

**THE PARADOX OF PENURY IN PLENTY:  
RESEARCH FINDINGS OF WOMEN  
RESPONSES TO CONFLICTS IN THE  
NIGER DELTA.**

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## **PROJECT ABSTRACT**

Women their rights, and their interests have been the unspoken casualties of Nigeria's ethno-religious and other social conflicts since the early years of the last decade. These conflicts have been particularly widespread and persistent in the past five to seven years, growing in frequency, extent and sophistication. Violence and other violations against women in the conflict zones have worsened apace with this development. There has also not been proper documentation and assessment of their efforts in conflict resolution and consensus building in the community and no action has been taken to prevent violence against them or to get them redress for this or other violations they have suffered and are still suffering. This has created an atmosphere of impunity that has further encouraged the perpetration of violence and other violations against women.

The project aims to investigate and document these violations, improve public knowledge about them, and help to develop the capacity of women who are in the community to monitor and prevent violence in conflict zones.

Violent conflict between the country's ethnic, religious, and social groups has been for long a feature of Nigeria's socio-political life. Until the early 1990s, however, they



were intermittent and localized. Since then it has become incessant, generalized and increasingly sophisticated in the weapons employed. Where previously it erupted only infrequently and only in a handful of places (principally, Ife in Osun State and Kano in Kano State), today whole swathes of the country are in the grip of various forms of more-or-less organized and persistent violence. These include the armed hostilities in the Niger-Delta, the conflicts in the middle-belt, and violent campaigns by Muslim fundamentalists and radicals in parts of the North.

Protests in the Niger-Delta communities are as a result of poverty in the midst of plenty. The crisis in the Niger-Delta has been attributed to the lack of transparency and sensitivity of the oil exploring companies, as well as the non-sitting of industries and lack of jobs for the youths in the region. The Niger-Delta area has thus remained one of the most underdeveloped part of the country, with a near lack of infrastructure.

The targets of the protests are the Federal Government and the international oil companies. Protesters comprise of individuals and families angered at the degradation of their land, as well as demoralized youths with little work and few prospects.

These protests have also resulted in ethnic clashes between neighboring communities over control of the resources on their land. These clashes have resulted in

the loss of lives and property amounting to millions of dollars, with women being the worst hit, losing children and their husbands, and thus being economically incapacitated. In these clashes, the women are raped and subjected to all kinds of abuse.

### **PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The project aims to reverse the general ignorance and indifference concerning the gross violations suffered by women in conflict situations. This general aim resolves into four specific objectives, which are to:

### **SHORT TERM**

1. Ascertain within 3 months the prevalence, forms and consequences of violence and other human rights violations suffered by non-combatant women in conflict communities in the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria
2. Raise public awareness of the prevalence, forms, and consequences of violence suffered by non-combatant women in the conflict zones of the Niger-Delta
3. Facilitate consensus building against violence among groups in conflict situations, both in the domestic space and in the conflict regions.
4. Enhance community protection of women against violence and other violations.



5. Build capacity of 60 women in the Niger-Delta zone to be able to engage in consensus building that can foster peace and development.

### **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

The project is for twelve months. Project activities are in two sites, Delta (Warri) and Rivers (Port-Harcourt), these been towns in the conflict zone.

### **PROJECT STRATEGIES**

To achieve it's objectives, the project adopts a combination of three key strategies: Research, Attitude-change advocacy and Capacity-building. These strategies combine into a composite strategy of intervention to protect women in conflict zones against violence and other violations. The research strategy provides the knowledge-base necessary for the attitude-change advocacy which in turn is necessary for building a consensus against gender-based violence in communities and also in the conflict zones and also building their capacity to monitor and influence in the settlement of violence in the environment.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

The last three decades in Nigeria's history have been characterized by the proliferation of violent community conflicts. However, beginning from the early years of the last decade, the frequency of these armed social conflicts manifesting as ethnic, religious, communal or political conflicts assumed a frightening dimension. In the past five to seven years, these conflicts have assumed even more horrific dimensions in terms of frequency, spread, sophistication and consequences. Violence, other violations and untold inhuman sufferings against women caught up in these armed social conflicts zones have equally worsened apace with this development. They are subjected to physical, psychological and structural violence in these situations. Besides being sexually harassed, they are victims of rape, and they are tortured particularly when their husbands cannot be found. They also suffer abductions and disappearances without any trace. Apart from loosing their husbands in such conflicts and therefore becoming the breadwinners in a society which has always regarded the man as the support of the family, they often have the terrible experience of loosing their children or loved ones, and even their means of



livelihood, or both. They are the unspoken casualties of the nation's armed social conflicts.

Yet, little has been documented concerning the conditions of women in these zones and no action has been taken to prevent violence against them or to get them redress for this or other violations they have suffered and are still suffering. More disturbing is the fact that the few existing works on community conflict in the country completely ignored issues pertaining to women. Not even the six volumes recently produced by the Programme on Ethnic and Federal Studies of the University of Ibadan on *Ethnic Groups and Conflicts in Nigeria* (2001) have anything on the conditions of women in situations of violent community conflicts in Nigeria. At least, three major reasons account for this. One, the projects, leading to each of these publications were gender-neutral in their conceptualization. The assumption underlying the projects is that conflict is a gender-neutral phenomenon. Yet, the findings in this study and others have shown that this is not so. Two, in Nigeria, like in other countries of the world, women hardly want to speak about their traumatic experiences under violent conflict situations. And thirdly, such women victims, as Smith (1994:109) observed, have inhibitions in revealing her victimization to an interviewer because of the feeling that "...the subject is too personal to discuss, as she may be embarrassed or ashamed, she may fear reprisal by her

abuser should he find out about the interview, she may misunderstand the question, or she may think the abuse was too minor and happened long ago. If the abuse was especially traumatic, she may not want or be able to recall it. If she does disclose that she has been abused, she may not respond fully and honestly to follow-up questions about the experience." It is this 'culture of silence' that partly explains the double jeopardy women suffer under conflicts situations. It has created an atmosphere of impunity that has further encouraged the perpetration of violence and other violations against women.

In order to understand how women experience the problem and make recommendations on how victims of violence against women should be assisted by the state to obtain justice and effective remedies for the harm they suffer, there must be reliable and valid data on the extent, trend and pattern of the victimization. A study and factual documentation of whether men's experience and response to conflict situations is different from that of women is key to formulating any appropriate responses to such violations. This calls for an interventionist study that would break the culture of silence.

It is against this background that the Women in Conflict Zones Project was situated in the Niger Delta region or zone of Nigeria. The project basically aims to investigate



and document these violations, improve public knowledge about them, and help to develop community-based mechanisms to monitor and prevent violence against women in conflict zones and to identify and punish their perpetrators.

### **Paradox of Penury in Plenty**

The Niger Delta in Nigeria is one of few deltas in the world. It has been documented that there are only five major deltas in the world (Isoun 2001). The Niger Delta has a very fragile ecosystem and is one of the most polluted and neglected areas in Nigeria. Covering about 3 percent of Nigeria's total land mass of 923,768.64 square kilometers, its land mass of about 70,000 sq km is home to more than seven million people. Half of the region is wetland, with the largest mangrove forest in the world. (Akanni 2000).

In 1958, Oil was discovered in this region, specifically in Oloibiri community in present day Rivers State. Since then, oil has continuously been exploited in commercial quantity. The oil as a commodity has accounted for over 40% of Nigeria's GDP, and 75% of annual budget revenues (See interview: Marl Tomlinson in *Tell Magazine* (Lagos), 17 January 2003; or see report of the Auditor General of the Federation on Federal Government Expenditures 2001); or Fayemi 2004. Ironically, the

statistics above which portrays the Niger Delta, Nigeria's oil belt, as the goose that lays the Golden eggs as it provides 80% of all Government revenue also effectively masks the global tragedy the region had since become. Such statistics has also be contradicted as was done by Fayemi (2004) who described it as the paradox of penury in the midst of plenty, citing, as it were, the UNDP and World Bank report on statistics of social conditions in the Niger Delta: Only 27% of households had access to safe drinking water in 1994, while 30% of households had access to electricity. On both indicators, the Niger Delta fell below the National averages which stood at about 32% and 34% respectively. In 1991, the population per doctor in the Niger Delta was estimated at 132,600; nearly 100,000 over the nation's average of 39,455 (UNDP & World Bank, 1997). He concluded that the situation most probably has worsened since then.

Moving away from statistics to real situations that pictured poverty as narrated by Thelma Ekiyor (2001) in her report: 'An Account of the Niger Delta Women,' "I asked the lady cooking where she had got the water to prepare our lunch and she answered, 'from the the river.' ...I asked her if she knew that people bathe and toilet in the water and she said yes, adding that the whole village has been raised drinking the same river water." Shockingly, the oil company's post not quite 20 minutes away from the community has clean drinking water for its personnel.



The situation in the Niger-Delta has since become even more complex, extremely violent and volatile. The conflicts, which manifest in different dimensions, have featured three (3) main actors or parties: The communities, the Government, and the Trans-national oil companies (TNCS).

The roles played by these 3 stakeholders are greatly affected by their historical nature, formations, and several social, economic, and political factors, and forces of local and international dimensions.

### **Trans-National Corporations in the Niger Delta**

The nature and subsequent character that Trans-national oil companies assumed in the context of the conflict in the Niger Delta is historic.

Oil capital made its earliest inroad into the emerging social formation called "Nigeria" in the 1930s, when the need for Britain to secure oil for the Royal Navy led to geological expeditions in many colonial outposts. By 1938, Shell D'Arcy had found crude oil in Southern Nigeria, although at that time the commercial value of this discovery was unknown (Ukeje 2002). Not much need be said on the circumstance of Shell's inroad into Nigeria under the colonial government, which has also

ensured that Shell has continued to enjoy advantages in the oil industry.

As a result of the ever-increasing demands for oil as source of energy for industrial and domestic consumption in countries around the globe, the number of trans-national oil companies involved in oil exploration has remarkably increased. As such, multinational corporations like ELF, TEXACO, AGIP, CHEVRON, through their subsidiaries or contractors, are engaged in seismic activities in search of oil. The operations of the oil companies have gross adverse effects on the environment in the host communities. The quantum destruction of the ecosystem severely affected or destroyed subsistent economic opportunities on which many communities had relied upon.

No doubt, the activities of large oil corporations such as Mobil, Shell, Elf, and Agip etc have raised many concerns and criticisms. Oil, which could potentially have caused Nigeria to be one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, has instead led it to become one of the poorest.

This study took into account the roles played by the multi-national companies and their home countries in the politics of oil in the Niger Delta.

The roles played by the multi-national companies in the conflict ensuing from oil exploration in the Niger Delta



can be further understood by reflecting on the following observations by environmentalists, human rights activists, and fair trade advocates around the world: "The history (and politics) of hydro carbon oil has also been aptly described as the history and politics of imperialism per excellence" (Ukeje 2002).

"A series of repressive and corrupt governments in Nigeria have been supported and maintained by western governments and oil corporations, keen on benefiting from the fossil fuels that can be exploited. As people and trans-national oil corporations have been fighting over this 'dark nectar' in the delta region, immense poverty and environmental destruction have resulted" (Oronto Douglas (2000), *Assassins in Foreign Lands*).

Trails of acquisition of bad practices by multi-national corporations exploiting oil in the Niger Delta areas is also reflected by Human Rights Watch in one of its reports, when it affirmed that multi-national companies are complicit in abuses committed by the Nigerian military and police: "The Ogoni, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Isoko, Ijaw and other people in the Niger Delta who have been worse affected for decades, have been trying to stand up for themselves, their environment, and their basic human and economic rights."

An investigation and report by Essential Action and Exchanges (January 2000) titled "Oil for Nothing: Multi-national Corporations, Environmental Destruction, Death and Impunity in the Niger Delta", explains that the presence of multi-national oil companies has had additional adverse effects on the local economy and society, including loss of property, price inflation, prostitution, and irresponsible fathering by expatriate oil workers.

While it claimed that reporting on the situation is extremely difficult due to the existence of physical and legal constraints to free passage and free circulation of information, it nevertheless concluded that: "While the story told to consumers of Nigerian crude in the United States and European Union via ad campaigns and other public relations efforts is that oil companies are a positive force in Nigeria, providing needed economic development resources, the reality that confronted our delegation was quite the opposite. Our delegates observed that almost every large multi-national oil company operating from the Niger Delta employed inadequate environmental standards, and relations with affected communities. These corporations' acts of charity and development are slaps in the faces of those they claim to be helping. Far from being a positive force, these oil companies act as a destabilizing force, pitching one community against another, acting as a catalyst.... together



with the military with which they work closely.., to some of the violence racking the region today”.

There have been many clear examples of corporate influence in the Nigerian military's repression of oil communities' protesters. The military have been accused of thousands of killings, house/village burnings, intimidating people, torture, rape and so on.

Evidence of involvement in the anti-people's activities perpetuated by the Nigerian military was established by some activities like Shell's involvement in the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoniland environmental rights activist and author, to Chevron-marked helicopters carrying the Nigerian military that opened gun-fire upon the protesters; the corporations are facing harsh criticisms for the way they have been handling (or encouraging) the repression of oil communities' protesters.

Though, all the reports cited above from both local and international sources were recorded around 2000, indeed, by 2005, things had taken a turn for the worse. For example, the *International Herald Tribune's* report on a study titled, "Peace and Security in the Niger Delta" noted, chiefly among others, the following: Environmental damage, corruption of company employees, and reliance on Nigeria's security forces. The action of Shell

companies and their staff creates, feeds into or exacerbates these oil-based conflicts.

In something that looked rather like self-defence, Shell had said that it remained "committed to corporate social responsibility," though it made a weak concession recognizing that its developmental activities in the past "may have been less than perfect"

### **The Nigerian State and Oil Conflicts in the Niger Delta**

Violent conflicts have been a major challenge for stable democratic order and sustainable development in Nigeria. The relationship between the democratic government that emerged in post-independence Nigeria and its colonial government patron gave unrestrained access to exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta. This situation was not only maintained but sustained by all the aforementioned involvement of the trans-national corporations in the politics of oil conflict in the Niger Delta. Ukeje (2002) affirms that the history (and politics) of hydrocarbon oil has also been aptly described as the history, and politics of imperialism, per excellence.

As Agwu (2000) observed, the extensive dependence of the Nigerian State on external inputs in the oil sector has obviously undermined national autonomy and contributed



further to increasing pauperization of the local oil producing communities.

Government's response to conflicts in the Niger Delta has resulted in over-politicization of contending issues at the expense of substantive crux of conflicts. Under the military, conflicts were exploited to foist anarchy and to perpetuate military dictatorship. The situation has not been entirely different under the new democracy where conflicts have become veritable tools, serving as substrate for state-organized anarchy as demonstrated in the handling of civil crisis in Odi in Bayelsa State and Zaki Biam in Benue State.

The capacity of the present democratic government to manage conflicts and bring about lasting peace appears limited by problems of credibility and insincerity on the part of the political class.

The incredibility, in a fashion, was a distinct result of the inadequacies in the transition to genuine democracy, although the reasons for the inadequacies in the transition to democracy are not far fetched. The process that culminated in the democratic departure in May 1999 was hardly a project for peaceful turnover of political power as was exhibited in the 2003 general elections.

Politics, whether under military or civilian, has been a dominant predisposing factor that aggravates ethnic, communal, or state violence in the Niger Delta. In his reflection, Mazrui (2000) described politics in Africa as an enticing monster that must be exorcised in order to create the enabling environment for the de-escalation and transformation of conflicts. For the process of peace-building to endure, the polity must witness more than declarative commitment to political hygiene and moral sanitation.

