research. It provided an overview of the study area, and the reason for such decision. It further outlined procedures adopted in the selection of informants as well as how access to informants was gained. My own reflection as the researcher, ethical considerations and limitations to the research was also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4:

Conceptual Approach

Introduction

This chapter provides the conceptual framework upon which my data analysis will be based; namely on concepts of empowerment. I choose to make use of the concept of empowerment because I found it useful in explaining WANEP's program in Ogoni as well as the values the women attaches to the same program, plus the effect the program is having on their everyday life. WANEP's project (WIPNET), which focuses on sensitizing the Ogoni women to become agents of change in their own community, by straightening their social network, and linking them to various resources or enabling factors, is viewed here as phenomenon of empowering actions.

The word empowerment has many meanings and can be viewed from different perspectives (Perkins & Zimmerma, 1995: 570). The term has become popular among different spheres of disciplines such as community psychology, adult education, feminist theory, sociology, political theory and psychology (Gutiérrez 1995: 149) Thus empowerment can mean different things to different people in different contexts, hence to get a clearer view of empowerment, it is therefore relevant that the immediate environment determines its true meaning (Rappaport, 1984: 2). For example what might be empowering to an individual in a one situation, might not be considered empowering, by another. And what may seem disempowering to some people may actually be empowering to others (see Deepa Narayan, 2005: preface).

Naila Kabeer (2005: 13) presented empowerment as a change from one condition to another. While creating a relationship between empowerment and power, the author stated that power is the ability to make choices, hence the denial of such a choice is regarded as disempowerment. And the processes through which such an ability is acquired is referred to as empowerment.

Empowerment can take place at various levels such as macro (group) and micro (individual) level, where macro level is viewed as the "process of increasing collective political power"

(Fagan, 1979; O'Connell, 1978. cited in Gutiérrez 1990; 150) , and micro level is seen as the “development of a personal feeling of increased power or control without an actual change in structural arrangement” (Pernell, 1985; Pinderhughes, 1983; Sherman & Wenocur, 1983; Simons & Parsons, 1985a, 1983b. cited in Gutierrez 1990: 150).

Being empowered at one level, may enhance empowerment at another level, some authors have highlighted the possibility that individual empowerment may lead to group empowerment and that the increase in group power can “enhance the functioning of its individual members” (Ibid: 150).

Empowerment theory tends to link individual wellness to the social policy obtainable within a society. For example, when those who have total control of power, for example if a political institution in a society, fails to meet the needs of its members, whatever situation that arises as a result of such denial is not blamed on the individuals, but rather on the government. (Rappaport, 1981, 1984, cited in Zimmerman & Perkins 1995: 569). For instance, if such a situation results into social instabilities, instead of blaming individuals, it is regarded as a survival strategy of individuals whose society have denied of their needs. (Pinderhughes 1983, sited in Gutiérrez, 1990:150; Zimmerman & Perkins 1995:570) In order words, empowerment theory projects disempowered individuals as victims, rather than perpetrators. Empowerment provides the enabling grounds through which disempowered individuals or groups can make a change to their situations. It “gives people the opportunity and necessary resources so that they can believe, understand, and change their world” (Lagana 1989, cited by Bredeson, 1989: 9). According to the Progress Report for the Sixth African Development Forum, empowerment is seen as, “people taking control over their own lives, setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems...and expressing their voices” (ADF vi 2008)

Gutiérrez (1990: 150) describes empowerment process as one which occurs at the “individual, interpersonal and institutional level” where the individual becomes aware of his ability to “affect” others by working with them to bring about changes to the social institutions.

Also, empowerment may be seen as an interventional approach whereby actors, for example members the non-governmental organizations such as WANEP, work with groups within a society in order to bring about changes in their situation.

Empowerment may be viewed as both a process and outcome. It is expected that empowering actions and activities carried out during the processes of empowerment should in turn ‘result to empowered outcomes’ (Perkins & Zimmerma, 1995: 570). For example if an individual or

organization is engaged in empowering actions or activities in a community or among groups, there should be a manifestation of actions among the recipients of such a program. While on the other hand, it can also be viewed as a continual process. According to Carr 2003, empowerment is seen as a cyclical process, suggesting that “ it is an inherently interpersonal process in which individuals collectively define and activate strategies to gain access to knowledge and power” (p.18). Viewing empowerment as a process suggests that growth and change are not static but occurs throughout one’s life cycle (Friere, 1973; Kieffer, 1984. cited in Gutiérrez, 1990: p. 150).

This study views , empowerment within the context of “bottom up” human development, and focuses on groups agency and ability to make use of available resource to achieve the change they desire (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005:73) , and actions displayed by the women, as a result of being part of WANEP’s project is viewed as a process of empowerment. Viewing such as a process, may help to recognize the changes that may occur as women “progress from one state to another” (Narayan, 2005:27). And also because, the project itself is continuous and involves other aspect of empowering actions which are yet to be accomplished for example economic aspect of empowerment.

Many authors agree that empowerment is difficult to measure (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005:79, Narayan, 2005:15;) Viewing empowerment as a process, may lead to difficulties in measurement, since process means moving, and a “moving target may not be properly captured” (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005:79). Although the main purpose of this thesis is not about the evaluation of WANEP’s project, such may require a different methodological approach, nor is it to carry out measurement of women’s empowerment in its complete sense, such is beyond the scope of this research, for example, measuring women’s economic empowerment alone, would require a complete profile of the women’s income and expenditures, as well as ownership of asset (Naraya 2005:20) and such may not be accomplished within the time frame of data collection. Rather the research attempts to understand empowerment within the context of the Ogoni women, the study focuses on the narratives of my informants and the meanings they attribute to their experiences, as they aspire for the change they desire. And based on this context, process is viewed “subjectively”, rather than objectively ((Kabeer, 1997, 1998; cited in Malhotra & Schuler, 2005:80)

In this paper, I shall approach empowerment through the following dimensions, namely: agency, power and consciousness. Agency refers to the belief individuals or groups have in their ability to achieve their goals. Collective power means the shared abilities of individuals as they come together to form a group. Consciousness represents the knowledge and awareness gained by individuals concerning their disempowered status and how to bring about changes.

4.1 Agency:

At the individual level, agency can be seen as self-confidence, or “self-efficacy”. According to Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is the belief or confidence people have concerning their ability to exercise control over events that affect them. Without a perceived self-efficacy,(that is belief in one’s ability), people will not have the will or incentive to ‘persevere in terms of difficulty. At group levels, collective efficacy is seen as ‘groups shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment’ or change (Ibid). Malhotra and Schuler (in Narayaan 2005: 72) emphasizes that individuals should not just assume the position of victims rather, they should be part of bringing the changes they so desire, they “.....themselves must be significant actors in the processes of change that is being described or measured...., by realizing that they can be an agents of change themselves. This however does not mean that all changes must be brought about by the individuals alone (Ibid: 73). But they should be significant part of these change. In other words, Individuals can also get help, to boost their agency. Bandura (1997: 101) identified different sources of self-efficacy among them is verbal persuasion (social persuasion) and stresses that when people are encouraged and persuaded to believe that they have the capability to achieve their aims, they tend to put in greater efforts to ‘sustain it than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies...” .This is an area the civil societies or NGOs such as WANEP can render help as well. Although they may provide the enabling ground and support for bringing about changes in the lives of the women, however, it is expected that the women themselves must be willing to be actively involved in the empowerment or change processes. It will be considered a waste of efforts and resources, if they themselves are not willing to be agents of their own change (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005:72). In other words, if groups do not have collective efficacy, social intervention activities with them for the purpose of empowerment, might not really be fruitful.

Furthermore, viewing agency from the perspective of gender and power, Kabeer (2005) emphasizes on the importance of the need to boost individuals agency through access to resources, explaining that agency alone cannot enhance capabilities; it takes resources plus agency in order to attain achievement. A factor such as gender inequality, can act as hindrance to agency because, agency is dependent on resources, hence limited access to resources, could result to limited ability to make choices (p 15). The author further argues that only those who are privileged to be part of decision making within household, communities or organizations, determines the way in which resources are distributed (ibid). Hence lack of access to resources may reduce the potentiality of agency. On the other hand, Malhotra & Schuler (2005), contends that 'changes' in or law or policy makes no significance in influencing practice, and argues that, although resources is important for empowerment, but having access to resource does not guarantee that empowerment will take place, however, it requires "women's individual and collective ability to recognize and utilize resources in their own interest" (73). In other words, women who have access to political, economic or social resources should be able to make proper use of them to further promote the interest of others, to ensure women's 'greater control over resources' (ibid).

4.2 Collective Power

Literally, power may be defined as a force. Following Kabeer's classifications, the term power can be viewed in various ways, for example, negative and positive power (2005:14). When it is applied as a weapon of suppression, oppression, discrimination, intimidation and marginalization leading to a situation whereby individuals see themselves as powerless or disempowered, then it is seen as negative power or power over (Ibid) .

In the work of Bradbury-Jones et al (2007) there was also the recognition of the link between power and empowerment as well as the various forms which power is exercised. So in addition to power over, as mentioned above, there are other variants such as "power from within" and "power with" (259). The former refers to "self-efficacy" as discussed under agency in this chapter, while the latter is referred to as shared power (ibid). Therefore, when power is shared among individuals, it becomes positive power. This positive power describes the concepts of power within the framework of empowerment. Within this perspective, collective power is viewed as "power with" rather than power over, because here, power is shared equally among group members, and are positively used to achieve group's objective.

Disempowered groups often take advantage of their “collective capability to organize and mobilize, so as to be recognized on their own terms, to be represented, and to make their voices heard” (Deepa Narayan 2005: 11) they distinguish themselves by establishing groups, unions, or associations, adopting different names or logos. And by having constant combined group activities such as meetings, church activities, the women, share information among themselves, spread new knowledge across each other, thereby building solidarity, and trust among themselves (ibid). All these activities also helps them to cope with their situation.

In addition, forming a coalition makes it easy for them to have access to resources (Ibid) For example, when aggrieved individuals within a community come together to form a group, It would be easier for them to approach heads of communities within their villages to register their grievances. Furthermore, it makes it much easier to access help outside their communities, for example to establish contact with Non-governmental Organizations (NGO), and through these NGOs they might establish further links with other national and international organization, that have the capacity to influence government policy to benefit them (ibid). The power that emerges when groups mobilize, plays a very vital role in the concept of empowerment, not only does it make available resources for the groups, it also can provide the bases for the measurement of empowerment, because, “it is essential to locate individuals who share these same history of disempowerment, in order to correctly interpret the outcome of the empowering program. (ibid)

4.3 Consciousness

The term consciousness means awareness and knowledge. It plays a very vital role in conceptualizing empowerment and lays emphasis on the stage “during which individuals come to understand the political dimension of their problems and act accordingly” (Carr 2003: p. 9) From the point of feminist positionality understanding, and identity building, Carr (2003) views “conscious raising as a process of discovery in which one begin to see ones position and move towards other possible positions.”(Ibid:15) The concept of consciousness helps to explain the realization by disempowered groups or individuals, that things are not the way they should be. Making these individuals to became aware of their position, as the marginalized group, and then move on to strategize how to bring about solution to it. During these processes, they share their experiences, ideas, and also became aware of their rights as human beings, as well as their socio-political rights.

Consciousness can be said to involve several process (see Carr, 2003:15) such as defining ones position and ‘relationship in the society’, ‘creating or recreating identity in regards to ones environments’ , and affecting social change. (ibid) According to Gutierrez, in development of groups consciousness, individuals within the groups perceive themselves as victims of a particular system, thereby viewing the whole situation from a subjective angle. (sited in Carr, 2003:15).

Consciousness reduces self-blame among individuals, making them recognize that their “existing” problem is not their fault, but a result of power arrangement within their society, thereby reducing the feeling of depression and deficient, making them “more capable of changing their situation”(Garven, 19985; Hirayama & Hirayama, 1985; Janoff-Bulman, 1979; Keefe, 1980; Longres & McLeod, 1980; Pernell, 1985; Solomon, 1976, cited in Gutierrez, 1990: 150).

Based on the idea of Freire (1970) consciousness enables individuals or groups to interpret the effect of their situation, by giving it a “name” in order to find a solution to it (cited in Carr, 2003: 15). In other words consciousness enables individuals to define their situation, see the consequences of their present situation, and find a means of changing it.

Summary

The term empowerment is chosen as the analytical tool to explain WANEP’s project, and its impact the Ogoni women. In conceptualizing empowerment, I used agency, power and consciousness. Agency was described as the belief individuals or groups have in their ability to achieve their goals. Power was referred to as the shared abilities of individuals as they come together to form a group. Consciousness was described as the knowledge and awareness gained by individuals concerning their disempowered states and how to bring about changes.

The theory of empowerment suggest that the state of human misery can be overcome as people undergo empowerment processes, such as mobilizing, identifying, gaining consciousness, confidence and solidarity (Carr.2003:14) This ‘changing nature of positionality’ may provide understanding to the Ogoni context.

Chapter 5

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The focus of this thesis has been to explore WANEP's attempt at enhancing gender balanced peace and security in Ogoni, through its project (WIPNET) which aims at strengthening the capacity of the women network group therein, and how the women are making use of their new skills, in their everyday life.

To address the above, data was obtained through various sources, namely semi structured interviews, focus group interviews and secondary sources. This chapter shall interpret and analyze the collected data, with the help of the theoretical concepts presented in chapter four.

First, a brief overview of my informants' background will be presented, before moving on to the presentation and interpretation of the qualitative data obtained from the above mentioned sources. These data will be merged together and presented in thematic sections with sub themes. The first section of the analysis will determine the perceptions of my informants regarding their condition, taking into consideration three time frames of before, during, and after the conflict and prior to contacts with any NGO. The 2nd section will establish what my informants centralizes in their perception of empowerment, the 3rd section will address measures taken by WIPNET's to facilitate changes in Ogoni, and the last section will examine the transformations among the members of the women group known as FOWA.

5.1 Presentation of informants

For the purpose of this research, I conducted five semi/structured interviews and one focus group interview. Two of the interviews took place in Lagos with staffs of WANEP; the national network coordinator and program manager respectively. One was a telephone interview with the founder of Kebetkache, after I had returned from fieldwork, and the remaining 2 interviews plus the focus group discussion were with the members of Ogoni women group (FOWA). The focus group interview took place in Gokana one of the six kingdoms of Ogoni. The focus group discussion was made up of 8 women. The selection of

participant was done through snow ball approach, thus was limited to only those within the network of my informants and who have been trained by WIPNET, or those who benefitted through replication training of the trained. The members of FOWA who participated in both the focus group discussion and the phone interview, were indigenes of the various communities in Ogoni. Pseudonym names were used, in order to protect the identities of my informants.