However, the measure of guilt held against the Nigerian state by the minority oil producing communities could be delineated from the experience below:

The earliest procedure in the indeterminable list of state sponsorship of repression against protesting oil communities occurred in 1990 against the Umuechem community in Rivers State when Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), the Nigerian subsidiary of Shell International, invited soldiers and anti-riot policemen to assist in quelling community disturbances. In the wake of this curious invitation, troops behaved more like occupation armies that had vowed to draw the last of the enemy's blood. They committed acts of arson, looted and damaged properties, maimed, raped, and murdered even harmless inhabitants, including women, children and old people. Further, the brutality visited on



the Ogoni oil-producing community (also in Rivers State) under the General Sani Abacha regime has become another major signifier of the extent to which the Nigerian state is willing and able to go in order to impose such a tenuous and delicate form of order and stability that can ensure continuation of oil extraction (Naanen 1995; Osaghae, 1995; Ngomitu-Roberts, 1994; Eteng, 1996). Ukeje (2002) in particular indepthly described the character of the state in the context of the Niger Delta conflict.

However, it will be unjust not to mention some of Government's efforts to respond to the developmental needs of the Niger Delta communities. The creation of states and establishment of development agencies like the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC (1992)), the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in 1994, and the enactment of some proactive laws like the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, FEPA Act (Decree No. 58 of 1988), and the Environmental Impact Assessment (Decree No. 36 of 1992) are among the most prominent measures. However, the predatory nature of the Nigerian state rendered all these measures ineffectual.

## **The Oil Communities and Conflict in Niger Delta**

The Niger Delta is a heterogeneous, multi-cultural, ethnically diverse region with a complex ecosystem. The region is endowed with renewable and non-renewable natural resources like large oil and gas deposits, fertile agricultural land, abundant forest reserves, and aquatic resources. With a conservative estimate of about 25 million people, the region is home to different ethnic groups including Itsekiri, Isoko, Ibibio, Ogoni, Ikwerre, Ijaw, (acclaimed to be the dominant group), Efik, Urhobo, Edo, Esan and Andoni among others.

To analyze the oil producing communities in the context of the conflict in the Niger Delta, it will be appropriate to integrate the effect of oil exploration on both the physical components (the environment) and the human component (human population).

The region covers some 40,000 — 70,000 sq kilometres with a highly complex ecosystem and a high level of biodiversity. However, due to gas and oil exploration, the Delta is in fact "the most endangered in the world" (Aston - Jones 1998). The Niger Delta has become an ecological disaster zone as a result of the debilitating effect of bad practices by the oil corporations.



The general situation of environmental degradation in the region is described below:

“A place where rusty pipelines run through farms, in front of houses. Day and night huge gas fires rage in massive pits and towers, spewing out noxious gases and filth right amongst people’s homes and farms. Oil spills and fires are a regular occurrence, more often than not, causing the death of local people and the destruction of wildlife and property (Ekine 2000).

Michael Fleshman of the New York-based Africa Fund, also describes what he saw at one oil spillage: “The impact of the spill on the community has been devastating, as the oil has poisoned their water supply and fishing ponds, and is steadily killing the raffia palms that are the community’s economic mainstay. Lacking any other alternative, the people of the village have been forced to drink polluted water for over a year and the community leaders told us that many people had become ill in recent months and that some had died. The sight that greeted us when we finally arrived at the spill was horrendous. A thick brownish film of crude oil stunned the entire area, collecting in clumps along the shoreline and covering the surface of the still water. The humid air was thick with oil fumes.” Fleshman (1999).

The above description shows what sacrifice the people in the oil producing communities are making for the economic benefit the Nigerian state is gaining from oil.

For the people living in oil producing communities, the continuous exploration of oil undermines and threatens their socio-economic lives and, ultimately, their survival. What the population gets back for the natural resource that is being explored in their land is unemployment, ill health, lack of basic infrastructure and social services, widespread poverty etc.

Compensation is a “case of broken promises, development programmes that are abandoned halfway, poor quality facilities that break down and simply rust away as soon as they are installed”. Okonta, Ike & Douglas (2001)

It is pertinent to state, at this point, that there exists amongst the population a group referred to as the “local elite”. This group consists of self-seeking individuals who emerged as leaders because of traditional privileges or their wealth; they compromised the interest of the whole community.

Julius Ihonvbere attempted to place their existence in the context of state emergence history:

*The indigenous elites that had been structurally incorporated into the power*



*and economic networks of colonialism following World War II were nurtured in the context of these undemocratic values... consequently; accumulation, survival and domination can only be guaranteed through the unmediated control of State power.*

### **Intra and Inter Community Conflicts in the Niger Delta Community.**

This is a conflict typology in the Niger Delta. It most times involves the people in the communities with the Government and Transnational corporations as indirect actors. Intra community conflict most times involves Youths and the elders. The traditional respect bestowed on the elders is fast eroding in the communities. The youths accuse the elders of being too soft and slow in dealing with the oil companies. They further accuse the elders of being stooges of the Government and oil companies. This new social relationship makes collective decision-making very difficult, thus leading to chaotic situation or full blown violence in the communities. Another genre of intra conflict that commonly features in the communities are those caused by power struggle in the form of Chieftaincy tussles. Here, camps are formed behind personalities that are interested in such titles.

“Youths are the ‘soldiers’ in the violent conflict and they play a very important role in the community and the elders are still the traditional figures of authority; any sustainable peace and development initiatives in the region needs to create avenues through which the two groups can work” Ekiyor (2001).

Inter community conflicts are the types that occur between communities fighting over land, such in many cases are historical brothers or have lived as neighbours for centuries. Royalties is a very important requirement for sustenance; so ownership of lands become an issue. “Some of these communities lay the responsibility for the intra and inter community conflicts at the feet of the oil companies and Government, contending that they have used “divide and rule tactics” between communities to keep them fighting while government and the oil companies exploit the Resources” Ekiyor (2001).

### **Responses to Conflicts in the Niger Delta**

The response of the people of the Niger Delta to the over 40 years of oil exploration and exploitation has been to organize across ethnic nationalities and beginning with the Ogoni Bill of Rights in 1990, by the Ogoni people, Kaiama Declaration by the Ijaw, the Akiaka Declaration of the Egi people, the Resolutions of the first Urhobo Economic Summit, the Oron Bill of Rights, the Warri



Accord and the Ikwerre Charter, stating their intention and determination to reclaim control over their land and resources and, their commitment to a Pan-Delta Alliance (NDWJ 2000).

The response of the State and its collaborative oil corporations to the mobilization of oil producing communities across ethnic nationalities demanding proper compensation, environmental, economic and social justice has been to meet them with egregious brutality and maximum violence. Indeed, it is classic violence prominently featuring judicial and mass murder, torture, rape, the burning of homes and property and complete militarisation of the Niger Delta by an unrestrained and unaccountable military force. The blood-chilling expeditions by the nation's military signposts the Government's total disdain for these communities' legitimate demands.

In "No Democratic Dividend", a recent report by Human Rights Watch (2002), it concludes that "both the government and the oil company have failed to fulfill their responsibilities. Security forces continue to commit human rights violations with impunity in response to protests and acts of violence at oil facilities, the oil companies often go along with whatever the government does or even make things worse. In one case examined in the report ... money paid by an oil company to a

community representative has apparently been used by that person to "hire" police to harass and arrest members of an opposing faction in the village (HRW 2002).

Two groups amongst the population of the oil communities whose actions or responses to the conflict in the Niger Delta has been remarkable are the Youth and Women groups.

The Youth groups have organized themselves in ethnic nationality militant groups to defend the rights of their people. Their activities and actions have accounted for both violence against the state and in intra and inter community conflicts of various magnitudes and dimensions. This have led to the emergence of youth militant groups like the Chikoko Movement, Supreme Egbesu Fraternity, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and several youth groups campaigning for good governance.

The actions of the youths have been fraught with several complexities that posed a lot of challenges to the success of their struggle. This includes issues of lack of accountability, sabotage and compromise for selfish



interest. As Akanni (2000) describes — “By 1999, almost all the communities had produced a youth body to “fight for its rights. In their over-zealousness, they engaged in piratical activities, which portrayed their selfish agenda. Properties belonging to trans-national corporations were hijacked, their staff kidnapped and released after the payment of a ransom. Sometimes the booty led to internal clash and death. Communities that once lived together became enemies and fought themselves as in Ogoni/Okrika, Eleme/Okrika, Itsekiri/Ijaw, Nembe/Kalabari and Ijaje/Ijaw.”

Youth agitation has accounted for almost 90% of inter and intra community conflicts that has been recorded in the Niger Delta. Most of this dimension of the conflict is rooted in land disputes, border disputes, electoral matters and many other issues that determines or are related to what a community can benefit from the oil companies as royalties and compensation.

The oil companies and the Government have taken the reckless use of small arms and light weapons as opportunities several times to break the ranks and solidarity that exist between various groups( divide and rule strategy) and therefore weaken their force and strength.

In addition to other criminal activities is oil bunkering — siphoning oil from pipelines into barges that are then sold on the high seas. The business is rumoured to involve the complicity of oil company employees and highly placed government officials, ex-soldiers, soldiers, and militias.

If the business is shrouded in clandestine operations, the chain of violence is clear enough. Human Right Watch (2005) says that oil bunkering is responsible for, or fuelling the gang-related violence in the delta that killed over 1,000 Nigerians in 2004.

Honest agitations and search for answers to their plight have yielded no positive results; corrupt political elites have seized the opportunity of a massive but restive youth population to engage them in political thuggery, cultism, and seizure of community power structure... The struggle for control of various power structures have become intense because it confers economic and social privileges on such power holders driven by manipulative tactics of oil multi-nationals and the politics of resource management and mismanagement by those in government. (Dike 2005).

The number of arms and ammunition that were later returned by individuals and groups in Rivers State in the arms-for-money programme clearly demonstrates the



state of insecurity in the Niger Delta. No one is in doubt that illegal procurement and indiscriminate proliferation of arms pose potential threats to Nigeria's fledgling democracy.

## *Chapter 2*

### **WOMEN RESPONSES TO CONFLICTS IN THE NIGER DELTA**

#### **Women and Niger Delta Conflicts: From Observer to Active Agent of Transformation**

Women are the backbone of the rural economies in the Niger Delta region. They farm, fish, produce, process and sell foodstuffs, care for livestock, collect water and firewood, as well as bear and raise children, care for the elderly and sick, and run the domestic household. It is because of their central role in the community life that acts of violence impact on women both directly and indirectly. Ekine (2005).

Women suffer violence, which includes rape, forced prostitution, beatings, and other acts of sexual harassment. Acts of violence like the above-listed undermine the community; also when violence is unleashed on other members of the family like husbands and children such as in detention, murder, beatings, etc, they as mothers, daughters, wives, and sisters also feel the pains of such actions. As described by a woman from Odi Town:



*We ran to a nearby village called Odoni. We were crying, our houses were finished (sic). We also heard the gunshots and knew people were being killed. Others ran to the bush; the entire bush was covered with water and some of the escapees were standing on trees, hanging precariously on the branches like that for days.... women, not men, only women, the men were dead. (Ingbe, schoolteacher, Odi Town)*

In every violent conflict situation in the Niger Delta region, it is the women that have to bear the major brunt. While able-bodied men go to fight, it is the women that are left behind unprotected and saddled with taking care of the aged and the children in the homestead. They are invariably vulnerable to violent attacks and raids... Omotayo (2005)

Women's response to these violent conflicts could be categorized in two: One, as victims; and then, as resisters of oppression. As observed by Ekine(2005) in an article 'Women's Response to State In the Niger Delta', " the focusing on Women as victims will undermine their willingness and ability to be agents of change while focusing on them as heroines who confront the oppressor may lessen the impact of the oppression. Thus, we need

to consider the complexity of Women's experiences as victims and resisters. The victimization experienced by the women folk also extend to the treatment they receive from the male (youth and old) group, as they are most times sidelined from negotiations resulting from their protest and subsequent compensation. When agitations for employment opportunities are staged, the oil companies favour men in their employment exercise compared to the numbers of females employed."

However, the history of women's resistance and revolts towards the injustice in the Niger-Delta dates back to the 1980s. Then there were two major uprisings of Women, first in 1984, by Ogharefe women of Ethiope Local Government, and again in 1986 by Ekpan women in the Okpe Council Area. The two protests were against a U.S. oil corporation, Pan-Ocean. Turner and Oshare (1994) believed that these protests proved that oil bated capitalization "not only break up women's social order but also created or strengthened the conditions for resistance." ... The women mobilized en masse and used a rare display of collective nudity as weapon of protest "threw off their clothes and with this curse won their demands" (Turner and Oshare, 1994, P.123: Lynne, 1990).

The Niger Delta Women in response to the conflict of oil in recent times have also staged a number of protests as



a measure of resistance to the injustice from multi-national corporations and the Government. The Ogoni women seized the Odidi oil well owned by Shell in protest against the destruction of economic crops as a result of oil spill from an oil site. In September 1998, the Egi women marched to seize the Elf gas plant in Obite.

In a more recent times as well, women's response have also followed the pattern of the foundation laid in the 80's. In July 2002, about 600 women in the coastal communities of Gbaramatu and Egbema kingdoms in Warri South West local government area of Delta State came out to protest against the deplorable conditions of their communities. The object of attack was Chevron – Texaco. The women wanted the oil giant to hire their sons and use some of the region's oil riches to develop their remote and rundown villages most of which lack even electricity.

The weeklong encounter involved the women blocking the airstrip, helipad and port that provide the only exit routes from the facility, which is surrounded by rivers and swamps. The women held 700 of the oil workers hostage inside an oil terminal in Escravos. The hostages included some Canadians, Americans, Britons and Nigerians. They let 200 of the men go but threatened a traditional shaming gesture if the others tried to leave. The traditional shaming gesture would have followed the

earlier pattern of the women appearing nude before the oil workers. As a representative of the women, Helen Odoweritse said: "Our weapon is our nakedness." Most Nigerian tribes consider unwanted displays of nudity by wives, mothers or grandmothers as an extremely damning protest measure that can inspire a collective source of shame for those at whom the action is directed.

Also in August 2002, protesting Itsekiri and Ijaw women seized the Elf gas plants at Ugborodo and Abiteye and Otunana Flow Station over various demands ranging from employment to provision of basic infrastructure and compensation for environmental damages.

These accounts display women's efforts to improve their lives and that of their families by fighting for justice. This was against the conventional wisdom or belief that women were non-political citizens and their pre-occupation is primarily with domestic issues.

Rather, it should be noted that the above actions do reflect in reality that women are still the worst victims of the violent conflicts in the Niger Delta, as they still face a lot of challenges imposed by history and tradition that act as obstacles to the resolve to fend for themselves. This much was alluded to by a woman respondent from Elebele oil community in Bayelsa State, in a report



published by the Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies (CEDCOMS), Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

“Our society does not give any role to women, women are mostly to care for children at home, and cannot be present where men hold meetings or take political decisions. A woman here, whatever her age is treated as a minor. Even a mother cannot talk where her son is part of or presiding over a meeting. Ukeje et al (2002).

This revelation points to the fact that women do not take men into confidence before such actions and protests.

### **Candid Confessions about the Causes**

However, women in the conflict zones in the course of the study made a consummate attempt to articulate the cause(s) of these perennial violent conflicts in their communities and of which they have been victims severally. Their testimonies, as forthright, factual and clinical as they come were harnessed first-hand from them and are reproduced below.

#### **Emem J. Okon**

The major cause of violent conflicts in Rivers State is the poverty conditions of the majority of people in the state and the lack of basic social amenities despite the huge revenue accruing from the oil mineral resources in

the state. Other causes of conflict include seizure of people's lands through various legislations such as the obnoxious Land Use Decree of 1978. There have also been land disputes arising from claims of ownership of lands where oil installations are located such as in the Ke and Bille cases. Land disputes have escalated since the discovery of oil. Other forms of conflicts are also caused by the location of Local Government headquarters such as the case in Ogu-Bolo.