Table 2: Showing informants background, organizations, role, location, sex and trained/trainer status.

Number	Pseudonym Name	Organisation	Role	Location	Sex	Trained/Trainer
1	Staff	WANEP	National Network Coordinator	Lagos (head office)	Male	
2	Staff	WIPNET /WANEP	Program Manager	Lagos (Head office)	Female	
3	Staff	Kabetkache	Partner Organisation / Training Facilitator (South –South zone)	Port Harcourt (Rivers State)	Female	*
4	Bera	FOWA	Group Leader	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
5	Lara	FOWA	Group leader	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
6	Obara	FOWA	Group leader	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
7	Tina	FOWA	Group leader	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
8	Bibi	FOWA	Group Leader	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
9	Obaro	FOWA	Member	Ogoni	Female	*

10	Preye	FOWA	Member	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
11	Tombri	FOWA	Member	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
12	Ogogho	FOWA	Member	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*
13	Binta	FOWA	Member	Ogoni (Rivers State)	Female	*

5.2 Perception of condition

This section will establish the Ogoni women's perceptions of the condition that affects them. Understanding the perception of Ogoni women about their condition will determine whether the condition they found themselves is empowering or disempowering. In other words, is it by choice or due to inequalities within the society, since empowerment focuses basically on "inequalities in people's capacities to make choice and not differences in choice they make" (Kabeer, 1999:439). This draws a line between "choice denial" and "preferences" (ibid).

This points further to the issue of context, as discussed in the previous chapter; context is a very important component in understanding and measuring empowerment, different social cultural settings have different interpretations of what is empowering and what is disempowering to them (Malhotra & Schuler 2005:76). Therefore it becomes necessary to find out the views of my informants regarding their condition, prior to their participation in any form of capacity building scheme. The time frame in this section covers the periods before, during and after the aftermath of the conflict. Obtaining the women's "retrospective narratives" (Ibid), will determine their condition, before participating in WIPNET's project. This will help to understand the impact the project has had on them.

From the information obtained from my informant, the fundamental element in their views concerning their condition was the issue of; (1) inability to meet their basic needs, (2) lack of confidence and awareness of their rights and, (3) the inability to be part of decision making regarding issues affecting their livelihoods after their participation in the struggle.

5.2.1 Limited Source of Livelihood

In the average Nigerian society, women are limited to certain roles, while the political, social and economic arenas are mostly controlled by men, (Ibeanu 2002: 207) As mentioned in chapter two, in Ogoniland, the majority of the women are dependent on the environment, thus, farming and fishing are their main occupation.

In response to question concerning the perception of their conditions before the conflict, the following response was given by Tina; one of my informant during focus group discussion:

“...the land degradation affects we women, because the land is no longer useful to our usage of the land, you know this is the source of our income, most of the women are not among the working class groups, they are farmers. Now we hardly make gain out of it, and as a result, we now have difficulties meeting our daily needs, we have become financially poor.”

All of my informants identifies with Tina’s excerpts above. They said that the lands were given to them as a gift from their husbands after marriage, and that their livelihood is based upon the income that accrues from tilling this land, as well as fishing, and it is from this income they also make necessary contributions towards the welfare of their home. As such, Tina went on to say that : *” whatever affects those crops also affects us”*

5.2.2 Lack of awareness and confidence

Before the Ogoni struggle, my informants narrated that they suffered in silence and also lacked the confidence to speak out. Preye, described their plight as such:

“before the conflict, we were novices. We do not know much, could not say much, only carrying our little produce from the farms, and to the markets. In fact we used to be afraid to speak out”

The women claimed that most of them lacked knowledge of their basic rights. They were not aware of laws or any human rights backings with regards to their condition as at then. And

even if there was, most of them were not educated enough to understand how such law operates. In addition they pointed out that lack of basic amenities such as electricity makes it almost impossible to be up to date with current happenings. Nigeria suffers from low power generation and distribution due to improper maintenance of power transmitting equipment's in the country (Ohajiana et la 2014:55). On most occasions, power supplies are completely cut off in many locations for long periods of time.

In this situation, even though their oppressors happens to be the Nigeria government and the Oil companies who were responsible for oil extraction in their lands and water, the impact of living in a society where women are only to be seen but not heard, appeared to have also contributed in their fear of speaking out. According to Kabeer (2005) "Gender often operates through the unquestioned acceptance of power relations...(..) ..so to behave otherwise is considered outside the realm of possibility" (p. 14) . Here it appeared like the women seem to have accepted their fate, and chosen to "internalize" their suffering.

Furthermore, apart from not having knowledge of existing rights and laws, the challenges of not being able to meet their daily needs appears also impacted on their self-confidence. According to Obara;

" we can longer be important, the regards we have in our homes by assisting our husbands because we contribute to their own efforts too, was no more there, because our source of income has been tampered with, since that source of income was no more there, we lost our values" –

5.2.3 Equal partners during the struggle and unequal partners in the aftermaths.

When the condition of Ogoni women continued and without help from the government, the women's self believes changed. According to my informants, poverty played a significant role in awakening their desire for change; hence the question of fear as regard to going against the traditional gender norms was no longer the issue for them, as they stood side by side with the men at the battle front.

Events from the past have proven that despite the patriarchal nature of most African societies; when women are "pushed to the wall" they often stand up against the source of their oppression (Udogu, 2005:93). For example, and in Nigeria specifically, the "Aba women war" of 1929, saw women defying all traditional odds in order to express their grievances against some of the perceived unfavorable policies of the colonial administration

(Mba ; 1982, cited in Udogu, 2005:93). In the case of the Aba women, the women revolted when they suspected that the new tax policy, which was about to be established then, would enforce them to be taxed, because during that period, only the men paid taxes (Hafkin & Bay, 1976:72). In the same vein, and in the more recent time, the Liberian women, operating under a group name known as Women's Mass Action for Peace Network, 'drew upon faith and common values', and demanded that the war in their country to be stopped (Anderlini, 2010:23).

And for the Ogoni women, the pain, frustration, and difficulties associated with the damage to their source of livelihood, motivated them to step out of their gender restricted position, and joined force with their men in demanding for change within their community. Many of them experienced various levels of violence during and after the armed conflict. According to the research conducted by Ibeanu, regarding t the impact of Ogoni conflict on women, he found out that the women interviewed gave various accounts of "systematic rapes", "shootings and killing", "sexual slavery", and "forced pregnancy" as the kind of violence carried out against them by their opponent during the conflict (2002:199). (see chapter two)

The wide spread of violence did not however deter their decision to participate in the Struggle, they continued both at the front line alongside their male counterpart as well as providing other supportive services (Ibid).

Although the women gained some level of recognition for their contribution towards the struggle, unfortunately, their selfless sacrifices (Ibeanu 2002, 207) did not change the gendered allocation of resources in their community, when it came to the period to return to peace. Mainly the men or community heads were involved in the peace agreements, the views of the women, as regards to how the conflicts impacted them, were not heard. Bera attested to this by saying ; "*it all depended on the interest of the community leaders, they still ignored the presence of women*"(interview excerpt.)

The narratives so far suggest that my informants lack the "authoritative resources" to act within such jurisdiction. Resource is one of the vital components of empowerment, and it comes in various forms (Kabeer, 1999:437) its is not only limited to economic, human, or social resource, but in a wider term,

" are acquired through a multiplicity of social relationships conducted in various institutional domains which make up a society (such as family, market, community). Such resources may take the form of actual allocations as well as of future claims

and expectations. Accesses to such resources will reflect the rules and norms which governs distribution and exchange in different institutional arenas. These rules and norms give certain actors authority over others in determining the principles of distribution and exchange so that the distribution of “allocative resources” tends to be embedded within the distribution of “authoritative resources.....” (Kabeer 1999:437)

This represents the gender inequality and discrimination that is inherent in some African societies such as Nigeria, where access to higher political and economic power are determined by gender. This was reflective at the higher level, when the government approved DDR program for all Niger-Delta combatants. A telephone interview conducted with Ogocho; one of the women group leaders portrayed her displeasure over this, I sensed her disappointments when her voice suddenly deepened with emotions as she asked; “*..do you know that the women were not involved in that amnesty program?* “ (interview excerpt)

In brief DDR is a United Nation (UN) initiative aimed at making way for lasting peace after a violence conflict, through demilitarization of combatants, and helping them to return back into a normal civilian life (UNDDR.org). As such, it suggest that all who participated in an armed conflict both directly or indirectly should be qualified to participant of any DDR project (ibid).

However, in reality, it is the peace agreements that determines who participates in the project, and since the members of FOWA where not equally represented in the peace agreement, they were also not taken into consideration during the design of the project.

My informants believe that the role they played during the Struggle gave them a sense of power, because they were given the opportunity to fight for what they believed in. Especially the opportunity to come together as a group to express their displeasure over the degradation of their environment., they had hoped to also be equal partners in all efforts towards building peace in Ogoni land, just like they were during the struggle, and more so, since they are the most affected by the land degradation in Ogoni land. These suggest that deep down in the heart of my informants, it seems they knew that things were not the way it should be, but were afraid to rock the boat.

5.3 Perceptions of Change.

The broad nature of the term empowerment, and its tendency to mean different things to different people in different situations (Naraya 2005), makes it relevant to take into consideration the views of those involved in the empowering process, in order to establish what they centralize in their view of the concept of empowerment (Porter, 2013:2-3). Taking such an approach is meant to demonstrate the extent to which WIPNET's projects corresponded to the women's perception and expectation of change, and what social value this may mean to them. To establish this, I inquired from them the type of change they desired, I also elicited from them the main reasons why they decided to participate in WIPNETS' project, as well as what in their views are considered as empowering. The following themes were recurring in their response;

5.3.1 Increased Access to knowledge.

During the focus group discussion, my informant perceived knowledge as empowering. They believed that to be well educated would enable them to be more grounded on how to fight for their rights. For them, it appears that the knowledge to question and hold accountable the agents of their oppression is very important for them. For Bibi, such knowledge will also be useful to them, in the area of making Shell Oil Company to own up to its responsibilities. And she said:

“especially with Shell Oil company, they come to our land to take our oil, so if we have our right, we can stop them, by saying don't touch our property again, unless you meet our demands, you know as women that's where we get our money from, so we need to insist that they should do clean up, so that we can get our lands back”

Tombri; another informant pointed out that education is very important for them, since most of them are not well educated, this may have affected their level of courage and confidence to question or address the issues affecting them in a proper manner as well as making references to obtainable rules of laws to support their claims.

For them, knowledge is power, as well as the key to full engagement in various projects within the community. In the same vein, they believe that it will require education, to be able to articulate the type of change they needed during peace negotiations, and agreements either with the Nigerian government or the oil companies in Ogoni or other parties.

5.3.2 Ability to be strong as a Group

My informants also perceived empowerment as the ability to remain united and strong as a group. They believe that their condition can only improve, if they work together as a team. In her words, Lara said “

“you know as a single person, to face opposition is not easy, but when women come together to form coalition, then you agree together on one term, so when you confront an opposition, it can be easier to achieve what you want to achieve”. . . . if we come together as one block, we can face the problem that is confronting us”.

In their perception of empowerment, the women consider any action that can keep them united, as empowering.

5.3.3 Ability to sustain themselves economically

The Ogoni women suffer economically, like most women, in traditional Nigerian society, due to their dependence on subsistent farming for sustenance. Therefore, limited access to land, just like the the case of the Ogoni women , will mean limited income, which becomes worse in a situation when a woman alone is the breadwinner of her house. It is a generally known fact that war and violent conflicts can be an expensive venture. The rebuilding of business and structures destroyed during such a period may not be so easy, especially for women, who lacked access to resources. For example, in Niger, the “men who survived the conflict” got compensated, while the women were left with nothing (Mahamane, 1999; cited in Bop, 2001:30) . For my informants, their prevalent economic difficulties did not begin after the conflict; rather it is more linked to the oil and gas exploration history, as earlier mentioned in a previous page.

Generally, all my informants are of the view that it is empowering to be economically independent. They believe that being economically sustained will increase their self-confidence and their abilities to pursue their objective.

5.3.4. The ability to partake in important decision in their community.

Although, violent conflict have many negative consequences for women, however, it also makes available certain gains for women, in the sense that it provides women a glimpse of what it feels like to be in those position that were formally occupied by men. The shift in

their role during the conflict, and their ability to accomplish things previously were never allowed to participate, seems to improve their self-confidence. And as such, may wish to sustain that shift in gender, even when the conflict has ended. According to Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen; *“Women say they feel they are different during periods of conflict and that they act differently, but the society does not allow them to live differently in periods of reconstructions”* (2001:8). My informant are of the opinion that FOWA should be seen as major stakeholders in the Ogoni kingdom, and must be included in all the decision making process in their community. This will give them the opportunity, to express their views concerning issues affecting them, just like they did during the period of the struggle.

5.4 WIPNET’s Empowering Actions

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the concept of empowerment tends to focus on a shift from one circumstance to another. Going by Kabeer’s definitions, empowerment is referred to, as a process of empowering individuals who are previously disempowered (see chapter 4). It refers to change as a movement from one condition to another. Against this backdrop, WANEP’s program WIPNET is viewed as empowering action; an attempt towards equipping the women with the capability , to achieve the change they want.

This section will discuss the methods WANEP’s adopted in strengthening the women group towards greater participation in peace and security issues in Ogoni.

5.4.1 WEST African Network for Peace building (WIPNET) : Strengthening Women Social Networking For effective Participation in Peace and Security.

WIPNET is a project of WANEP and is headed by a program manager. The program manager, works in collaboration with WANEP Secretariat, and “focal persons” inform of member organizations. And through member organizations, WIPNET establishes links with other network members like FOWA (Federation of Ogoni women)

The ideology surrounding the s project known as WIPNET is to “fight against patriarchy” and to “promote social justice”. Although WIPNET aims at stopping direct violence against women, however, its mains target is to systematically remove “structural violence”, which it assumed to be basically responsible for most of the direct violence that women experience

during violent conflict (WANEP's Peace building Training Manual, 2007, 02). These views are anchored in the assumptions that the "deeper systematic disregards for women" within patriarchy is responsible for the gendered-based violence against women. And women's equal participation in peace-building will provide the opportunity for this issue to be addressed (Ibid).