Yet others are caused by oil companies' refusal to pay compensation when there are oil spills. For instance, during the Rukpokwu oil spill in December 2003, Shell claimed it was stopped by Rukpokwu youths from entering the community. However, the action of the youths was prompted by the incidence of the spill and the consequent slow pace of response by Shell. Apart from communal clashes, rivalries and war among cult and militia groups form another dimension to the conflict in Rivers State.

The major impacts of violent conflict situations have been destruction of lives and properties. The Ke and Bille conflict left no less than 30 persons dead, and most of the houses in Ke community razed. In Finima, lives and properties were also destroyed as well as in Ogu-Bolo. In Orkirika, a lot of people were killed and their houses



burnt. This has resulted in further under-development; poverty and widespread unemployment.

Women are affected in many ways. In the first instance, the boys fighting are their sons and husbands; hence women suffer the constant emotional fear that their loved ones might be killed. Besides, young women are captured by the militias and kept as comfort women; they are subjected to both the physical and emotional agony of sexual abuse and rape.

The major needs of women who are affected by violence are also both physical and psychological. When my group visited Ke in April 2001, about 2 months after the crisis, some of the women had no shelter because their houses were destroyed by fire. A great majority of them had no clothes: they wore borrowed clothing. They needed security, wrapper, shelter, food, an income generating activity. But above all, they needed a voice. They needed someone who cared, someone sincere and honest who would understand their grief and situation.

The women have not received any meaningful support. They just coped with violence; they live with it, and they live with the pains, humiliation, and agony. They suffer in silence. Though their problems have received sufficient public attention but nothing has been done about it. In 2002 and 2003 International Alert (a London based-NGO)

trained some women leaders on leadership and conflict transformation after which leadership fund was given to a few groups. However, the project lacked a follow up strategy and hence, the leadership training could therefore not be consolidated upon, and everything was subsequently lost.

#### **Amarachi Eke**

The causes of violent conflicts in my community are poverty and land disputes. Conflict makes people loose their jobs and destroys their source of livelihood. It turns the young women into forced prostitution because they are compelled to act as comfort women, thus resulting in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Besides, the children become homeless.

#### **Kate Emmanuel**

Violent conflicts in my community are caused mainly by poverty and land disputes. During conflict situations men usually loose their income because they would have to stop their businesses. Women's means of livelihood are as well destroyed. Those who are traders do not trade anymore because of fear. Women lose their loved ones who may be among the fighters. The general attitude of the women is usually that of fear. They are targets for sexual abuse and rape and are exposed to HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections.



I do not know of any body that has supported women who were affected by violent conflicts. The women victims are just on their own, with nobody lending them any hand in any thing. Most churches have women fellowships; it is these fellowships that care for their members. But here we have nobody to take care of us.

**Chinonso C. K. Ihesiaba**

The causes of violent conflicts include the oil companies not respecting the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) they signed with the oil-producing communities, not keeping their promises made, and the divide and rule strategy employed by these same oil firms in their dealings with the oil communities. The major impacts of these conflicts in my community are deaths of women and children. Men, women, and children are all turned into environmental refugees in their communities. Women are not involved in either initiating or executing this violence, yet they suffer its consequences of lack of shelter and food. These they direly need and do not get any support from any quarters. They need capacity-building programmes to empower them to make informed decisions about their lives.

**Eucharika Ibegwura**

The situation in Rivers State in particular and in the Niger Delta in general is not just a conflict situation. It is a struggle by a people who have been neglected and

cheated over the past decades, to control their own destinies, by taking ownership of resources found in their areas and utilizing such to develop themselves and leave something for generations to come. There is the lack of necessary infrastructure such as electricity power supply, pipe-borne water, hospitals, clinics or any functional health centres, safe and reliable transportation systems on land and water, adequate and quality education at all levels and adequate and proper housing facilities. If you just ask somebody "what are causes of these conflicts" and you are told "communal clashes", you miss the point. There is a reason for the communal clashes: Some people are gaining while others are fighting and killing themselves.

The grievances of the people are that, so much revenue is generated from here and yet there is nothing to show for it. The East-West road is the worst road in the country, yet that is where all the fuel tankers ply in order to transport fuel to other parts of the country. Farmlands are acquired indiscriminately by government and oil companies, the women cannot farm anymore and they cannot get employment elsewhere. Nobody will employ them because they do not have the skills and the necessary education.

This is the reason youths in deprived communities go to multinationals to claim what is rightly theirs. And how



do they react? Beat the youths up and get them arrested. The impact is negative: Loss of lives and properties; continued bitterness between oil companies and host communities; hostage taking; prolonged poverty; under-development; psychological trauma; estranged families and a legion of other atrocities!

Women get tactically involved in these conflict situations by staging peaceful demonstrations. Women become affected when their economic activities are destroyed. There is no government policy to protect women during conflict situations. During the Asari Dokubo (Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force militia leader) and Ateke Tom (NDPVF break-away factional leader) clash, many women were raped by Ateke boys and government was aware but did absolutely nothing. Those rapists are still walking the streets of Port Harcourt, perhaps, committing even more havocs.

### **Beauty Ejekwu**

The significant conflict situation in my community took place in December 2003. The cause of the conflict was a major oil spill and the consequent fire outbreak that destroyed acres upon acres of land. This particular spill has given rise to various issues within the community. Now, families are at each other's throat because of compensation issues. Women and youths are neglected. Women were not allowed to go with the Chiefs and elders

to Shell to discuss issues of compensation. The grave implication of this is that though women are more impacted than others - their lands are destroyed, their economic rights are abused and violated - and yet we are not part of discussions and negotiations of things that concern us! I am talking about fire that burnt for over one month; burnt our farmlands and crops. We cannot plant on that land anymore. There is oil everywhere, the land is condemned, totally condemned. Our cassava plants are all destroyed and now we are buying garri. When the men were going to Shell for negotiations, they asked us to stay back; even though, we insisted and went to Shell, yet we were not booked in. We are demanding that Shell pay us for destroying our land.

### **Annkio Opurum-Briggs.**

The major cause of violent conflicts in Port Harcourt is the oil and gas pollution in the community and inadequate maintenance of oil pipelines. The oil companies, on their own part, do not listen to the women. These conflicts have deeply impacted psychologically, economically, politically and socially on the people. The psychological effect is perhaps the worst, because everybody goes about with fear. There are specific areas in Port Harcourt that you would not want to stay beyond 6 p.m., such as Diobu and Town. Every now and then there is shooting. This situation has created fear in the minds of the people.



The economic impact relates to the fact that the productive workforce is gradually being eroded. The militias comprise of young men in their productive years. These young people, instead of being useful to their communities and families, are rather wasting their lives and killing themselves. The inadequate existing infrastructure is daily being destroyed in the processes of fighting. I mean, down here in this part of the country, we are neglected, underdeveloped, and with so much poverty, yet the little that is available is being destroyed by conflicts. Politically, conflict is destroying the youths, the leaders of tomorrow. So, where do we stand when it comes to having people in positions of authority? Those who have leadership potentials are using it in the negative way - to destroy, rather than to build.

One cannot really tell how women are involved. For one, they do not join the forces to fight, but, behind the scenes they try to reason with their sons and husbands not to be involved in the violence. Some women groups appeal to the authorities to do something to stop the violence and the shooting. Women try to bring peace and sanity in the communities during conflicts. Women are affected in various ways during violent conflicts. They suffer like other people in that their houses are also burnt down; their other properties are also destroyed; and their clothes are torn and burnt. Their babies are thrown down and at times trampled upon. You know that those who are

involved in violent conflicts don't act on their own. Their actions are controlled by the drugs they take. So, at times they don't even know when they are hurting babies. Further on the woes of the women: Their husbands are killed. Their daughters are raped and abused. The women are injured; some are raped and beaten while some get killed. In a war situation anything can happen. Some women cannot tell you exactly what they go through.

What the women need is a sustainable means of livelihood. Some of them would say they need compensation but having a skilled job and something that can generate income is far better.

The women are not receiving any support. Who will consider them and give them support? NGOs talk about the conflict; they can really offer help. The women just cope anyhow after the conflict. They have to rebuild their homes, get new clothes, send their children back to school, and do other things. I think some of them take to begging and just become destitute. Some resort to borrowing from friends or relatives. Some of them withdraw their children from school. This explains the high rate of prostitution in Port Harcourt because young women go into prostitution to assist their families settle back. This situation puts pressure on the female children and their mothers; they are expected to get rich men who can cater for the family. The married women and



widows are forced by circumstances to hawk sex just to survive. The situation in the Niger Delta is such that if you go into details a lot of things will be revealed, things that will make your stomach churn. It is disheartening. Integrating these women into the society requires a lot of commitment by the government. Shelter is the most important and the next thing is income-generation. Then the whole issue of resource control and resource ownership should be sorted because without this, violent conflicts will continue in the Niger Delta.

### **Blessing Enobun**

The major causes of these violent conflicts, I think, is the oil and gas pollution in the community resulting in injustice and misunderstanding. The impact has been loss of lives and properties. The men are always left with the options of either joining to fight or stay indoors and live in fear. The women who live in conflict communities live in fear and bitterness. The children grow up in fear and they end up being violent because they are used to seeing people fight and kill themselves.

Women are scarcely involved in violent conflicts because they lack the courage to fight and kill. All they do during conflicts is to plan for escape. The general attitude of women to violent conflicts is the attitude of fear. As a result of violent conflicts, most women are forced to escape from the community, leaving their husbands

behind. Some others might be faced with the agony of loosing their husbands or children as a result of the conflict. The major needs of women who are affected by violent conflict are love, care, and understanding. In any concerned society or proper setting, they are taken to rehabilitation centres where they are taught different skills or trades to help them earn their living and take care of their children. The major sources of this vital, primary support are always the government, nongovernmental organizations, and religious groups. But here in our own cases, the women are left with no other option than to accept their cruel condition as fate and work painfully towards recovering all what they had lost. Women affected by violent conflict can be integrated into the society by rehabilitation and support programmes.

### **Anonymous**

The major causes of these violent conflicts include problems over resource allocation, and differences in opinions and ideas. Women are frightened and they call for peace during conflicts; unlike men and youths. Women are flogged and raped in the heat of these violent conflicts. Their economic activities are adversely affected. They lose husbands and sons to these violent conflicts. They are psychologically affected and traumatized. They need counseling, rehabilitation and empowerment. Though some women have received some form of support in the form of micro-finance and skills acquisition, the sources



of which are NGOs, families or family members, but these are not adequate. Coping with life after the conflict is not easy, but after counseling and rehabilitation (if and when made available), they would be fit to be re-integrated into the society. Unfortunately here, their problems do not receive sufficient public attention because government does not consider their problems as a priority.

### **Anonymous**

Major causes of these conflicts include a whole range of obnoxious practices by the oil companies (sometimes they take land by force), agents of governments and gender segregation, or simply put, female marginalization. The major impacts are set backs, enmity and death. Houses are destroyed, young girls are raped and they become pregnant out of wedlock, and youths become more violent. Women are not really involved in violent conflicts. Sometimes women are raped and rendered homeless; sometimes they lose their husbands and children. The major needs of women caught up in these violent conflicts include good homes, food, good drinking water, and electricity. The women live with fear. The government should go in there and implement programmes that will affect the lives of these women. NGOs can sensitize women on conflict resolution. The problems women face during violent conflicts do not receive sufficient public attention because women are not seen as anything in the society. Moreover, some

communities do not have women who can rise up and speak for them; nobody listens to the women.

### **Violet Agwana**

The cause of the violent conflict in my community was land dispute. In the Niger Delta specifically, the main issues are oil revenue; resource allocation; oil spills and compensation issues; then corporate social responsibility and the host communities; ethnic differences; land disputes; claims over locations of oil installations; protest and counter protest and so on and so forth. In Nigeria in general, the causes of conflict are many: religious conflicts; unfriendly government policies; increase in fuel prices; inflation; resource control; agitations for 'south-south presidency', PDP crisis; political assassinations; and a whole lot of conflict situations. The impact has been losses of lives and properties; agony; pains and poverty. It is difficult to start all over again. Building a new house, getting new clothes, buying new furnishings for the house and all that stuff is pretty difficult. Women are most affected because they are more or less the breadwinners in their households in these conflict zones. The men use the little money they are able to raise to indulge in drinking so as to forget about the challenges and the circumstances, but the women will agonize over, and rigorously calculate, how the family will be up again. That's why women pray a lot. They become very religious and hope for divine intervention. As a coping



strategy, some enlightened ones go to corporate organizations to solicit for contract, but then they become exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse before they could be given contracts. When they are given, they are not paid as soon as the supply is made, so they end up accumulating debts.

Where and how then could they get support? Banks should be able to assist in giving loans to women from conflict communities with, lower interest rates. Now, I think women NGOs should advocate for this. Government has not given any significant support. Whatever support that had been rendered had been for the general community and not for women specifically. And of course, you can imagine, the distribution is done on a big man basis. Widows end up not getting anything.

The problems facing women affected by violent conflicts are known by everyone including the government. Whether there is publicity or not, the society knows what the women have suffered, but not one particular thing is being done to address the situation.

### **Violated and Victimized, yet Vulnerable**

Moving away from the virulent causes of these conflicts to its effects on the women folk, their testimonies portrayed the horrendous silent agony and sadistic cruelty they went through during each violent conflict. They

depict also the indeterminable degree of perpetual mental anguish and physical constraints the victim women live with as a result. Their testimonies show that in the community conflicts studied in Nigeria, women and young girls were killed, maimed, widowed, displaced, sexually abused, and subjected to humiliating widowhood rites. Many of them were therefore forced to run female-headed homes in the post conflict period. Only a few women come out of situations of violent conflict unscathed. Indeed the women are subjected to physical, psychological and structural torture made difficult by not only the difficult economic circumstances of women in post-conflict societies in Nigeria but also by discriminatory post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Some of these testimonies as directly recounted by the women are reproduced below and they are as blood-chilling as they come.

### **Mrs. Esther Ada, an Ijaw woman recalls her experience during the Itsekiri/Ijaw crises in 1999.**

We were staying around Okere. During the crises between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, one of my aunties told me to escape because she could not overpower them in order to protect me or secure my life. I am Ijaw; I used to live among Itsekiri people. When I escaped, I went to stay with one Itsekiri Ogunnu man. I stayed there even though I did not have any other cloth with me before I sent for



my sister. She could not come through; so she asked someone to bring me down. So I went to her house. After that, we were living there - all seven of us - I, with my children and my sister with her son. From my sisters' house, I used to come to NPA; even at that time, we were always running up and down.

On the day the opposing community were going about to burn NPA; so we were running up and down seeking to escape to safety. It was while we were running that a bullet hit my sister's son called Victor. The day he died, a girl that was pregnant by him was in labour at the General Hospital. We did not know. My daughter told me that since the time calm returned after the killings they had not seen Victor. I went over to where my son took refuge to search for Victor but my son said he was not with him. Then one man told me that the mob killed many people and that they had seen Victor's corpse, and so I decided to go and see his corpse.

As I was going, the army did not let us see anything at all. They brutally pursued us. As I did not have anything to lose anymore, so I began to cry, and cried until I got home. At home, I met my younger brother; he used to teach in Burutu. He was going to Burutu from Warri when they hijacked their boat and took them to big Warri.

When we heard the rumour about the boat, it was said that only one person survived. Even that person jumped into the river and hid himself under water before resurfacing at the other end. We waited for long before news came that they had actually hijacked the boat and consequently kidnapped the occupants. My two brothers were in the boat; one was a pastor called Apani, the other Iseyefa. Not knowing that the two of them had already been killed by their abductors, we took consolation in the words which came that their hijacked boat would soon be found. After much searching for them over a long time, they were never found up till this day. Even though one of my late brothers' wives was going to protest naked, my mother was also going to protest naked because of her brother that had also been killed. And now we cannot even go home because we do not have transport money.