Through consultation meetings with various women groups, WIPNET discovered that, apart from gendered discrimination stemming from patriarchy, lack of confidence and knowledge of relevant skills in peacebuilding, also tends to be responsible for the absence of women at the official peace table (WIPNETS, Internal Report 2007; 2008), and as such, seeks to close these gaps. Apart from interpreting the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) into various Nigerian language, WIPNET also designed its trainings to improve women's self-esteem.

Generally, it adopts approaches of intervention geared towards building women capabilities to engage in "community based peacebuilding initiatives" (WIPNET's Reports, 2011). In other words, WIPNET provide the necessary skills and knowledge that will enable community women like the Ogoni women group to make use of their collective powers to advocate for the changes they desire.

By adopting such approach, this suggests that WIPNET recognizes the importance of groups as the agent of their own empowerment. To be an agent of ones' own empowerment relates to the concept of agency within the empowerment framework. Agency is a vital aspect of empowerment, and was defined in the previous chapter as people's belief regarding their ability to exercise control over their lives events, especially when it concerns women empowerment, (Malhotra and Schuler, 2005:72). It is expected that having a collective belief in groups own ability, will enable them to be motivated towards making attempts to change their condition. It also recognizes that women's agency itself is dependent on other element such as resource. The following section discusses WIPNET's attempts at enhancing the agency of Ogoni women.

5.4.2 Boosting Agency

The Importance of agency in empowerment, cannot be over emphasized, however, the ability to exercise agency may also depend on the level of resources available to individuals. Therefore it becomes necessary to boost individuals' agency through access to resource (Kabeer 2010:15). To put it in Malhotra and Schuler's words " Agency as the essence of women's empowerment does not imply that all improvements in the position of women must be brought about through the actions of women alone, or that it is the responsibility of individual women to empower themselves"(2005:73). To this effect, WIPNET under one its projects called "Institutional Mechanisms for Sustainable Participation of Women in Peace Processes in Nigeria, has been engaging in consultative meeting with various institutions, such as the Nigerian navy, police force, civil defense corps, and ministry of women affairs, on deliberation on *"effective strategies for engendering trainings of security institutions in the country" in order to ensure gender dimensions to peacebuilding, in Nigeria as well as facilitate women's participations to peace and security in their communities.*(WIPNET' Reports, 2008). In this sense, WIPNET believes, that if more women are recruited into the military, and given equal training as men, it may help in balancing the gender differences in the military forces and peace keeping missions, and equally enhance women participation in peace and security issues.

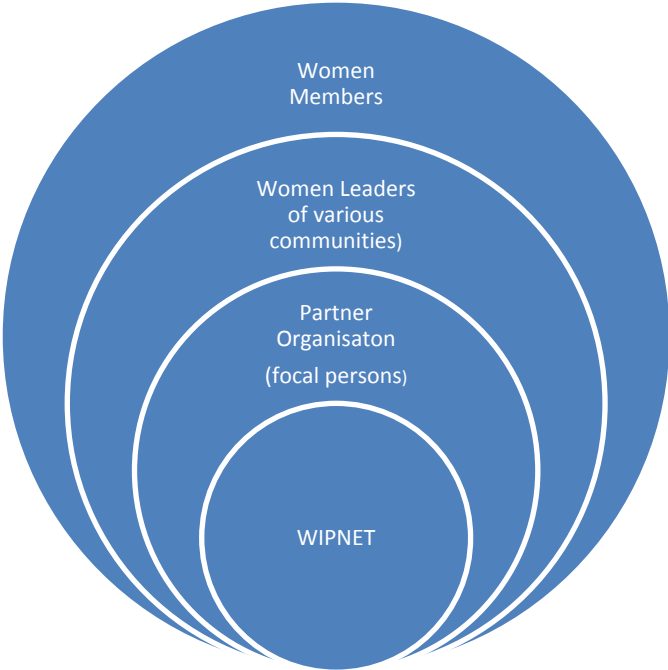
Furthermore, during the period of collecting data for this research, the program manager, made me to understand that WIPNET was working in collaboration with the Nigerian Ministry of Women affair to develop the countries National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Contributing to the development of this important document brings forward WIPNET role in influencing government policy to enhance women ability to participate in peace and security.

Furthermore, WIPNET upon the realization that lack of self-confidence, basic knowledge in peace building , knowledge of existing rule/laws (e.g UNSCR 1325, Human rights) and lack of access to finance would be a limit to the agency of the women, it made provisions to this effect, by mapping out strategies, aimed at providing access to knowledge, information, with the hope that such resources might help to strengthen the agency of the women group .

5.4.3 WIPNET’s Training Scheme

To build women capacity and skills, WIPNET adopts a method that involves training women in order for the trained women to replicate the same to other members of the community. First WIPNET trains members of its partner organizations, representing the different geopolitical zone in Nigeria. For example Ogoni women group (change agents) receives it trainings through Kebtkache, which coordinates the south-south zones of Nigeria . First the women leaders of each community in Ogoni, get trained, and then replicated the same training to other fellow women.

Figure 4: diagram illustrating the flow of WIPNET’s skills training.



Typically, trainings are tailored to suit the peculiar settings obtainable within each community and designed to boast women self-esteem in addition. Furthermore, the trainings are carried out in a women only space; an informal setting, which allows women to reflect on their past experiences and to also learn something new.

According to a field studies carried out by Anderlini, et al (2010), for ‘MIT Center for International Studies and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) in six

countries to assess whether and how efforts were made by key actors (for example NGO's, government and international organizations) to include women in peacemaking, and to ensure gender sensitivity in peace accords and recovery processes', among the key findings was that, "capacity building for women is not directly linked to peace and security issues" instead it focuses more on women capacity to "run elections" (2010:26). The study points out that, skills that are taught does not cover areas such as gender analysis, scenario assessment, conflict resolution, mediation, negotiations, advocacy and team building, and as such, have hindered women effective participation in peace and security (Ibid) . To compare the above with WIPNET's method of training, findings from interviews and WIPNETS documents suggest that WIPNET has taken measures to avoid similar discrepancies. According to information on their training manual, internal documents, and discussions with the program manager, it shows that the teachings are carried out with the aid of drama, role plays, group exercise, presentations, diagrams, debates, and case studies, and the trainings manual, covers areas such as, knowing oneself, conflict analysis, and mediations, gender and gender based violence, skills in advocacy, and decision making. Below are brief descriptions of what the trainings entails:

a) Knowledge of Oneself

According to WIPNET's training Manuel, and information from the program's activity reports, the essence of the above subject was meant to awaken participant's thoughts, regarding the different aspect of their life that makes them a woman, by taking into consideration the things they regard both as strength and weakness. For WIPNET, "*the objective of the exercise is that women believe the negative things that they are told about themselves and never take time to affirm themselves* (Training manual, 2007: 7). The hypothesis behind this points to the general conditions of the Nigerian women in particular, especially the cultural beliefs that restricts women choices., Therefore by raising women awareness concerning their strengths, WIPNET believes that such knowledge will enable women to re-think about those negative beliefs or notions of women, that relegates them to the background. This may be seen as an attempt to remove the women's self-doubts, concerning their inabilities, and to believe in themselves, and in their capability to achieve the change they want.