**Rose Dudun, victim of the 1999 Ijaw / Itsekiri crises recounts her ordeal.**

We lived at No. 9 Dudun Street in Warri. My husband owned the compound. While we were there, somebody told me to look for a way of escape because the other community was coming at that very moment to burn down our compound. I told this to my husband, urging him that we should find a way of escaping. I also told him that some of my friends had told me that very morning that I should find a solution to pack my large



quantity of clothes because they know how my clothes are in my room. A lady friend of mine even said I should pack some to her place. I told them that to pack some of my property from where I was staying would be difficult because people from other places were bringing their own clothes to my house where I was claiming that they were safe. 'Would I now pack my clothes from here to where else?' I had asked the person. While we were still discussing, that very moment before our very eyes, before we could even look back, the attackers had come into the compound very fast. So I asked my husband, how are we going to do it?

I urged my husband to escape, but before he could escape, they had gathered and there was no way for him to escape. As he managed to run away, they caught him. When they caught him, he began to struggle with them. He had only a pair of shorts on. He continued to struggle with them and after a while, they tore the shorts off him leaving him naked. He then began to run.

When they realized that they could not catch him, they barked 'Where is that his wife?'. So I stood. I had a baby I was nursing; my other four or five children with me, and we were there. They hollered: 'Where is the woman, where is the woman?' I answered them. I had only a wrapper around my chest. Luckily for me, the baby was sleeping before but had just woken up. So I carried it in my hands to feed it when the attackers came.

So I placed the baby on my shoulders and told my children to find their way, whoever can run should run. I grabbed my penultimate child, and the next one to him grabbed my hand. I was being dragged about when my wrapper fell off leaving me with only my panties. I managed to grab my two children with the baby in my hand and ran.

Before we ran a short distance, they had started getting fuel from a car in front of our house and began pouring it on the house. In my presence, they set the house on fire. When I saw that they had set the house on fire, I wanted to go back to meet them so that they could burn me with the house because all the property I had laboured for since my youth were in that burning house. My husband had fled to safety. People dissuaded me from going back saying that since I had escaped being lynched, that I should take my children and run away. I asked them, 'With only my panties on?' So one woman gave me her wrapper and I escaped. Then I saw that truly my house was already burning. I was confused and I agonized that all my property was burnt but I thanked God that my baby had woken up just at that instance otherwise I would have left the baby in the house and it would have been burnt with the house.

I then left and began to look for my husband. I searched and searched for him not knowing where he was until



someone told me he saw him on a motorbike. I asked the person if he was absolutely sure and he said he was sure. So I went to my sisters' place. Everyone had gathered at my sisters' place lamenting what had happened. I told them that I had not found my husband though he was seen on a motorbike; still I have not seen him. My husband had gone to Alele Military Barracks to get soldiers to help him quench the fire and retrieve some of his property in the house. Before they got there, everything had been burnt. So we were putting up at my sister's place. We stayed there for about three years before we were able to rent the present place where we are now staying.

**Julie Omaromi is an Itsekiri woman whose mother is Ijaw. She experienced the Ijaw/Itsekiri crises in 1997, and was also injured during the August 2003 protest against Shell. Her story:**

The first person that was killed when the crises just started on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1997, was when they killed my husband. I cried and went into traditional mourning for him. The very day I stopped mourning, the crises and killings erupted all over again. There was so much chaos that we had to go into the bush in the village. And I was eight months pregnant. My mother-in-law began to look for a means of getting us to Warri. She decided that even if she had to die doing that, she would. Even if it would

be by boat, she would take all her children to Warri, she decided. She then put us on a boat to Warri because my husband lived in Warri but she (my mother-in-law) lived in the riverine area.

When we got to Warri, after about a month and some weeks, I delivered a baby boy. When I delivered the baby, I told my mother-in-law that I could not stay idle and watch people feed me because there is no one to cater for my needs. This being so, since I no longer have a husband. She tried to see to it that I returned to the village. When I got back to the village, I began to trade again. By this time, my mother-in-law did not have any house in Warri again. They had burnt her house in Warri, so she had to rent a place and stay as a tenant. I then decided that when my baby was big I would drop him with my brother-in-law, and because my mother in law no longer had a place of her own. I continued to trade. While I was in Tissu, before we knew it, there was chaos and information quickly went round that the Ijaws have started again. Although the mob that came, if they see me, they would not kill me; but they could not see my face because it was at night. All my property that I had gathered and planned a second time was burnt again. I hid in the bush for 3 days before returning to Warri. I passed through Ondo State to get to Warri. I was wearing one blouse that an Ilaje woman gave me (*she describes the blouse*) at Ogeye.



Then my mother asked me to wean my baby because he was almost 1 year old. I weaned the baby and gave him to my mum. After that, I still did not want to stay idle, so I decided to go back again to Tissu. My mother persuaded me not to, because everyone was returning to Warri, but I wanted to return to Tissu. I told her that I have children, unlike other women who do not have children. I needed to work to provide for my children. So I went back and stayed in Tissu. While in Tissu, I used to go to Ijaw area at Tissu because I sold my goods at the company there, though the boats did not travel all the routes. Before this time, I came to Warri, leaving my property behind. I lost a brother so I came to Warri. It was when I came to Warri that I met my people protesting against Shell. So I joined them. During the protest, the soldiers pursued us with intent to beat us. As we were making away from the soldiers' pursuit, I fell from a motorbike (*okada*). I did not even know at that time that the leg would be so badly affected for some months before it reaches to an excruciating pain, up to a point that I could no longer walk with it.

While all these were taking place, my property that I left behind was burnt down when the crises started again. This made it three times that my properties have been so burnt.

*Under what circumstances exactly was your husband killed?*

My husband was the first to be killed when the crises first started. He had come from his workplace at Chevron, to the village, when he was killed. He worked in Chevron as a PRO. He came to see us and inform us of the coming crises so that we could take care. I was in my village with my parents and not in his village. He was even questioning why I was in my village because I was almost due for delivery. It was on his way back that he was killed. The people from the other tribe kidnapped him on his way. My husband is an Itsekiri man. They said he would return but till today, about eight years later, he still has not returned. The baby is about eight years old. We did not even see his corpse. Till date, I have not gotten my own house because the 'war' has been retarding my progress.

*What did Chevron do?*

He did not die inside the Chevron Tank Farm. Chevron did not do anything. May be, if he had died inside Chevron premises, they might have responded; not where they did not deploy him to.



*Was he on contract?*

He was a contract staff. They did not do anything, not even a mere condolence visit to us. I heard that some people donated some money for us but I did not see the money. They gave it to my husband's brother. I think the money was from the company under Chevron with which he was a contract staff.

The children are with me. When the burden of their upkeep became too unbearable on me and I wanted to drop them with my father -in-law, I could not because they had burnt down his place. He does not have a place of his own to stay. It is not possible for me to drop the children with someone who does not have his own place and is staying with someone else. Even my mother-in-law, where she is now, her condition has worsened. Her place was also burnt and her business completely destroyed. Whenever I say I would drop the children with her by force, she would say it is not that she could not take care of them but that they would be hungry. This is because where they are now; they are being fed well and go to school regularly.

Nobody had since given me even an ordinary Five Naira to train my children up to the secondary school level they are now. Again, my leg is another problem; since I

fell and injured it, I have not been able to work to earn money to train my children again.

**Rose Orila, an Ijaw woman who was raped by soldiers during the August 2003 protest.**

For someone like me, two things concern me most. The way the crises affected me is that it turned me into a newborn baby – utterly helpless, without any property whatsoever and totally dependent. I do not have anything and I do not have anywhere to go to. I became just a crawling little baby that is just starting life. Everybody that knew me before knows that the crises had turned me into a little baby. I cannot say all that I went through. After the crises, there was no other way to struggle to survive, to just find how to continue in life; there was absolutely no way out. That was the situation before we the women mobilized ourselves to Shell and Chevron to see again how we can live our life. It was all in a bid to find a means to surviving. From there the oil companies' management sent military men to brutalize us, and they raped me. Those who raped me then; it was not just a single man or two people, but multiple rapes. Many soldiers took turns in raping me. The women were running helter-skelter and were being mercilessly kicked with boots.



*Where were you when the rape occurred?*

I was at the Shell Petroleum Company's gate at Ogunnu, with other protesting women, when the military men were coming towards us. They shot tear gas at us. We began to run because we saw that they were shooting guns at us. We all ran to avoid being shot. The soldiers outran and caught up with some of us, whom they also violently kicked and beat with horse whip, including pregnant ones. As we saw this happening, we ran into the bush. It was inside the bush, right there on the grass that they began the raping. I began to cry aloud, and as I was crying, other women were running for their lives. They women were being whipped. Some ran into the water. Many sustained serious injuries. I was raped by soldiers.

*Did you see anyone else being raped?*

I do not know. But on that very day, I saw an Ilaje woman who was booted to death by soldiers. It was also reported in the papers. Then, Chevron management rushed her and another Ijaw woman to Shell yard at Ogunnu. When they now saw that they were dead, the staffs who were involved in the matter became afraid of their superiors. Then there were other women whose cases were between life and death; Shell then rescued the women and took them to their own hospital. Shell treated them for two days after which it collected its I.D. cards that were given

to those women from Shell and all they had been given. Then it asked the women to leave and not to come near the place again. The women then looked for another means of taking care of themselves. After that, we started going to Peace Clinic at Odion road; it is owned and run by a Yoruba man. There was another Yoruba doctor at Cemetery /Odion road. There are two clinics. Both clinics at Cemetery road and Odion road were filled with our women.

**Doris Bigha, an Ijaw woman whose close relatives were killed during the Ijaw/Itsekiri crises in August 2003.**

What I witnessed during the crises is what I want to say, I mean, what I saw with my own eyes. This first incident I am about to relate happened to my senior sister called Ebikeme Doris Thomas. The direct victim was her most senior son that was with her... she had about four children. She used to stay at Adamu... but when the crises came, she ran for her dear life. She did not pick anything from the house. She just escaped and went to stay at the staff quarters in her work place. When the crises came, everyday they (she and other victims) were running up and down. Sometimes they would spend three or four days in the bush; that was how they were running helter-skelter. Children could not locate their mothers and mothers could not locate their children. Everyone was



just running for his or her dear lives. Sometimes it would take up to 3 days before mother and children would rejoin themselves and sometimes the children would be hiding out at other peoples place.

At a time during the last crisis, they were inside the house and suddenly they began to hear heavy gunshots. It was early in the morning and they had not gotten out of bed. In a hurry, they got up not knowing where the sounds were coming from. In a rush she came out of the house to find out what was happening but could not go back inside the house to get the other children. It was only the little baby which she was carrying that she had with her. They (she and other victim women) began to panic and alert others that the invaders from the other tribe had reached the area so that everyone could come out.

While she was rushing, she did not know that her oldest son was still inside the house, and asleep. It was inside there that the other tribe killed the boy. They did not even allow them to carry the boy's corpse. They took the body away and till date, we do not know where they threw the boy's body. This happened to my senior sister.

My cousin again sent her two daughters to buy foodstuff from the market. On their way to the market, the crises broke out again as usual - anybody not knowing when it would start. After their shopping, on their way back,

these two daughters, one of them was pregnant and she was with another child, while the other one was not married. Both of them were from the same mother and father. As they were coming, when the crises broke out, the two girls were both killed. Even the pregnant one with her young child was killed. Till today, their whereabouts is unknown. One other woman lost four children in one day. The victim woman's mother is still alive; she is at home in the village. The bereaved woman's elder sister is in Warri town.

### **Maria Oguntade**

My name is Maria Oguntade; the crisis that occurred affected me very terribly. All the property I had in Warri was burnt to ashes. Even my children, I did not know where they were when the crisis broke out; they all ran into unknown directions.

I ran into the bush with other people. We stayed in the bush till the crisis ended. When I came back, I searched for my children for a while before I found them. The attackers had burnt our house. We did not have anywhere to stay. We were now staying with a girl and her child called Segun. We stayed there for about two years before we could get another house.

All the property I left at home, they had burnt it too. Right now, I do not have anything anymore; only me



and my children. I am just suffering. I do not even have a job and my children cannot go to school.

**Mrs. Rita Ereku, an Itsekiri woman.**

My niece has five children; her husband was killed in the crises. Another of my niece too lost her husband during the same crisis; and another of my nephews was kidnapped, a boy of 26; still another, his wife was missing. I myself, during the crisis, my store was burnt down - my driers and all the goods inside the store. Not one thing was left after the crisis. I did not have a single Naira to manage, so I began to go from place to place with a comb to plait hair to gather some money. I do not have a husband but I have children and no money. The small capital I invested in and was using to manage was all gone in the crisis.

**An unnamed Ijaw female participant recounts what she witnessed during the crises.**

There was this woman who had a baby strapped to her back. She was running when she was shot and she died, but the baby did not die. When the crisis died down, people heard the cry of a baby and traced the sound into the bush. They found the baby strapped to its mother's back but the mother was dead. They took the baby from the mother's back. We went to inform the woman's husband what had happened. She was married to an Urhobo man. The Urhobo people said it was not his

fault, and that they should bring the body. So after consultation, the people took the corpse to them.

**Ibimisan Koriko, an Ilaje woman who lost one of her breasts after severe beating by soldiers.**

I stay at Iweara. I am Ilaje. I have been there since 1987. I remember many of the crises. I remember the 1996 crises in Escravos; they burnt everywhere and killed many people - students, workers etc. I do not know any tribe that caused it.

In August 2003 when we went to Shell, we did not go there to fight or quarrel. We went peacefully to demand for our rights. However, before we knew it, they had deployed armed military men against us. The Army and the Police spread tear gas at us, shooting at, and flogging us, besides raping women. For myself, when they flogged me, I was seriously injured in one of my breasts. It was our woman leader that rescued me.

*What happened to your breast, and how did it happen?*

When we went to Shell - many of us went to Shell and Chevron Texaco. They spoke to us then, but, surprisingly, after a while, they deployed Soldiers; MOPOL (Police Mobile Squad), tear gas and dogs. But when they said we that should leave, they at the same instance began to flog us. They severely flogged me to a point that one of



my breasts got swollen and I got an injury. I then began to feel pains, very serious pains. My woman leader then took to me to the clinic when it became unbearable. Then they performed an operation on the breast.

*Did you get any kind of support from Shell or Chevron for your hospital bills?*

Our women leader and the Niger Delta Women group paid. There were three groups that contributed the money.

*Did the government come to your aid?*

No, they did not do anything.

*What help do you want?*

What took us to the place in the first place – our rights.

*After the operation, are you now alright?*

Some times, I still feel pains in the breast.

### *Chapter 3*

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS IN WARRI**

### **Major Causes of Conflicts in Warri**

The first issue needing urgent clarification was the major causes of the violent conflicts in the various communities in Warri town. According to participants, causes of these violent conflicts are varied. Any violent conflict could be as a result of general policies of the governments - local, state or federal, - which are seen as anti-people; or it could be as a result of fights for recognition by one ethnic group or the other. Another cause may also be as a result of clamour by residents to partake in the sharing of the oil proceeds from their lands; or it could be as a result of political groups fighting for power, dominance and supremacy in the area. Nevertheless, the consensus among them is that the major causes of these violent conflicts are oil and politics. They further explained that due to the polarized nature of the town, certain people always cash in on these two dominant sources to blow certain crisis out of proportion.