Conflict Analysis, Monitoring, and resolution

The above lecture was designed to enable participants to understand the real nature of conflict, its causes, well as its various categories. WIPNET believes that most women, have the wrong definition of conflict, which views conflict only from the negative sense for example “ war, oppressions, disagreements, chaos” amongst others. According to WIPNET, “*conflict can be used to bring about positive change, growth in individuals, organizations and communities*”(…)*.it is neither positive nor negative, but what determines the nature of conflict is how individuals respond to it” ..(.)* (Training Manual: 2007) WIPNET believes that with a good knowledge of conflict, and its characteristics, women will be able to manage conflict in manners that will be beneficial to all.

In addition, lectures on conflict monitoring, was designed to further enable participant to understand their environments, in relation to issues such as the underlining causes of conflicts, tendencies, its trigger, escalation, and signals. Over time, it is expected that participants should be able avert conflict, before it escalates.

Trainings in relation to UNSCR 1325 is believed to be beneficial, when participants have good knowledge about the nature of conflict, and issues within their environments, and afterwards, review the content of the UNSCR 1325, in order to find out how to address such, than training not based on context ((Anderlini, et al 2010:26)

b) Gender and Gender Violence

This aspect of lecture was designed to make the women understand the real meaning of gender and the implications on women. In essence, participants are made to understand, their position of disempowerment is due to the socially ascribed roles of men and women and not because they are the women are incapable of performing well in certain roles. Furthermore, the violence experienced by women during conflicts tends to be also linked to gender, thereby exonerating participants from guilt’s feelings and, self-blame (Carr 2003:15), because women who became victims of rape are often blamed for exposing them self to such, instead of bringing perpetrators to face the law.

This aspect of conscious rising was expected to make women, to be able to articulate the roles they can play within the society and pursue such without guilt.

Also, the above topic covered teachings about the various types of gender violence, both direct and indirect, as well as their impact women and methods of healings. It is expected that such knowledge, will equip women towards effective and efficient peace building process.

c) Skills in peace building

Skills in peacebuilding comprises of the ability to communicate appropriately, to advocate, negotiate, mediate and team building. With the right skills, in communication, WIPNET hopes to overcome pitfalls in communications such as criticizing or threats, or inability to listen attentively when others are speaking. Also, skills in communication may also enable participants to present their case in the right manner, backed with proofs and evidence. It is expected that when women are able to negotiate effectively to support their cause in the right sense, it would enhance the women full contribute in decision making related to peace building within their communities.

d) Annual lessons learned conferences

Among similar training conducted in Siri Lanka, there was reported cases, of lack of follow up on participants to ascertain whether the training was beneficial for them or if they are making use of the acquired skills (Anderlini, et al 2010: 27). And have led to difficulties in determining outcome against input.

For WIPNET, in order to afford delegates to work effectively, WIPNET arranges yearly, a lessons learned conference. The attendances during such meeting, cuts across, delegates from different geopolitical zones in Nigeria, delegates from various women groups, policy makers, amongst others. The main objectives of the conference is to deliberate on issues affecting women, reflect on past achievements, plan future activities, share success stories and knowledge among network members (Report from Annual lessons learned conference, 2008). It also provides an opportunity for various network members operating in different communities, to share their experiences, and revisit WIPNET mission statement (ibid). Through the knowledge obtained from these conferences, WIPNET is able to follow up on the impacts of its activities among member organization and women group at the grass

root levels. Share best practice, and re-strategize to achieve success over failed project.

5.4.4 Access to Micro Finance.

Poverty and empowerment, are often interlinked, it suggest that lack of access to the basic needs of life, might have impact on individuals ability to make relevant choice or decisions (Kabeer, 1999:437). Going by reports stemming from WIPNET's "experience sharing meetings, economic difficulties, was a reoccurring theme. The women also identified to this during interviews and focus group discussion. And in an effort to reduce poverty among the women, WIPNET is currently making arrangements towards linking them to various micro finance institutions. Although this was yet to take effect during the period of data collection, however WIPNET hopes that when such access is finally gotten, it will help the women to be financially sustained and as such boast their confidence.

5.4.5 Civic Education

Agency has more than one characteristics, it is not only positive for empowerment, it can also hinder empowerment. Kabeer refers to it as the positive and negative aspect of agency in relation to power (Kabeer 1991:438). The positive aspect points to when individuals are determined to achieve their "goals" despite "oppositions", while the negative aspect refers to when some groups in a society exercise their agency at the detriment of others, making use of violence.. (ibid). This practice of negative aspect of agency is reinforced by cultural ideology, evident in patriarchal societies, where political, social and economic resources are allocated based on gender. Therefore, in an attempt to promote "*civic appreciation and support for women's participation in peace and security processes*" going on in the region (WIPNET's Reports 2008), WIPNET is engaged in various informative and educative media presentations in project benefitting states in the Niger-Delta regions such as Ogoni. In addition to this, WIPNET in collaboration with the women, engages in peace march in celebration of Women's day, thereby creating awareness about the importance of women inclusion in peace processes.

5.5 Process of Change

This section will discuss the narratives of my informants regarding the process of change. It describes how my informants are making use of their acquired knowledge to affect changes in their communities. In concepts of empowerment, consciousness is seen as stage where individuals become aware of their disempowered situation, and make moves towards change (see chapter 4). The Ogoni women, were not only the most affected by the conflict, they suffered more as a result of the land degradation in their communities, and to make matters worse, their importance were not recognized in the peace building process within their communities, due to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, where gender determines allocations of roles. Also, the lack of awareness of any other alternative, left the women with not much choice, thus any attempt to question such traditional norms are usually frowned upon by the society. In situations like this, conscious rising enables groups to realize that things can be done differently, and that there are other “possibilities”. Borrowing the words of Bourdieu (1997), which refers to Doxa as “traditions and beliefs which exist beyond discourse” the process of moving from the normal traditional norms, to the stage of questioning those norms, is assumed to be as a result of consciousness (cited in Kabeer 1999:441). For the Ogoni women, participating in WIPNET’s project, have awakened their consciousness, going by their narratives below, it appears that they have become aware of their rights as individuals in the society, and are beginning to question the restrictive traditional norms therein. The reoccurring themes below, from the interview with the women, suggest they are beginning to question their present condition, and are also in believing that there are possibilities of change.

5.5.1 From “Doxa to Discourse”: Critical Consciousness

As mentioned in the previous chapter, consciousness involves various processes (Carr, 2003:15) one of such is the stage where individuals define “their relationship in the society”. In Nigeria, traditional societies when a woman marries, she becomes more or less a “property” of her husband forever” (Rwomire, 2001: 74). Divorce is usually not common, hardly do most women seek for divorce. For those who attempt to leave their spouses, they do so by running away, or back to their parents’ houses, leaving behind children and

properties. More so, such action requires the returning back to the husband whatever financial payments that was made in relation to the marriage, not taking into account how many years the marriage has lasted, or how many children are involved, nor the financial contributions the women made to the marriage, in addition, she also losses custody of the children (ibid). Thus the level of “power and influence a woman” can exercise is equally “determined” by the husband (ibid). Acting otherwise, may result in to women being threatened with a divorce. Hence most women may not want to be seen openly involved in challenging or questioning decisions at home or in the community due to fear getting divorced by their husbands. However, as earlier mentioned in chapter four, there is the possibility for groups empowerment to enhance the “functioning of individual members”. As for my informants they affirm that the awareness they acquired during the various trainings they underwent, have made them to be bold to question certain traditional marriage norms that encroaches on their human rights. According one participant named Ogogho”

“ Now our eyes have been made open. The enlightenment we have now, are making us not to believe that their traditional norms, that women are not entitled to certain things. Infact now we are making arguments, for example, if our husband threatens to divorce us, we will insist that we must share the properties”

In support of the above, Bibi added “ *if they must divorce, then they should equally transform our bosom back to the way it was before we married them (speaking in irony) in exclamations she added, hheeeee!!! You think we will leave every wealth we suffered together to acquire, for you, so that another woman will come and take over and enjoy it? No way.... No! we must share it..ooh*

From the above excerpt, it seems that my informants are applying their acquired skill to address issues both at home and at the community level.