In Warri, for instance, there are three main ethnic groups, namely the Urhobo, Itsekiri, and the Ijaw, besides, albeit marginally, the Ilaje. Some of these ethnic groups feel marginalized over the years and are now militantly agitating for recognition and the desire to be accorded



their due status in Warri's economic and political settings. Expectedly therefore, these ethnic groups now see themselves as arch enemies and which are set against each other in deadly combats. For instance, in Warri, the major conflicts have been between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri. The Ijaws, feeling that the Itsekiris have dominated the affairs of Warri both economically and politically over the years, and buoyed up by their bid to reclaim what they feel rightly belongs to them, tend to question whatever decision that the authorities take in the area that seem to them to promote the status quo, be it political, economic, social or even cultural. These two ethnic groups of Ijaw and Itsekiri now see themselves as enemies and would never want to agree on anything. According to participants, some of the issues that have generated conflicts among these two ethnic groups include the creation and citing of local government headquarters in the area; the position of the Olu of Warn as the traditional ruler of the entire Warri kingdom; and also the payment of oil royalties and compensation to the various ethnic groups and their leaders.

It was also the consensus of participants that the politicians, the oil companies as well as the leaders of these various ethnic groups in the area, have always cashed in on these traditional enmity between the two ethnic groups of Ijaw and Itsekiri for their selfish interests. Often times, the oil companies would want to adopt the

divide and rule tactics in their sharing of benefits to the communities. The politicians, on their part would want to use the opportunity of the division among these groups to exploit the people and use them for their political benefits. The traditional and community leaders, on their own part, would want to use the restive youths of the various ethnic groups to intimidate the oil companies and the government to get recognition and the wealth that follows it. As a result of all these, the conflicts tend to reoccur over and over again even at the slightest provocations.

Generally, as a result of the polarized nature of the people in the area and the general hatred and distrust amongst the major ethnic groups involved in the conflicts, every little misunderstanding or event tends to create tension in the area. For instance, on the 13th of September 2005, there was a protest in Effurun, the headquarters of Uvwie Local Government in the Warri area of as a result of the death of one Bright Ogbemi. According to participants, Mr. Ogbemi was an alleged leader of one of the notorious gangs that usually terrorized the people of the area from its hideout in Alaka Market in Warri. There was great tension in the area, as it was feared that the protest by the deceased's kinsmen and gang members could degenerate into a full-scale conflict in the area. This development underscores the level of division and distrust among the various ethnic groups in the area.



According to the participants, it was an obvious fact that the deceased who was shot and killed by policemen attached to Ekpan Police Station in Warri has been notorious for terrorizing the residents of the city.

### **Impact of the Conflicts on the Communities**

On the major impacts of these conflicts on the various communities in Warri, participants were of the view that these incessant conflicts have succeeded in pushing the people further backwards than their counter parts in other parts of the country. According to them, these conflicts have always been accompanied by wanton destruction of lives and properties. Businesses have equally suffered as no person would want to come into the area to set up a business other than oil business. The various violent conflicts in the area have also impacted negatively on the education of the people as the schools and other educational facilities are always targeted for destruction any time there is conflict. Infrastructural facilities have also been impacted upon negatively by these conflicts as the combatants have always targeted these facilities for destruction. Generally, these various conflicts have resulted in a very high cost of living in the area as the markets, the infrastructures like electricity, pipe borne water, telecommunication facilities etc are destroyed any time there is a major conflict.

### **Effects of the Various Conflicts on Women**

On the effects of these violent conflicts on women and children, the participants were of the view that this vulnerable group have suffered most in all of these conflicts, and that general life have been very negatively affected by these conflicts. According to them, oftentimes, when these conflicts occur, the women are always the worst victims: Physically they are attacked and maimed in the process as they are always the last to escape the conflict area due to their attachment to their children. They will want to protect themselves as well as their children. In one instance, WARDC researchers were actually informed of a woman whose breast was cut off with a knife, besides her physical brutalization, thus leading to her eventual death. In another instance, a woman was brutally murdered while trying to protect her newly born twin babies; these babies were later rescued and are now being taken care of in a foster home.

Sometimes, when these women are not being physically attacked, their economic bases will be destroyed thereby totally incapacitating them economically. The participants were of the consensus that the women in the area are far more enterprising than their male counter parts and are often the breadwinners in their families. As such, whenever there is any conflict and destruction of the economic bases of these women they are further subjected to greater pressure of taking care of the



families. A parallel to this stark reality, the participants further explained, is that the markets are always the targets in any major conflicts in the area, resulting in the destruction of the wares of these women and their stalls.

Further, whenever there are conflicts, oil facilities may become targets, thus resulting into oil spillages, which in turn destroys farmlands and pollutes the waters for fishing in the community. When such occurs, the men will always go and ask for monetary compensation, forgetting, in the process, their wives who are in the villages farming and fishing and actually sustaining the families. Also, when there are conflicts, the women are always forgotten in any reconstruction arrangements, their market stalls and wares destroyed are never replaced. Rather, the authorities will be contented with sharing few bags of rice or salt and other foodstuffs to the women. Ironically and sadly enough, as the authorities are busy distributing those few bags of rice to the women, at the same time they are usually equally engaged in rebuilding and replacing damaged properties belonging to the rich men in the area. A case in point was the reconstruction of a hotel belonging to an influential personality in Warri after a major conflict while the women, the major victims, were completely forgotten.

Also, the hospitals and schools are always targeted for destruction during conflicts in the region. These tend to

have a two-pronged grave effect on the women as not only that their children will be out of school, but also there will be no hospitals to treat the wounded who in most cases are women. All these further tend to depress the women the more.

The participants also noted that whenever there are conflicts in Warri, particularly among the different tribes in the area, women married into the opposing community from the contending tribe are always first targeted for immediate elimination, as it is believed that these women even though married into the other tribe may be spying for their own tribe of origin. The same fate automatically applies to children born to a man from another tribe but living with the mother's kinsmen. They are always cut down with relish, and without mercy or hesitation. Participants further noted that these scenarios are particularly common between the Ijaw and Itsekiri in Warri, thus underlying the extent of hatred between the two tribes. These all tend to negatively affect the women and girls mostly in these conflict zones.

The various military task forces set up to maintain peace in the conflict areas, particularly in Warri, also contribute greatly in initiating the conflicts rather than quelling them. This was the consensus of participants who said the task forces do this by collaborating with conflicting parties to wreck havoc on the people and create panic in



the community. They are also guilty of so many other atrocities like raping and abuse of the women, and shielding one party in order to inflict pain on the opposing group(s). When there are conflicts, there are always cases of disappearances of women and children.

Even though there are always prior warnings before any major conflict in Warri, the women are still caught up in the conflicts as a result of their desire to salvage some of their family belongings and also to carry their young ones with them. In all these, they are the worse for it.

#### **Role of Women in the Various Conflicts**

Generally, women in the Warri conflict zone are not known to be playing very active roles in the conflicts. However, sometimes these women may be used as spies to gather information that will eventually be used by the men who are the real combatants. Women may also be used in starting these conflicts as the conflicting parties may deliberately use their women (maybe wives and daughters, sisters and aunts) to provoke their opponents and by so doing, a major conflict may ensue. Although there are no known women militant leaders for now in the Warri area, sometimes the women may mobilize themselves to take actions that may in turn start a conflict. This situation could only arise in exceptional cases when these women felt that things were going out of hand and their actions would be intended to provoke a re-action

on the responsible parties to correct the perceived anomalies. Some of these cases include instances when the women are forced by the enormity of the circumstances to march around the town naked to protest one injustice or the other, and these actions may then result in a major violent conflict in the area.

#### **Attitude of Women in the Conflicts**

Participants were of the view that especially due to the general nature of the women in the Warri conflict zone (which is their general attitudinal disposition towards peace), they tend to discourage their husbands, sons and brothers from taking part in the conflicts. However, in cases of extreme provocations, the women will be the ones urging their husbands and/or sons and brothers to take part in the conflicts. And the reason could be to redress very apparent injustices on their people. (A case in point is the unending rivalry between the Ijaw and the Itsekiri and which has been sustained by an ever increasing hatred between the two tribes.)

Also, the women always so easily tend to betray their emotions whenever there are major conflicts in the area. They could easily show whether they are happy or not regarding any conflicts. And, whenever the women are happy about any conflicts, like the conflicts between the Ijaw and Itsekiri in Warri, they tend to give their husbands, sons and brothers great moral support. However,



whenever the women are not in support of any conflicts, they usually discourage and dissuade their husbands and sons from partaking in them. The women generally prefer peace in the town to allow them pursue their businesses unhindered as they are in most cases the breadwinners in the area.

As earlier noted, one of the major causes of the conflicts in the Warri area is the fight for equality and also for recognition by the contending ethnic communities. And, even though the women are always the major direct victims in the crises, yet the bitterness that had piled up over the years from the incessant clashes, and the urge for revenge by both the men and the women have tended to encourage the women to support their husbands and sons in the conflicts. On the other hand, the women also always work very hard to ensure that peace is restored whenever there is any ongoing conflict, and, in cases where the conflicts are yet to be started, the women try their best to prevent it from taking off. These conditions are prevalent on occasions when the women feel otherwise about any conflict or its continuation if already in progress.

#### **Needs of Women Victims in the Warri Conflict Zone**

The participants were unanimous that the major need of the women in the Warri conflict zone is peace; they say that if peace is permanently restored in the area, the

women will be able to go about their normal businesses without any fear of molestation from any quarters. The women of the area are generally very enterprising and will prefer a perpetually prevailing atmosphere of peace to do their businesses rather than receiving peanuts as compensation in the aftermath of the conflicts. Also, since the women of the area are very enterprising and hard working, they will need some kind of assistance in the form of replacement of their wares destroyed as a result of the conflicts. This would make for the ease of their rehabilitation in both the economic and social spheres of life.

The women will also want the various market stalls destroyed during the conflicts reconstructed and/or restored to enable them continue with their trading businesses unhindered. They will also want jobs for their unemployed youths, scholarship provision for their children, replacement and rebuilding of destroyed health facilities. Some women also lost their homes in the crisis and are now living in makeshift accommodations. These women will need the provision of a decent accommodation to replace the ones destroyed during the conflicts. The women who lost their husbands during the various crises need some kind of assistance to enable them cope with the added responsibility of single parentage. Women should also be considered when appointing members of committees for the resolution of



the various crises, so they reasoned. Since they are always direct victims of these crises, they believe that common sense dictates they should be in a position to proffer suggestions. Such suggestions could lead to a more permanent solution to the problems of the area.

### **Types of Support Received by the Women from the Government or Other Organizations During and After the Conflicts**

Oftentimes the women-victims of these various conflicts are not given any form of direct support by the government, the oil companies, or any other organizations whatsoever. However, the women may benefit indirectly from compensations and damages paid to their husbands, which in most cases hardly get anywhere. The women may also receive some other relief materials like bag(s) of rice and other minor relief supports that could not really help them in effective recovery from the damage and dislocation suffered during the conflict. Although a few women may, due to their high position in the society receive some kind of financial compensation from either the government or the oil companies. Nevertheless, this extreme is rare. The churches, particularly the Catholic Church and some other non-governmental organizations have always played some vital roles in assisting the women and children during and after conflicts in Warri, but all these supports and assistance are not always enough to restore the women to their positions before the conflicts.

### **How Women Can Work Together to Stop These Conflicts**

It is a well-known fact that women generally support their husbands during these conflicts, whether directly or indirectly. The men are, however, the major active players in the conflicts. Sometimes these men instigate these conflicts as a means of making money, as they always use the instrument of the conflict to bargain for financial compensation from either the government or the oil companies. The conflicts may also be a means of seeking for recognition and/or to redress some perceived injustices suffered by one particular ethnic group or the other. Whatever may be the cause or causes of these conflicts, women can definitely play very active roles in dissuading their husbands and sons from taking actions that may lead to these conflicts. The women are, no doubt, very close to them and can easily influence their husbands and sons one way or the other.

Participants were further agreed that the women may also reach-out to the various religious leaders and urge them to persuade these men who are always in the forefront of these conflicts from taking any action that may lead to violent conflicts in the area. The women leaders may also mobilize the women folks to embark on anti-violent conflict rallies to demonstrate their opposition towards these unending conflicts in the area.



These were, indeed, the major decisions reached at the Focused Group Discussions in Warri regarding the conflicts and the roles women play in the violent conflicts in the Warri zone.

## Chapter 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS IN PORT HARCOURT

#### Causes of Conflicts in the Port Harcourt Zone

According to the participants, the major causes of conflicts in the Port Harcourt zone include the desire to share in the proceeds of the natural resources in the area, i.e. oil. The various ethnic and interest groups initiate and/or provoke some of these conflicts in their bid to gain control or access to the rich oil wealth in the area. This leads to contradictory claims of ownership of lands in the area as this solely and ultimately decides who gets what in terms of compensation(s) from both the government and the oil companies. This fight or struggle has worsened as a result of the general poverty in the land. There is very high rate of unemployment among the youths as the oil companies most times recruit their major staff from outside their locations even before commencing operations in the area. This often leaves the youths between the devil and the deep blue sea. These unemployed youths readily become tools in the hands of the various ethnic and interest groups engaged in mortal combats in the area.

Also, the government and the various oil companies contribute largely to the various conflicts in the area in



the ways and manners they distribute the compensations whenever they decide to do so. They usually select a few people who may not actually be the right beneficiaries of these compensations. By so doing, those that felt marginalized and/or left out in the sharing always want to fight back, and so, conflict will ensue. The government's boundary adjustments programs also contributes to fuelling these violent conflicts as often times an oil-rich land may be adjudged to belong to another ethnic or interest group. This effectively denies the other group the right to claim compensation on the land(s). Thus, the group that felt aggrieved in the process always want to fight back to reclaim what they feel rightly belongs to them. The oil companies' 'divide-and-rule tactics' in the area is also another cause of these conflicts. In a way to avoid paying compensation to the people or contributing to the development of the area, the oil companies always resort to some underhand practice(s) of not only creating but also sustaining some tension in the locality. In their perennially but totally unhealthy motive of always wanting to favour one ethnic group against the other; the other group will naturally vehemently protest such move, and that may in turn lead to conflict in the area.

The apparent lack of infrastructure in the area is also a major cause of conflicts. Generally, the people of the area are gravely lacking in the basic amenities of life, like pipe-borne water, electricity, telecommunications, etc.

In contrast, however, the oil companies and their workers live and carry on business in unlimited affluence, and that, with the proceeds of the oil that comes out of these areas. Therefore, the people feel severely pained, marginalized and even completely neglected. In their bid to correct these perceived injustices, conflicts may ensue. And closely connected to the above is the high rate of ignorance and illiteracy among the people of the area. This is so because there are not enough educational institutions in these areas. There are no scholarships for the people as most of the people there are very poor and could not afford to train their wards without assistance from either the government or the oil companies in the form of scholarship grants. The few elites in the area therefore resort to manipulation of the illiterate masses for their selfish ends.

The participants also agreed that politics and bad governance contributes greatly towards the incessant conflicts in the area. The political leaders are not honest in their governance as they are mostly interested on how to acquire personal wealth at the expense of the masses; the leaders are very corrupt and are not transparent in their handing of public fund. Funds meant for developmental purposes in the areas are often diverted



and misappropriated by these political leaders and their collaborators, into private accounts. The result is that the people have continued to wallow in poverty and lack. Often times these political leaders and the community leaders connive with the oil companies to divert what ordinarily should have been used in the development of the area into their personal accounts. When the people could no longer bear the obvious deprivations and injustices perpetrated by their leaders in connivance with the oil companies operating in the area, they often resort to violence, which in turn leads to conflicts among the people.

### **Recent Conflicts in the Port Harcourt Zone**

Some of the recent conflicts in the area include the Orkirika-Eleme crisis of 2003. The conflict was as result of rival claims by the two communities over the ownership of the land hosting the Port Harcourt refinery and petrochemical industry. It was a major conflict resulting in so much loss of lives and property among the conflicting parties. Also, in very recent times, there was the conflict between the supporters of Asari Dokubo, leader of the NDPVF, and Atake Tom, a break-away factional leader. Although, the conflict was gang-related and equally has some political undertones: The rival groups were supported and armed by the politicians who were using them for their electioneering campaigns. However, the conflict later acquired ethnic dimension as

the Asari Dokubo group were mainly Ijaw and the Atake group were mainly of Orkirika origin. This conflict also came almost at the same time the Orkirika and the Eleme were fighting for the ownership of the land hosting the refinery. The two gang-leaders have since institutionalized themselves and are now carrying out various other illegal activities including oil bunkering, arms racketeering, hostage-taking, ransome-kidnapping of oil workers, oil pipeline blow-outs, creeks and riverine gun-battles with federal troops and an intractable guerilla warfare against the federal government, amongst others.

Other major conflicts in the area in recent time include the Ijaw and Itsekiri clash. This was a spill over from the Ijaw/Itsekiri clash for the ownership of Warri town which had to do with politics and ward delineation. There was also the Andoni and Ogoni crisis, which was also politically related. The conflict raged on between 1993 and 1994 and was only temporarily suspended, as the rival ethnic groups are always ready to escalate the conflict at the least provocation.

### **Impact of the Conflicts on Women**

Most of the time, the women are displaced anytime there are conflicts in the area. They lose their houses and other valuable properties and are forced to become refugees in other places, sometimes in the bush. The women sometimes lose their husbands and become widows in



the process. Added to their widowhood plight are now their double responsibilities of families' headship and as breadwinners. The children become orphans and add to the pressure on their mothers. The women also suffer the trauma of their forcefully separated families as the men, the women, and children will normally take different routes of escape during the conflicts. At the end of the conflicts, it becomes extremely difficult to get re-united again as some of the family members must have lost their way while trying to escape from the conflict zone. Sometimes this forceful separation could be finite; sometimes it could be indefinite, which in turn ultimately shatters the woman emotionally and otherwise.

The health of the women is also affected negatively as the shocks and injuries received during and after the conflicts tend to dislocate them. Also, most of the time, they are cut up in the crossfire of the conflict, resulting to their death. Those who survive the conflicts often lose their means of livelihood and are forced to take up prostitution with its attendant health implications as a means of survival. The women are also raped by the men from the conflicting ethnic groups as a way of inflicting pain on their rivals and, as it were, humiliating them. They tend to suffer the aggravated trauma and psychological pain that accompanies the rape even years after the end of the conflict in the area.

### **Effects of the Violent Conflicts on Children**

The children are also at the receiving end whenever there are violent conflicts in the area. Sometimes, the children are abandoned and left to die in the conflict, as the relatively stronger adults hastily flee the flashpoint. Children who survive the attacks are always traumatized and psychologically affected all through their lives. Some of the children grow up to become very violent in their ways of living and thinking, having grown up with violence. Re-moulding and re-orientating them into responsible citizens which pose no danger to society's safety and security becomes an arduous challenge. In families affected by these conflicts, the children's education is usually abruptly disrupted and their general development arrested as a result. Also, some of the children are deliberately killed by the contending parties, and others still are maimed thereby living them deformed for life. Such developments regarding children caught up in Port Harcourt conflict zone runs parallel to that in Warri, where, in one instance, a mother had to abandon her few months old twins in the bush during a conflict in the area. It was not known whether the mother survived or died in the conflict. Also, during conflicts children who are products of inter ethnic marriages are always dealt with in very unpleasant ways. Some of them are either killed outrightly, or pushed out to go and die in the war front. Many of such cases were recorded during the Andoni/Ogoni crisis.



### **Role of Women in the Port Harcourt Conflicts**

Generally, the women provide moral support for their husbands and children who take active part in the conflicts. The women prepare their foods and provide all needed supports they can muster for the combatant men. However, the tide is gradually changing as many women are now seen playing very active role in the conflicts. Reports abound of so many women and girls in active participation in the violent conflicts in the area. Cases in point are the Asari Dokubo/ Atake conflict where young women were seen carrying arms and fighting alongside the males. The women are also used as spies and confidants by the male combatants. The men use the women to get vital information needed for strategizing for the conflicts. The women are also used to move weapons around or to conceal arms needed for combat.

### **Attitude of Women in the Conflicts**

The participants agreed that though the women generally lend their support to the men during conflicts, they do not generally want violence. The women generally tend to discourage their husbands and sons from taking parts in the conflicts. Another parallel is seen here in the women's attitude to the conflicts as their counterparts in Warri: They always give their full support and encouragement to the men in cases of extreme provocations. In such cases, here also, the women will be the ones urging their husbands and/or sons to take

part in the conflicts as a way of redressing very apparent injustices on their people.

To demonstrate their hatred for violent conflicts in the area, various women groups have carried out rallies protesting against moves to start any violent conflict or to stop an ongoing conflict. Some cases in point are the Ogoni women protest march to the Rivers State House of Assembly in April 2005, against moves to revive the suspended Andoni/Ogoni crisis. There were also the Kalabari women protest rally against violent conflicts in their area in 2004/2005; the Ogbakiri women protest in 2004/2005, and the Orkirika women protest rally against the Eleme/Orkirika land crisis in 2003, which was coordinated by the non-governmental organization, Gender and Development Action (GADA).

Participants were of the view that more coordination works are needed to be done by women organizations and community leaders in mobilizing women to protest against these violent conflicts. They contend that there could be no better approach to the problem as the women are always the worst affected whenever there are conflicts in the area. The NGOs need to source more fund for use in mobilizing the women to resist these conflicts in their communities and areas, they further suggested.



### **Needs of Women Victims in the Port Harcourt Conflict Zone**

According to the participants, the major needs of the women in the aftermath of these conflicts include the provision of shelter. Most of them have actually lost their houses during the crises and are most willing to go back to restart their lives, but they so urgently needed some form of shelter over their heads. They also needed medical assistance as many of the women sustained various degrees of injuries during the conflicts and have not received any form of good and proper treatment afterwards. Added to these is their dire need for some forms of counselling to enable them overcome the trauma and psychological pain suffered during the crisis.

The women also needed some form of economic empowerment and assistance to enable them restart a new life. The assistance could be in the form of loan to start a new business, replacement of their destroyed market stalls, replacement of their wares destroyed during the crises, assistance with their children's educational costs, relocation assistance fund, etc. The women also needed some kind of legal assistance to enable them redress the injustices some of the suffered during the crisis.

Besides, some of the women needed to be encouraged to go back to their communities as most of them usually

refuse to return even after the conflict for fear of reprisal from rival communities. A case in point here is that of the displaced people of Orkirika who have refused to go back to their communities even long after the return of peace in the communities.

### **External Support Received By the Women**

Some organizations, companies, and institutions have always provided support to the women during and after the various conflicts in the Port Harcourt conflict zone. These organizations and companies include Chevron oil company, IFESH, the Red Cross, the Catholic Church, etc. The kind of support often provided by these institutions and organizations include food, clothing materials, drugs, and blankets, The Catholic Church in particular provided relief materials in the form of rehabilitation of some displaced Ogoni people during the various crises in the area. Building materials were also provided by the church.

The NDDC is also providing some kind of support in the form of road rehabilitation, mass transit system, eye surgeries etc, although participants were of the opinion that some of the supports provided by NDDC were more or less artificial and political.

The above formed the core of issues discussed in the Port Harcourt conflict zone.



## Chapter 5

### ANALYSIS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The Questionnaire administered in the course of this study specifically focused more on women in Warri and Port Harcourt for obvious reasons: The conflicts are more concentrated in communities of both Rivers and Delta States. The distribution of the questionnaires and interviews was spread among the different categories of women as this was adjudged to be very crucial in relating with the various experiences of both young girls and elderly women involved in respective conflict situations. Although the educational backgrounds of the respondents suggested their inability to keep records of times and events, however the cyclic nature of these conflicts, though with different tenpos, is a key reason for it.

The above points to the fact that the conflicts occur frequently; while some get national attention, some don't because of their dimensions. Nevertheless, all feature destruction of lives and properties which are very common at all levels of conflicts.

However, what could, indeed, be derived from their responses is that the series of violent conflicts started in 1999 soon after the inception of civil democratic rule.



The questionnaires had further sought to know the major groups that were involved in these conflicts. The responses provided showed clearly that all the groups that were involved were organized across ethnic dimensions, i.e., all the groups were ethnic nationality groups and most of them were youth groups with ages between 14 to 45 years. This expressly points to the importance of ethnic identity as the singular basis for mobilization in most conflicts in the Niger Delta.

From the responses also, it was clearly reflected that most of the conflicts have a general character of economic and political research analysis.

These conclusions were reached based on information derived both from the administered questionnaires and responses, and discussions from the Focused Group Discussions. Also, some oral interviews were conducted on the field during the fieldwork.

The first part of the questionnaire had questions that were related to the respondents' knowledge of the incidence of violent conflicts in the community. Most of the interviewees in their responses were actually unable to separate the conflicts in terms of their date(s) of occurrence or duration. The reason for this, they said, is because the causes of these conflicts are most times similar besides the fact that the conflicts occur like a cycle that escalates and de-escalates, with the same parties

involved and even with similar issue as causes. Some of the respondents isolated the political and economic as separate causes of the conflicts. The inseparable nature of political and economic causes of conflicts showed that one was an implication for the other in terms of who gets what as resources. The percentage distribution showed 60% of the respondents as ascribing the causes to both Political and Economic; 30% Economic only, and 10% Political only.

Compensation or land charges featured topmost as the dominant motive behind these conflicts as most times, groups with political power cuts more resources than those with less political power.

However, in an attempt to test respondents' knowledge of the major issues at stake in any of these conflicts, it was apparent from their responses that they find it easier to group the conflicts generally as either political or economic rather than to point out specifically the major issues at stake in the conflicts experienced. Reasons for conflicts are peddled as rumours, and respondents said they found it very hard to recollect what was actually responsible for each of the conflicts. A specific instance when the cause of the conflict was known was that involving the movement of the Local Government Area headquarters from the Itsekiri community of Ogidigbe Escravos to the Ijaw community of Ogbe Ijaw, in 1997.



What was topmost in their description of the major issues at stake in these conflicts is compensation for oil exploration (by way of employment gain and financial pay-outs), land boundary disputes and sitting of public facilities. The reason for this opacity is adduced by the women to be the clandestine nature in which the decisions regarding these violent conflicts are taken, and the consequent lack of articulation of issues and positions. Decisions on war in traditional African setting are treated sacredly amongst men, sometimes to avoid sabotage. The implication of this is that violent conflicts are men's affairs in most communities.

The second section of set questions administered through questionnaires, or orally and also used as an outline for the Focused Group Discussions, had sought to understand the character of violence, in the context of how it affects women directly. To this, most respondents were unequivocal that women suffered attacks during violent conflicts. In describing the types of attacks, most respondents chose and categorized them thus: Beatings, Killings and Rape at 60%, 20% and 20%, respectively. But in the analysis of the group that make most of certain types of attacks, it was deduced from respondents that soldiers are known to perpetrate rape more than fighters from opposing groups, while fighters from opposing groups do more of the killings. And indeed, the conditions prevalent to the emergence of each of these actors in the

conflict scene seemingly predispose them to these sets of atrocious acts: Most soldiers on peace-keeping missions possess power to check opposing forces and are more relaxed to think of activities or actions like rape, while fighters from other groups aim at inflicting mass destruction of lives and properties on the opposing side within the shortest possible time. Not surprisingly therefore, women casualties were more in raids carried out by military forces than in clashes between communities or groups. When two groups clashed, their young men were most affected as they wait to fight back. But anytime state forces like police or soldiers attack a community, the men escape faster, leaving the women and children in the hands of brutal soldiers. The respondents claimed that there have been instances in which a number of women who lose their lives during conflicts are more than men. Women are most vulnerable during violent conflicts.

Another part of the questionnaire attempted to bring to the fore the women's involvement in conflicts. Almost all respondents agreed to the fact that women do participate in conflicts, although not directly in terms of carrying weapons to fight but they provide assistance in various forms. Significantly, most respondents pointed out the 'general support for one group against another' as what the women provide for their own group. This support could come in terms of provision of food,



especially when militant groups are waiting in anticipation of an attack; groups are usually divided to guard entrance points to communities where they check people in and out of the community. At such instances, clothes, food and drinks (water and alcohol) are regularly supplied to oil such assignments. The women are mostly in charge of the supply.

Since motivation comes in diverse forms, respondents also identified 'mobilizing others to support one group against another' as a form of activity that women participate in, in conflicts. They sing behind the group and also make sure that the news that is peddled within the community is positive to encourage their fighting group. This they see as a way of mobilizing support to encourage the group. The psychological warfare is taken care of through this means. Like in all places world over, women are the message carriers in the community and they play this role effectively during conflict situations. The scenario is also not any different with women in the violent conflicts in the Niger Delta. Financial supports for the conflicts are obtained from various sources. Though women are the economic back bone of the community, they are not the financiers of the procurement of small arms and light weapon. These are financed most times by elites within the community who may not reside within; they are mostly politicians, buoyant businessmen or retired soldiers who are rich.

The last set of questions was targeted at investigating the state's and civil society's response to violence against women in conflict zones. Most respondents were unequivocal in their demand that the State must urgently intervene to protect women from the violence in the community either through the local, state or federal governments.

In the analysis of their response to the actions of the State to violence against women, the state government was identified as the most active tier. The common type of intervention (action) undertaken by the state government, according to their responses, is the provision of police or military protection for civilians during conflicts. They also identified the enactment of Law to stop the violence. However, none of them could refer to any (specific) law that was made for such purposes or show evidence of the law in operation.

The Federal Government was also identified as an actor in terms of its response to violent conflicts. Here, the respondents point to the Federal Government's oftentimes responses to conflicts which have a high measure of destruction, killings or grave socio-economic implications. Its response most times involves drafting military personnel to the violent conflict zones. The consequences of such peacekeeping activities in the conflict zones have been rape cases, abuse of drugs,



incidence of sexually related diseases, sadistic brutalization and assault and all other social consequences of militarization. The menace of proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta, they trenchantly argued, is consequent upon the militarization of the region; this has led to illegal arms trade and drug trade. Bunkering activity has also been boosted by the availability of small arms and small weapons.

Most respondents claimed that the Government's peace-keeping actions and militarization brought a new albeit deadly dimension to even their local and internal conflicts as sophisticated weapons were always on display at fights which hitherto witnessed only locally-fabricated cutlasses and arrows which these communities were used to. There were claims that some soldiers on peacekeeping missions exchange small arms for money, and this accounts for proliferation of arms in the region. Although, most of the respondents also agreed that in some instance, the intervention of the peacekeeping troops have helped to save some communities from what would have spelt total destruction in the course of the violent conflicts.

The activities of the Local Government are not always obvious as they are most times enmeshed in the conflicts. The local government leadership is either divided; supporting local groups, or for loss of credibility, is

unable to act as a harbinger to the resolution of the conflict.

The activities of the civil society organizations have been very weak in the Niger Delta in terms of their responses to violence against women. Most respondents could not even remember the names of organizations that have launched interventionist programmes in the past. The activities of such civil society groups have always been a one-off thing, determined by prospect to secure funding or grant from donor organizations. The direct consequence of this is that interventions most times lack sustainability components and ownership of the processes is never given to the people. Thus, as soon as the funds are dried up, the NGO's disappear; and with them, everything and everyone else connected with the programme.