5.5.2. Taking a Stand!

Another process of consciousness is when individuals see the problem with their present position in the society, (see chapter 4). In Ogoni like most traditional Nigerian societies, both economic and policy making powers are determined by gender, and as, issues such as peace agreements, compensations, and official security issues, are decided by male elders or community leaders, thereby excluding the women. On a normal situation, women don't question such authority, even when they are not satisfied with the outcome of the decisions. However, having been made to understand that they have a chance of changing their condition, it seems women have started to take a stand in the community, and are now

advocating for what they believe is their right. Among those who participated in the interviews, it appears all of them are in agreement with this position. They all held on to the view that they deserve equal participation in all matters surrounding the rebuilding of their society, and as well as any compensation that is to be paid for such, since they happen to be the groups that was most affected by both the land , degradation and the violent conflict that took place in the region. One of my informants, by name Tombri has this to say, while re-emphasizing their anticipated position in their community:

“Nobody can block us any longer! Now we have gained full knowledge that we are the direct sufferers in this land! We have lost our children, we have lost our husbands, we have lost most of our lands, so we are entitled to any benefits and compensation that is going to be given.

Another participant; Tina by name, expresses focus on their decision to protect this position,

In fact, now any action that would give negative impact to women, women are out to crush it! We will not accept any activity that would give negative impact on women! We are bold to stand our ground.

Crushing any activity they perceive to have a negative impact on them, means that they are ready and willing to fight for their rights, through available laws and the legal system without relenting. With more confidence, Bera added:

Here most women job is farming and fishing . Since the spillage is destroying the source of both, We the women are angry now, it is no longer only the men..ooohh. Women are now angry for their rights too”

Here, their anger is as a realization of their position as the main victims of the environmental damages in their communities, as the structural violence inherent therein. Interestingly, there was no sign of hatred in the midst of their anger; rather it was more of an inspiration to make changes.

Generally my informants seem to have adopted more rational means of dealing with their situation. All of my informants exhibited strong interest in rules of law. They constantly made references to their basic human rights, in fact, they reiterated, that human right is for everyone whether man or woman. And in support of the above view, Preye added:

Unlike before, when we are ashamed to speak out, now even if you carry gun against us, we would still be bold to stand our ground, we will inform you that you cant not shoot us, because the law is there. Now, our No is No, unless you agree to our terms and conditions.

It seems that there is great increase in the confidence of my informants, compared to the earlier periods. The resilience to adversity, and the aspiration to pursue what they believe, appears quite strong in the above statement.

In the same vein, and regarding the pollution of their environments, my informants stated that Ogoni women are also making effort to hold Shell accountable to their responsibility to clean up their environment. According to the independent assessment carried out by UNEP regarding the damages to Ogoni land, it was recommended that systematic clean-up, should be carried out within the community (UNEP, 2011).

5.5.3 Affecting Changes

Although the Ogoni environs and the Niger-delta regions as a whole, seems to be relatively calm in terms of not so much violent clashes in the communities compared to the early 1990s, however, tensions still remain, due to occasional violence involving youths armed with light weapons and small arms in the region (Davidheiser & Nyiayaana, 2011:45). It seems that this issue was also a source of concern for my informants. The below statement made by Bera suggests that my informants themselves are systematically monitoring violent outbreaks within their communities. According to her:

“ it is the youths that normally come out to cause these conflicts, and what they want is money...in fact it is a monetary affair for them. The oil company normally use a divide and rule approach, when they bring something they give it to the council of chiefs, and the eyes of the youth is upon those things, and maybe the chief does not give part of it to the youths, and the youths will now come out to strategize how they will now get their own share, by making trouble. On seeing the consequences of their actions, the chiefs would then give out some gifts to some of the youths in order to gain their supports, while neglecting the others, thereby causing divisions among the youths and causing groups to fight against each other, leading to escalation of crisis within the community”

Going by the above statement, it appears that my informants have good knowledge of the nature of conflict inherent in their communities, as well as what triggers it. More interestingly, they seem to have also devised a non-violence means of reducing violence outbreaks in their communities. According to Tina:

We preach peace around Ogoni land, we do demonstration of peace march, and while we are singing peace song, we also preach peace to the people, while the

peace song is going on, we tell them the outcome of peace, as well as the outcome of violence and conflict.

Also in support to the above statement, Obara added:

It doesn't end there, we do fasting and prayers, praying that God should send down peace and touch the minds of youths, these amongst others are the initiators of conflicts and crisis.

Because the majority of Ogoni indigenes are Christian, church activity is central among the people of the region. The Sunday gathering serves as meeting opportunity for a majority of the indigenes ranging from, women, children, men and youths. Usually, the purpose of the church service is to devote time for worship, other issues bothering the community can also be deliberated and prayers offered in that direction. Therefore by raising such prayer points regarding the peace of the community; during such big gathering my informant believes that, they have also been able to carry along the communities, in their quest for peace and security in Ogoni.

In addition to general campaign for peace, my informants also preach peace at individual levels.

According to Ogogho :

We also approach individual youths too and preach to them to be of good behaviors and calmness, we tell them that it is bad to imitate bad behaviors.

Apart from offering prayers and peace campaigns, my informants also adopt various peaceful measures, to prevent conflict from escalating in their community. Sometimes, they mediate, and other times, they march physically to the scene of the conflict to rescue the situation.

Narrating one of such instances, one of my informants by name Bibi said:

"..like what happened recently, there is a company that wants to work on our land, and MOSOP as a group of people said no, because they do not like the way they are doing the work, and that they should not continue the work again, so we the women just went there, with just ordinary leaves and said that they should stop.

When she paused, Lara intercepted and said: *Because we women understand that if the men go further, it would result to battle, and something can go wrong.*

Lara statement above suggests that my informants have good knowledge and rich experience of conflict dynamics within their communities.

And Bibi continued: *"So we women asked the men to go back, and so the women moved to the front, holding leaves, and the company now come out to ask us why we are here, and we*

told them that we don't want them to continue the work, so they listened to us, and the work stopped".

By holding leaves instead of weapons, it suggests that my informants understand some methods of nonviolence means of dealing with conflicts.

Furthermore, they explained that they also make use of the above peaceful method, to stop further development of conflict among youths of the community, according to Obara:

"with regards to the problems of the youths, each claiming to be members of various associations. In most cases, the crisis gets escalated, and they start making use of guns, and other dangerous weapons. And such situation, it is the women who always come in to make peace, if a man comes in to make peace, they can even kill the person, so it is always the women that intervenes.

Obara's statements equally suggest that their men have respect for what they are doing. Also, during interview with the executive director of Kebetkache, she confirmed that most of the men within Ogoni community are beginning to respect what the women are doing, and went ahead to narrate the incidence, when the husband of one their members sensing how important the women meetings was for his sick wife, volunteered to represent her in one of their meetings. Although he was not allowed to be part of the gathering, since it is a "women only space, however, this goes to show that the women efforts are being recognized and appreciated even at their private homes, and the communities at large.