The activities of some religious organizations were reflected in the responses as they provided shelter for victims during crisis. Nevertheless, the activities of the civil societies like non-governmental organizations, especially those who work in the area of peace building, was acknowledged, but also limited to training, conferences and workshops, and lacking in any sustainability component whatsoever. Several of these efforts have, in the past, and still now, are been condemned as purely ineffective as those trainings,



workshops and conferences held for just 2 — 3 days are grossly inadequate to change deep-rooted problems factored by long cultural and historical realities. The need for articulation of issues concerning violence against women during conflicts is really a tall order for such organizations, not to talk of taking such issues to advocacy level for possible policy development and implementation.

Very few civil society organizations cooperate with relief provision response to victims of violence, or specialize in trauma healing, and all other post-conflict challenges.

Also, a point of note is the action of the press as a member of the civil society; their reporting of conflicts in the Niger Delta has been adjudged to be very unprofessional as most reporters lack the necessary competence to carry out the assignments. From the oral interviews conducted, most respondents (especially the learned ones) claimed that most reports were false, unverifiable, or out rightly biased.

## Conclusions

The research effort was able to bring to the bare the situation and challenges experienced by women in conflict situations. Women as a group in carrying out their socio-economic role in the society as bestowed on

them by cultural and traditional norms acts as the economic backbone of the family. They take care of the domestic activities within the household and the children. This role poses a lot of challenges during and after conflict situation. However, it a case of intriguing paradox when one tries to analyze the role they play in the decision-making process within this same community wherein they give so much. The culture and tradition as much relegated the womenfolk to the position of “domestic caregiver” who has little or nothing to contribute as thought on how to run the community.

The research also established the fact that women are worse off in cases of these violent conflicts. The loss of either Husband or Children is most felt by the women.

The attempt by women to improve on their cultural and traditionally-imposed status has been challenged by both internal and external factors. The *internal factors* include a lack of self-confidence that is psychological, as they seem to have accepted the patriarchal structure of the society as normal and should continue. Over time this has affected the ability of women groups to articulate their positions within the community and has also affected the sustainability of some of their efforts to organize themselves and voices in response to their predicament.



Their little knowledge and remembrance of history of conflicts in their communities also establishes a lack of interest in the basic issues within their communities. The culture considers the experience of violence as bad and details of which should not be kept in one's thinking or memory by any means whatsoever. This further accounts for their low capacity for engagement in post-conflict situations, as women exhibits very low attitudinal response to post conflict issues and when active, are not always beyond courting sympathy. The expression is that of a victim who exhibits withdrawal from community issues, although one needs to also appreciate the traumatic experience of violent conflicts. Societal culture and tradition has also deeply impacted negatively on post-conflict programmes; in situations where raped women are stigmatized in the society; one finds it difficult to institute legal actions against the offenders.

In the course of this research, it was equally established that women further play some supportive roles in terms of providing food and refreshments that will assist their groups in the battlefield. However, this does not extend to the fact that the women were included in the logistic plan in the preparation for violent conflicts. Such assistance is provided on need basis and with sheer sense of patriotism.

Since communication has been established as a major component in conflicts, the women groups were also identified as a major factor in the spread of information that most times aggravate conflicts. Rumours on issues that later result to wide-spread violent conflict are peddled by women. Likewise, they could be used as carriers of good messages and ideas that would promote peace. This role played by women could be explored in the practice of "early warning" (a Peace-building method for Conflicts Prevention). Women group can effectively be used as monitors of indicators that measures conflict vulnerability of the community.

Women are also assumed to be naturally more detached from issues of violence as compared to men in conflict situations; this attribute could be explored for peace building purposes

On the other hand, the *external factors* are mostly inspired by the contempt in which women are generally held by the community when it comes to leadership and decision making process.

This research also brings out the prospects and potentials for managing conflicts using women as key players. The experience of a protest involving women groups from the three ethnic nationalities (Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo) was a classic example as this was markedly the first time



groups from different ethnic nationalities would come together to fight a common cause. The male folks have never been able to come together on any of such issues. Such positive development could be explored as an opportunity to establish good relationships between neighbouring ethnic nationalities as it could proffer a panacea to the recurring inter and intra ethnic conflicts.

The post conflict engagement of both state and non-state actors (which has been more frequently adopted) is not sustainable and most efforts are dropped in the dustbin of history as soon as the conflict subsides. Most findings are never implemented as policy change levels, and this chasm re-ignites the cycle of protests which conflagrate into violent conflicts.

The non-state actors have demonstrated little or no capacity for post-conflict reconstruction projects while interventions during conflicts are often rebuffed by parties for lack of confidence in the mediation process. Besides, while it is granted that Peace Studies and practices are just being developed in this part of the world, thus leading to whole unscientific approach to the conflicts and their resolution, expertise that will accommodate gender issues seem not to be still available within the pool of existing 'Peace Building Practitioners.' This low capacity, however, can be explained through time and prevailing factors: First is the lack of a sustainable fund programme

for peace projects, and secondly, most organizations working in the area lacks basic skills for interventions.

Response of the state to the conflicts has been that of reprisal, and most of the post-conflict actions like setting up of Commissions of Inquiry with regard to the cause(s) of the disputes and their other associated issues have clearly proved to be just futile efforts that lack commitment on the part of the Government. Findings and recommendation of such commissions are never implemented nor are any policies developed to back them up. Such inquiries have succinctly proven in lacking the basic knowledge to deal with very sensitive gender issues that are related to the conflicts.

The nascent nature of the nation's democracy have also not brought forth a legislative structure that is pro-people, in a way that advocacy efforts could be encouraged to impact on policy actions that will protect people in times of conflicts. This in itself, justifies the imperative for an advocacy component of any proposed interventions if the effort is to prove meaningful.

### **Recommendations**

From the above observations, analyses and discussions the following recommendations are proffered as contributions to alleviate the arduous conditions facing



Women in Conflict (pre, during and post conflict) situations:

There is a need to develop a well thought-out Peace Education Programme for Women's Group(s) in the Niger Delta. The Peace Education programme will take care of the training needs and prospects for women interested in peace building and identify obstacle to the widespread participation of women in peace building. This will enhance and develop their capacity for already identified potential as "Peace Agent" especially for conflict prevention projects

An Advocacy Programme should be launched to achieve the following:

Government total commitment to post-conflict justice; by implementing recommendations of panels of inquiry, judicial commissions and other investigative and administrative panels or committees set up in the events of violent conflicts.

Government should be encouraged to devise other means of responding to conflict situations other than the reprisal methods practiced. These methods give room for excessive actions of law enforcement agent, such as rape and battery.

Messages targeted at identified groups that perpetrate violations of women dignity in the course of war and conflict; for example, lectures could be organized at Military Institutions to discuss the implication of rape and other violation against the women folk at peacekeeping assignments.

Effective legislation should be enacted to protect Women groups and children in conflict situations. The legislation should also be capable of promoting justice in the event of violation of Women in the cause of conflicts.

Universities and other relevant institutions should develop Peace Studies programme that will promote research opportunities to explore cultural resources available for the development of women peace builders in the Niger Delta.

Research should be developed to link the development of Women to that of the Niger Delta region; this will apparently attract Governments' attention to issues concerning Women and their Children for a better consideration in Budget Process (Allocation and Appropriation). Such attention will shore women's image and confidence within the community.

The Recommendations highlighted above can only be implemented through a very strong Multi-Stakeholder



collaboration capable of exhibiting and accommodating dynamism in its approach. Both non-state and state structures should willingly deploy their capacity and other resources to support this collaborative effort. It is also very important to mention that Peace building projects are long term; as such results should not be expected in the immediate.

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## *Chapter 6*

### **STATE AND NON STATE INTERVENTIONS**

The lingering conflict situation in Niger Delta has received several responses towards a peaceful resolution of the crises. Actors who have participated in the efforts to bring peace and development to the region can be grouped into two: State actors and Non State actors.

The state actors include, Government at three levels, i.e. Federal Government, State Government, Local Government and its Agencies, while the non state intervention efforts are markedly distinct from the international donor agencies, Local NGOs, CBOs, local and international academic institutions and multinational companies.

All efforts at resolving the Niger Delta crises have failed to achieve a successful resolution of the conflict or a peaceful transformation of the situation. All attempts to institute meaningful conflict management mechanism within the system have been frustrated by recurrent violent conflict.

Against this background it will be appropriate to attempt a general analysis of the interventions by various groups and institutions as a means of articulating the gaps, challenges and potentials of the various approaches.



### **State Interventions**

Most active in the peace process of the Niger Delta is the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The strategic importance of crude oil to the Nigerian economy and attendant security threat caused by the violent conflicts accounts for the prominence of the Federal Government in the peace process. The various state and local governments of the Niger Delta have also had meaningful interventions.

A clinical observation of the Government interventions reflects two approaches: Peace Operation or Peacekeeping and Conflict Transformation Approach. Peacekeeping is defined as interjection of force between two conflicting factions in order to allow tempers to cool, to contain what is obviously an explosive situation and prevent it from reoccurring. Another writer describes it as a device to buy time in order to settle the underlying dispute<sup>1</sup>

Conflict Transformation Approach involves efforts to improve the living conditions of the victims and also transform the conflict by establishing sustainable development in the environment. The approach practically involves a continuum between relief, rehabilitation and development<sup>2</sup>.

Peacekeeping as a response or intervention approach by the Nigeria's central government is usually undertaken by the Nigerian Armed forces and sometimes the mobile police division of the Nigeria Police. Sometimes the operation includes a combined force of both the Armed Forces and Nigeria Police. Peace Keeping Operations take many months and the situations in the Niger Delta have witnessed a perpetual presence of Peacekeeping personnel in some areas of the Niger Delta.

As recorded from the testimonies of the victims recorded in the previous chapter features of the peacekeeping process include, beating, raping and killing. Personnel dispatched to conflict sites are often strongly disposed to the idea of destruction and killing than persuading parties in conflict. Looting of properties is also a common feature during peacekeeping operations. This result of this is that people often do not appreciate or see the intervention of the government through deployment of troops as a positive intervention. The events of Odi in Bayelsa State and Choba in Rivers State has created a deep hatred for military personnel within the communities especially for the victims of the sporadic rape incident that followed the government interventions. Women, as reflected by the testimonies are the worst victims. They are less mobile, sexually abused, suffer systemic rape and become means to punish, intimidate, humiliate opposed groups.



Till today people still point accusing fingers to the Federal Government of Nigeria for “genocide” actions against the people of the Niger Delta.

There have been several calls from both local and international institution, for review of the peacekeeping operations for internal conflicts in Nigeria which has often exposed the lack of professionalism in such operations.

Peacekeeping as defined above is a very useful phenomenon that could help in curbing violence and create conducive environment for peaceful resolution of conflicts. It helps to reduce killings and destruction especially in internal conflicts. Experience has shown that peacekeeping, if not professionally conducted worsen the conflicts or contributes to its re-occurrence. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Niger Delta is often attributed to peacekeeping personnel who sell arms to Ethnic militias in exchange for sex, hard drugs and alcoholic drinks. The militarisation has also recorded adverse effect on the morals of both young boys and girls encouraging prostitution and gang raping. This approach of intervention can only guarantee **Negative Peace**, It simply implies the absence of violence, but still entails accepting the type of uneven power relations, inequity, lack of resources, etc. that have, in the first instance, led to the conflict.

The Federal Government has also have tried to respond to the development needs of these communities through the creation of certain development agencies like the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992; the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in 1994; and the Obasanjo government’s Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). These agencies do not seem to have helped in a way in addressing the significant developmental challenges occasioned in these communities by oil extraction activities of the multi-nationals. Also lacking the bite are such proactive laws as Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) Act (formerly Decree No 58 of 1988), and the Environmental Impact Assessment (Decree No 36 of 1992).

Agencies created in the past have experienced a lot of challenges which include constitutionality and legitimacy, corruption, political interference, inability to prioritize the people development needs, lack of confidence in the Government and cooperation from the people. The Agencies face initial challenge of representation, with attendant agitation by ethnic groups for representational requests.

None of the agencies have been able to respond appropriately to either the Relief, Rehabilitation and Development needs of the People in the Event or After Conflict Situations. Many of the women who gave their



testimonies affirmed that the government abandoned them in the orgy situations.

The attempt by the government to resolve conflict has also de-emphasised the relevance of women. Several Niger Delta "Peace Talks" held at the instance of the Federal Government reflect little or no women representation. The focus has always been the Youth and Community leaders. The Government has often been blind to the opportunities created by the possible roles of women as **peace makers**.

### Non State Intervention

The basic assumption was that solving the issue of violent conflict was a *condition sin e qua non* for attaining development results, specifically the sustainable alleviation of poverty. Moreover, it was argued that conflicts around the world wiped out past development efforts by the enormous humanitarian and economic damage caused. More seriously, they set back the economics of those countries sometimes for decades and at the same time shattered the little future potential for economic and social development<sup>3</sup>. The above reference was the motivation factor behind the effort of international agencies to get rid of violent conflicts in developing nations to allow economic growth and sustainable developments.

Positive Peace requires changes in society that can only be realized gradually and for which the involvement of societal groups and organization is inevitable. Peace must finally be based in society itself. Society needs to be reformed socially, politically and economically. In addition, a whole range of reforms is needed in the sphere of good governance, democracy and institutional development. Sustainable results cannot be achieved within the institution of the state only, but need to encompass civil society. Strengthening of civil society in fact is essential in order to function as an articulate partner, watchdog and countervailing power vis-à-vis the government in this connection. Currently a large number of initiatives is undertaken to support local capacities for peace and strengthen civil society in conflict-affected countries<sup>4</sup>.

Non State interventions comprise the efforts of Non Governmental Organisations and Institutions to mobilize support for Peace building and development in the Niger Delta. This remarkably commenced in 1999 after the enthronement of democracy and particularly the government led by General Olusegun Obasanjo. The Civil Society Organisations saw the need to explore the opportunity created by the existence of a democratic Government to engender sustainable development and also consolidate democracy. The Niger Delta, because of its strategic importance to the economy and the security



of the Nation, caught the attention of many international donor agencies. They signified intention to work with many local NGOs and intergovernmental departments of the government to achieve **Positive Peace**

Capacity development was top on the strategy, for local organisations and identified stake holders. The approach was to build their capacity in terms of acquiring the knowledge of non violent approach to conflict resolution. This knowledge was to be disseminated through TOT (Training of Trainers) workshops.

At several of these workshops held within and outside the Niger Delta, attempts were made to raise Peace and Change agents who will propagate the “gospel” of peace. Many of such effort paid off in terms of increasing the knowledge of participants who were fortunate to attend such training mostly held in the comforts of posh hotels, paid transportations and honoraria (reason why they scramble for slots). But less was achieved in terms of changing the attitude of the communities to their approach to conflict resolutions.

Most interventions suffered initial setbacks for lack of confidence and suspicions from the people in the Niger Delta. This was complicated by the lack of experience of cadres from organizations which have little or no training in “working on conflict”. The task of confidence

building amongst the community was difficult. This affected the success record with initial interventions.

Despite the background experience, at NGO level, scores of peace and conflict resolution organisations are sprouting. Training (workshops, seminars and conferences) has become the most widely marketed commodity of the emerging “peace industry”. Myriads of training workshops, seminars, consultations and conferences have been conducted in and out of conflict zones<sup>5</sup>.

The training approach to evolving peace in the Niger Delta was obviously designed by people who know very little about the real situation and how it affects the people. Although most of the projects commence with a need assessment, information supplied at such sessions are limited by time and representation. The obstacles discussed hereunder have been identified by Doe, to be challenging the success of almost a decade of peace-building training in the Niger Delta;

### **Transferability and Technique Orientation**

This concerns the assumption that the model used in one setting is sufficiently universal to use with adjustments and sensitivity in others. That is a high view of transferability of conflict resolution skills and processes is taken. Second it is also assumed that culture is an



aspect of conflict resolution that can be reduced to technique. Transferability and the technique orientation are the major sources of de-motivation and lack of creativity in the field of training.

### **Same Methods, Same Symbols, Same Authors**

Consistent use of just a few materials for training across the world. Such monotony has stripped the discipline of creativity, innovation and excitement. Symbols used in manuals are practically the same while authors cited will mainly come from the North America, especially, the United States of America.

### **Socio-cultural Context of Peace**

The fact that peace-building is a social process that is uniquely experienced by each at a particular time and in a particular situation is completely ignored. North America that defines and dictates today's peace and peace-building has a different worldview that does not apply to other societies

It is also important to note that the component of relief and rehabilitation were clearly omitted from the Conflict Transformation intervention process, may be for reasons like resources. Omitting relief and rehabilitation from the conflict transformation makes all the processes less attractive to the people, especially when they are just coming out of a conflict situation.

Other reasons that contributed to the ineffectiveness of the interventions of the civil society organizations as enumerated by Tsejeard and George<sup>6</sup> "...drawbacks have been identified when involving local civil society. In the first place the local NGOs may be liaised protagonist parties, either implicitly or explicitly. Secondly, the social base and representation of many of such NGOs ... dubious and often they are captured by local elites and instrumental to their interests. A third objection is the lack of transparency and accountability and the resulting danger of abuse and opportunism. Many NGOs emerge from nothing as soon as donor money enters the scene and are more something of a private company than organizations for the sake of the common good. Next problem lies in the great diversity and number of such organisations, leading to a fragmented, uncoordinated, if not contradictory overall picture. A fifth problem is their lack of executive implementation capacity and their own need for institutional development. Finally, it has been observed that such organizations lack the necessary impact at national and regional levels and that their eventual contribution to conflict resolution can be easily neutralized or opposed by other actors and levels in society. Moreover, these NGOs would not be able to affect the underlying causes of conflict, such as those related to the political economy of violence, the scarcity of resources, and the lack of political influence and the process of underdevelopment. The approach is criticized



on the basis of its simplistic assumption that people at the local level inherently wish peace. It seems to forget that conflict is a deep-seated and culturally embedded problem that cannot be solved by a number of well-intentioned activists. Similarly, the notion is criticized that women could offer a special contribution to peace building as the role of women in conflict is much more complicated than that of bringing peace only”.

The inability to explore the changing roles of women in conflict situation has also created a big gap in the intervention process of the civil society organisations. In the past few years the *victim role* of women<sup>7</sup> is often stressed and it is becoming necessary to take into account the *multi-faceted role* of women in conflict.

## Recommendations

### A) Research Opportunities

The non - availability of well researched local documents on very important issues on Conflict and Gender has limited the quality of capacity development project for women in conflict. Local research should be encouraged especially on issues that borders women organisation in conflict areas, Changing roles or multi-faceted roles of women in conflict, cultural resources that can increase women's performance in peace building. West African Network for Peace (WANEP) through one of its

appendage organisation Women in Peace-building Network (WIPNET) conducted a research on the “Potential of women in monitoring conflict” at its latent state for the development of an early warning mechanism<sup>8</sup>. It was revealed from the research that women possess great capacity as monitor of conflicts as they are less involved and also emphasized that culturally women are more incline to peace. The phenomenon of motherhood in the African traditional philosophy should be further researched to espouse the great potential of women in managing conflict and building peace.

### B) Enactment of Law to “Protecting Women in Conflict Situation”

Special enforceable laws should be enacted for the protection of women in conflict situation. These will prevent the occurrence of rape and battering. The laws should accommodate the specificity of conflict situations for it to be effective. There are several laws and international statutes, despite the facts that Nigeria is a signatory to such, the government has often exhibited political will to enforce them.

C) Relief and Rehabilitation Programmes in post-conflict situations should be encouraged especially for women. Organisation with expertise in relief and rehabilitation programmes should work in conjunction with those who



specialised in capacity building and advocacy to create a continuum for sustainable conflict transformation and peace. Testimonies given by women relating their untold economic hardship reveal that conflict transformation should also consist of economic empowerment components. The continual economic hardship deepens bitterness and also creates opportunities for reoccurrence of conflict.

D) Capacity Development Programme should be encouraged for personnel working with Women in Conflict areas especially on issues like trauma healing and rehabilitation in which there is lack of expertise. Organisations who possess expertise in this area can train others.

E) Special Advocacy programme should be launched to focus on mobilizing support for “respect and fair treatment to women during and after conflict situations. The programme should involve commanding authorities of the Nigeria Armed Forces and Police. This will help to enable the military personnel carry out peacekeeping operation.

F) Special Health Policy should be created to assist victims of conflicts especially women with their Health complications and challenges. Most women complain of persistent health problems suffered during and post conflict periods, worse situation are those that are

infected by HIV/AIDS who need more intensive care for the life threatening situation.

G) Needs to access and reappraise the interventions and supports given by International donor communities. According to the British scholar, Goodhand<sup>9</sup>, development agencies can work *around, in and on* conflict. Most development agencies find conflict as disruptive factor over which little influence can be exercised and in turns withdraw from or keep out of conflict affected areas. But it's possible to creatively see how development programme can continue without being negatively affected by conflict and continue to work in low risk areas on mainstream development activities. The crises in Warri should not necessitate total withdrawal from the Niger Delta. The challenge is to make reactive adjustments to programmes in medium and high risk area and to put greater focus on positioning, i.e. neutrality and impartiality. Development programmes can exploit opportunities to positively affect the dynamics of conflict (Conflict Transformation).

### Conclusion

Women's experience in conflict situation especially when viewed from the *victim role*, is that of hardship and neglect. Women are among the most heavily targeted victims of a conflict. Their burden increases during conflict which also reflects the structural and gender



imbalance that exists in the society. They invariably bear greater responsibilities for their children and elderly relatives, which make them less mobile to eventually flee from the (open) conflict.

That systematic rape and other forms of sexual abuse of women increasingly becomes a means to punish, intimidate and humiliate opposed groups. The fact that many African communities, for instance, treasure the sexual purity of women is of eminent importance. Sexual abuse can be regarded as an attack on the entire community<sup>10</sup>. This is also complicated by the continued social stigma and health complication experienced by victims.

The challenge posed by intervention approaches of both State and Non State actors raise a lot of concern for both review and drastic change of style.

Militarist approach of the Government through unprofessionally conducted peace keeping operations featuring Spartan indiscipline by personnel has worsened the conflict situation. Militarisation of the Niger Delta has eroded civil life in a manner that a creative social rehabilitation will be needed to recreate the socially undermined society.

The NGOs are leading the non state efforts in the Niger Delta with the support of the international donor agencies.

An assessment of their previous efforts reflects low capacity for the enormous tasks of building peace in the Niger Delta. Efforts should be intensified to build the capacity of the NGOs and international donor agencies (especially their local knowledge) alike.

Increasing knowledge that the *victim discourse* of women in violent conflict is limiting will help to tap the potential of women as peacemakers. A close look should be given to the *multi-faceted role* of women in conflict. More insight into issues like constructions of symbols, attitudes and behavioural pattern related to notions of femininity and masculinity. Also important to know is how cultural definitions of masculinity with attendant aspects of aggression firinto the organization of war as well as the building of peace. The transformation of norms of masculinity is key in any peace-building strategy though most institutional arenas, are permeated by masculine norms<sup>11</sup>.

In summary, women in conflict must be seen as a highly differentiated group of social actors, who possess valuable resources and capacities for peace. Welfare-oriented projects that aim to reduce the women suffering should be implemented to increase their capacity for peace-building.

The task ahead is that of relating the impact of conflict on gender specific tasks, responsibilities, roles and



identities of women during and after conflict and the specific mechanism that could lead to a re-negotiation of gender identities permanently.

Practical programmes are needed to sustain positive gender-related changes in tasks, roles and identities of women as a consequence of conflict.

### END NOTES

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### *Appendix 1*

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A 3-DAY CONSENSUS AND CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY WOMEN ADVOCATES RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE (WARDC) SUPPORTED BY NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FUND (NED) AT TALAND HOTEL, PORT-HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE ON 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2006.**

The workshop organized by WARDC on violence against women in conflict situations and peace times, had in attendance of about hundred participants who are victims of Ilaje, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Choba, Okirika, Port-Harcourt crisis in recent times as well as various women organization were in present.

#### **DELIBERATIONS**

Arising from the exhaustive discussions of participant during the consensus and capacity building workshop of which solutions to peace building were reached. The participant recommend the following:

After extensive deliberation on issues bordering on violence against women during and post conflict periods i.e. suffering of women in conflict zones therefore violence was defined as the physical and psychological tortures women pass through during the conflicts and peace time.



- It was observed that women have not properly stand to fight for their rights and therefore recommend that :
- women should be actively integrated in the decision making process and management of affairs in their societies.
- Women should see themselves as agents of intervention in the society.
- All laws, norms values and traditions that as impediments to women's right should be abrogated.
- Women should be politically and economically empowered to enable them ascertain their rights.

Finally, that if the above recommendation are strictly adhere to, the communities will be more at peace, organize and sustainable development will be achieved.

## *Appendix 2*

### **BEING A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A THREE DAY CAPACITY AND CONSENSUS BUILDING WORKSHOP ON WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES, ORGANISED BY WOMEN ADVOCATES RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER (WARDC) AT HOTEL PEGGY, WARRI DELTA STATE ON 18TH – 20TH APRIL, 2006**

Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center (WARDC) organised a three day Capacity and Consensus Building Workshop on Women in Conflict Zones in Warri Delta State .

The workshop targeted women from the three tribes (Ijaw, Itshekiri and Ilaje) who have been victims of the several conflicts in Warri and its environs. While the opening of the workshop had in attendance the Chair, Hon Justice G E Akperi, the attorney general duly represented by Mrs. T O Uloho, the Secretary of FIDA in the State, members of the NBA, and members of a prominent organization the Human Rights Defender led by Barrister CDS Omo Irabor.

Papers presented includes : Peace Building techniques, violence against women in war and peace times, the role



of women and men and how women can participate in decision making and peace round tables.

### **OBSERVATION**

After the three day intensive deliberations, the participants observed as follows:

- That the women of Nigeria right from birth to death, in time of peace or conflict face discriminations and various form of violence such as rape, sexual assault and harassment, female circumcision , forced prostitution and labor, which are often used as weapons of war in order to dehumanize them and to prosecute the community to which they belong.
- That by the constitution of Nigeria and other external laws, there are obligations on the government to protect and defend its citizens from any form of violence against them.
- That in all the discussions, the participants recognised the government has failed to produce the necessary conditions for women's welfare and advancement since our society is tolerant of violence against women, what we then have is a culture of silence and care free attitude by government concerning the condition of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

- That following this, private persons, multinationals, the police, solders and the government act without fear of punishment during conflict situations thereby resulting in gross violation of women's right.
- That violent conflicts has been on the increase in the Niger-Delta for some time now and it is quite worrisome, that social groups such as we have in the Niger Delta and the Middle Belt, South West and the North; now use more sophisticated weapons during conflict.
- That the Multinationals particularly Chevron, Shell and Texaco have continued without fear of punishment to flare gas, degrade our environment, spill oil without fear of God or human security.



- That at one point or the other, these multinationals have agreed to perform some developmental duties spelt out and signed between them and some communities in a MOU, but have failed to fulfill these promises.
- That we note with deep sadness the wanton destruction of lives and properties that have been lost in Delta State due to conflicts as a result of crisis over boundary allocation, tribal superiority, corruption of the leadership and chieftaincy issues.
- That we have also realized that where attempts have been made by the multinationals to develop certain communities the funds have been wrongfully used and abused by the so-called contractor.
- That the above mismanagement is due to lack of transparency openness and information by the multinationals on the extent of the contract awarded.

Recognizing the above, the workshop on consensus building against violence against women in conflict situation has thus achieved the following:

- Build consensus amongst women of the three different tribes (Ijaw, Itsekiri and Ilaje) against gender based violence among tribes.

- Bring to fore real life experiences of women and the effect of the various conflicts on their lives.
- Reinforced the point that violence devastates and distorts the lives of many, especially women all over the world.
- Hear from the testimonies of individuals who were victims of violent abuse;
- Strategise on how to work in these different communities to facilitate peace and harmony in the Niger-Delta and Warri in particular.

The meeting therefore recommends as follows:

- That the relevant government agencies and regulatory bodies should as a matter of urgency put up a policy document promoting and protecting women against gender based violence in conflict and peace time.
- That the government should embark on restitution / reparations on past issues and begin a process to facilitate a peaceful restoration in the state.
- That the government should strengthen its structures to maintain law abiding conduct by the citizens and



punish offenders, who propagate hate speeches amongst the tribes or who have the tendency of causing havoc or crisis in the communities.

- Those leaders in the communities and youth should always ensure a non violent approach to conflicts; give way for dialogue to have its place in order to quell disagreements whenever it brews.
- That it should be mandated that after any civil or national strife, women should be renewed and empowered afresh to start a new lease of life to enable them forget the ravages of war as this will go a long way in healing the scars of the wound; and
- That traditional and community leaders in the three tribes should explore a more comprehensive means of addressing and preventing future violent conflict.
- That the religious groups in the communities should take up the preaching and teaching peace to their subjects.
- That government should support girl-child education to facilitate women's development.
- That women should always insist to participate in peace roundtable in their communities.

In conclusion, as a matter of urgency the meeting demand the following:

- A public hearing at both the state and National Assembly to re-define the relationship between the communities in the Niger-Delta and the Multinationals.
- A state Endowment Fund in Honour of the women's victims of the violent conflicts in the Niger-Delta, to be managed by a board of trustees, to be appointed or nominated by the victims themselves.
- Demand employment quota or affirmative action of not less than 30% employment for indigenes of Delta State in all the oil corporations in the state.
- Scholarship process should be more transparent so that children of the poor can benefit from such programs .

*Signed by:*

Mrs. Rita Ereku	<i>(Women Leader, Itsekiri)</i>
Mrs. Roseline Orila	<i>(Women Leader, Ijaw)</i>
Mrs. Esther Asiogbon	<i>(Women Leader, Ilaje)</i>

All the participants present.



## Women in Conflict Zones in Nigeria

### In-depth Interview Guide

#### COURTESY

My name is .....,  
 I am a field assistant for a research project on Women in Conflict Zones in Nigeria. I am grateful that you could all spare some time to respond this interview. The main purpose of this project is to develop an appropriate intervention package and advocacy framework to help alleviate the plights of women who suffer severe physical, emotional, economic and social problems during and after violent frequent in our country today. The study maintains a high level of privacy and identity is well protected.

Thank you for your precious time and cooperation.

Name of Interviewer:

Date of Interview: Day..... Month.....

Year.....

Time Interview was Held: from..... to.....

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWER

Age	
sex	
Marital St.	
Education	
Occupation	
Religion	

1. What do you think are the major causes of violent conflicts in your community, and in Nigeria today?
2. What are the major impacts of violent conflicts on your communities?
3. In what different ways do you feel that the violent conflicts in your community are affecting the following categories of people:
  - (a) Men
  - (b) Women
  - (c) Children
4. In what different ways are women involved in violent conflicts in your community?
5. What is the general attitude of women to violent conflicts in your community, and how is this different from those of men and youths?
6. Please identify and discuss the different ways women are affected by violent conflicts in your community?
7. What do you think are the major needs of women who are affected by violent conflicts in your community?



8. What is the extent of support received by women affected by violent conflicts in your community towards reducing their burdens?
9. What are the different sources of these supports and how adequate are they? For example, from husbands, children, immediate and extended families, non-government, social/traditional institutions, government, etc.
10. How are women affected by violent conflicts in your community coping with life after such conflicts?
11. How do you think women affected by violent conflicts can be effectively integrated into the society?
12. Do you believe the problems facing women affected by violent conflicts receive sufficient public attention? YES/NO.  
  
If not, what do you think is responsible for this lack of attention?

Thank you very much, once again, for your comments and time.