Politically, my informants are confident about their abilities to make some changes, they have started initiating moves to change the views of their leader, by negotiating for inclusion in to local politics; according to Preye: *"We campaign also that they should give women a chance to be among politicians at least 40% of positions should be given to women. We do that by approaching the leaders of our communities"*.

While some communities are still at the process of reaching this level, some others are have already started seeing the results. According what another participant from a different community by name, Tombri:

Atleast we now have like two women among the councilors in the local government. They have promised to carry women along in everything that they are doing . Even, we are still insisting that they should give us more chance".

In addition to the above, Oghogo added: *“now we have women leaders in the council of chiefs within our communities. For example, in my own community, I am the woman leader”*

Upon further enquiries about the reactions of other members of the communities to this new position of FOWA in Ogoni, especially the men and the leaders. Almost all my informants admitted acceptance by the community, except Tina, from another community, who narrated that they are still having difficulties in getting the leaders to listen to their views. However, she attributed it to be personality problem, which over time can be overcome. According to her” *you know we have a lot of individuals differences, because we are dealing with different type of human beings,....so it may take time.*

Notwithstanding that my informants desire changes within their community, they seem to have chosen to adopt a gradual and peaceful approach.. To confirm the above, the head of the women group said:

We have to continue this gradually, they know that women have been on the move, campaigning for peace making, so they listen, and they are interested. It will take time to make complete change, where something has gone wrong”

My participants believe that more changes will come; although it may not happen immediately, but will surely take place over time.

Summary

The main aim of this chapter has been to present and analyses the collected field data. By so doing, it has examined the perception of my informants regarding their condition before they took part in the capacity building project. It has demonstrated that my participants felt that the limited source of livelihood, traditional norms, lack of awareness, and the inability to participate in important decision within the community is disempowering . The views my informants centralizes in their perception of empowerment was also presented and discussed. Furthermore, this chapter has also examined the capacity building training of WIPNET of WANEP, illustrating its methodologies, objectives and expected outcomes. Finally, it also examined my informant’s views of their present condition, what they perceived as the outcome of the training skills they acquired, and have demonstrated that WANEP’s projected has raised the consciousness of Ogoni women , and have equipped them with skills that can

enhance their participation in peace and security. In return, the Ogoni women, are affecting changes in their communities.

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

If only the government can do it, it would be much better for the women; if a policy is implemented in that direction, it will mean that we women would be at leading positions, (interview excerpt)

Introduction.

This study has examined WANEP's Women in Peace building Network project, aimed at enhancing gender balanced peace and security in Ogoni. And have highlighted how the women are making use of their newly acquired skills, to address peace and security issues in their everyday life. To accomplish this, the thesis began by looking into the past situation of Ogoni, bringing forward the remote cause of the conflict, plus women contribution to it, and the efforts geared towards lasting peace. Regarding data collection, the thesis, adopted a qualitative method, informants were selected through the process of snowball. Data were gotten through both secondary sources and primary sources Focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews were utilized in collected data for this research. Theoretically, the concept of empowerment within the dimensions of agency, group power and consciousness, were adopted to explain WANEP's project, and its impact on the women.

6.1 Findings

The analysis of field data have demonstrated that WIPNET is empowering the members of Ogoni women group, known as FOWA, through its training scheme aimed at equipping women with skills in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The main objective behind this venture, is to engender conflict prevention and peace/building and the eventual domestication of UNCSR 1325 in Ogoni, and Nigeria at large. Furthermore, WIPNET's skill training was tailored to fit into immediate environment of the Ogoni women. Gender issues, as well as the types of conflict inherent in the communities were also taken into considerations. This

emphasis on the importance of context driven empowerment, which requires that one's environment, determines the type of empowerment that is required (Rappaport, 1984:2, Malhotra & Schuler, 2005:76).

The study has shown that the informants were disempowered before they came in to contact with WIPNET. This condition was very obvious at two points in time. The first was before the conflict, and the second was after the conflict. Their condition before the conflict, was characterized by, lack of awareness, lack of opportunity to speak out, poverty due to limited access to their sources of livelihood and lack of confidence, stemming from, the existing traditional norms and poverty. Second was the lack of opportunity to participate in decisions concerning peace agreements and compensations, regarding their community, plus the lack of knowledge of how to go about it.

As demonstrated by the analysis, the difficulties associated with poverty, motivated my informants to distinguish them self, based on their own initiatives, and formed the group known as Federation of Ogoni Women (FOWA) with the aim of showing their grievances alongside the men, during the Ogoni struggle. Their role in the struggle also raised their group agency as well as their "profile" within the community.

Armed with collective power and agency, it became easier for them to establish contact with WIPNET of WANEP. Going by the analyses, their participation in WIPNET's activities, have helped to awaken their consciousness, to understand their present condition, and how to go about changing it (see Carr 2003:9). Grounded with some knowledge about gender analysis, conflict analysis, conflict resolution, mediation, advocacy, existing legal rights and laws, my informants now have some level of knowledge to articulate the kind of change they want.

So far, my informants have been involved in preaching peace within their communities. They have also, intercepted in various conflict situation, thereby hindering escalation of violence in their community. Furthermore, they are involved in passing on the knowledge the gained to other members of the community, during social gatherings. They are also involved in replicating the training they received, to other women in the communities. In addition, the knowledge they now have is equally robbing off on their individual life, in the sense that, they are no longer afraid to question decisions that appear oppressive.

Going by the analysis, there is also some positive changes in gender relation in some communities, for example, women are being appointed as members of community leadership. Although, not in all communities. However, my informants have high hope, that change will certainly come over time.

As stated in the analysis chapter, my informants are still facing certain level of economic difficulties, owing to limited source of livelihood since the majority of them are farmers, and the lands have been damaged by oil exploration. WIPNET was making arrangements to link them to some micro-credit institutions during the time of data collection. However, my informants remain very optimistic about the future, they believe that the knowledge and awareness they now have, will be a useful tool for them in other aspect of their lives, both socially and politically.

6.2 Concluding Remarks

There is no doubt that armed conflict has a varied impact on men and women, hence the adoption of the UNSCR1325, on women, peace and security. However, issues such as lack of political will by some states(Anderlini, 2010), and cultural norms amongst others, have in many African countries, hindered women's equal contribution in decision making pertaining conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As various researches are being carried out, with the aim of finding out challenging issues hindering the full manifestation of the resolution. Equally necessary are researches which focuses on were changes are being noticed, no matter how small the change may be, after all "a journey of 1000km begins with a step". Beside, doing so, may help to find out how the changes came about, and /or what is being done differently.

This thesis provides an alternative way of looking at the Ogoni struggle; it suggests that amidst the gloomy pictures of violence and destructions therein, there is certain remarkable transformations also taking place in the region, as a result of the "bottom up" human development project channeled therein.

The thesis, has focused on WIPNET's projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of women group to enhance their equal participation in peace and security issues in Ogon, as well as to find out how women are putting the acquired skills into practices. The findings suggest that WIPNET is working towards the domestication of UNSCR 1325 in Ogoni. And that the

women are engaged in various security and peaceful action and are effecting changes in their communities.

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