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**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**

**EDUCATION FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE IN NIGERIA:  
THE ROLE OF A WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT NGO**

**BY**

**ADENIKE OLUFUNMILAYO YESUFU**

**A THESIS**

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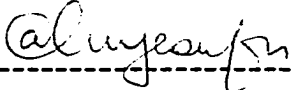
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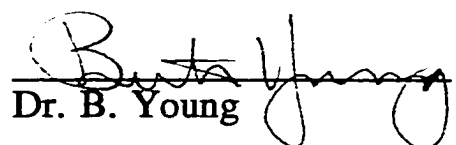
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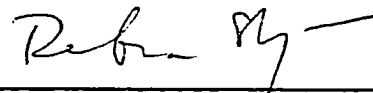
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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my precious gifts, from God,  
My four devoted, appreciative and understanding sons,  
Dhira Olufemi Yesufu  
Hakeem Oluwatosin Yesufu  
Lawal Olorunfunmi Yesufu  
Mohammed Olumuyiwa Yesufu  
who believed in me,  
who thought I could do it,  
who encouraged me to go for it and  
who supported me in all ways imaginable.  
You have all enriched my life as I hope I have enriched yours.  
May God continue to bless you all,  
As you continue to be a blessing to my life.  
Amen.

## ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s the United Nations and other international women's conferences have adopted **Equality, Development and Peace** as an organizing theme and framework for women's activities in development. Women would not only benefit from peaceful structures, as opposed to violent structures which oppress them, but they also have a role to play in building peaceful relationships and structures, which UNESCO has referred to as a "**Culture of Peace.**" This interdisciplinary program by UNESCO is meant to encourage member states, individual citizens and other public and private agencies to promote principles, practices and conduct based on the universal values of peace, respect for life, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men. The connection between development, peace and gender equity is explicit in the UNESCO (1995) culture of peace framework, which says:

*Equality, development and peace are inextricably linked. There can be no lasting peace without development and no sustainable development without full equality between men and women.*

A culture of peace calls for non-violent relations not only between states but also between individuals, between social groups, between a state and all its citizens, and between humans and their environment. It seeks to overcome within and across societies problems of militarization and militarism from macro to micro levels, of direct violence, of structural violence of poverty and inequalities, human rights violations, cultural intolerance and conflicts, environmental destruction and personal peacelessness. It therefore seeks to promote economic security and equity as well as respect for human rights; cultivate cultural solidarity, environmental care and sustainable development; establish political security and democracy and facilitate the empowerment and full participation of women.

To date a considerable amount of social research has been conducted on "women, gender and development" issues and problems in North and South contexts. However the

theme of “peace” in “gender and development” has been relatively unexplored. At the Beijing Conference in 1995, a group of women scholars and advocates initiated a consultative project to examine the contribution of women to building a culture of peace. This study sought to participate in this endeavor, by looking at an African country, Nigeria, to see how the visions and activities of one selected women’s development NGO, *Women, Law and Development Center* (WLDC) may be building a culture of peace in Nigeria.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology comprising in depth interviews, participant observation, analysis of relevant documents, journal writing and discussions facilitated by a workshop on the concept of a culture of peace.

Overall, this study established the positive relevance of ideas and strategies of a culture of peace to the work of women’s development NGOs in South contexts. Although the WLDC’s program focus lies in issues of gender and development, it was found that such organizing, educational and advocacy work is very relevant to building a culture of peace. The WLDC helped to sensitize women to the root causes of their social and economic problems, namely patriarchy, militarism and the structural violence of the modernization paradigm of development. The WLDC’s training strategies also reflected values and processes consistent with a culture of peace (e.g. participation, empowerment, and conscientization).

In its internal and external relationships, the WLDC demonstrated sincere efforts to be peaceful by following values and strategies of active nonviolence and conflict resolution. Leaders, staff and members of the WLDC were found to have critical insights on the many problems of militarism, economic security and equity, human rights, political security, participation and democracy, and cultural solidarity. However, one limitation in the WLDC women’s concept of a culture of peace was in the area of environmental care and sustainable development. This finding led to a recommendation that the WLDC could enrich its program by integrating ecological principles in its major theme of development, human rights, and militarism.

**In All Thy Ways Acknowledge HIM (Proverbs 3: 6)**

**I give all the glory, honor, praise, worship, adoration, and immense thanksgiving to God Almighty, the Blessed Trinity (The Triune One) my Heavenly Father, Jehovah El Shaddai (the Bountiful Giver of all grace) my Lord, Savior, Master and Friend, Jesus Christ my Precious Comforter, Teacher and Guide, the Holy Spirit for favor, love, grace, mercy, empowerment and provision to undertake and complete this program. Halleluyah, Amen.**

**I acknowledge the spiritual support of my church family at Cornerstone New Testament Church Of God Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and at House On The Rock, Lagos, Nigeria.**

**I acknowledge the invaluable support of my Co-supervisors, my Supervisory Committee, and my Examining Committee**

**I acknowledge the encouragement and support of my entire family and friends dotted all over the globe who stayed connected to me through out the whole exercise.**

**May God Almighty bless you all. Amen.**

# EDUCATION FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF A WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT NGO

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# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

As humanity makes the transition into a new century, the attainment of peace remains an enormous challenge facing all nations, communities and peoples worldwide. Looking back on recent history, humanity has witnessed not only the destruction and suffering caused by wars, but also major problems of poverty, inequalities, human rights violations, bloody interethnic and intercultural conflicts, and the devastating effects of environmental degradation. In response to the challenge of achieving peace, the United Nations has appropriately declared 2000 as the International Year of a Culture of Peace and the next decade as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence.

This study is located within the general context of the idea of a culture of peace. Specifically, it focuses on the contribution that women, as victims of violence, could be making towards building a culture of peace in a violent world. There is now substantive evidence that women, as half of the world's population, have been disproportionately victimized by the pervasive phenomenon of violence: physical, structural, psychological, and ecological. It is clear that, fifty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, women still lag far behind men in the fulfillment of their human rights.

The underpinning theme for the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-85) and the four international women's conferences (Mexico, Copenhagen, Nairobi, and Beijing) has been **equality, development and peace**. In practice however, the women's movement and initiatives have focused more attention on the dimensions of equality and development as well as the vital concept of human rights than on the dimension of peace.

In the peace movements of the 60s which had antiwar and disarmament as focus, women have played an inspiring and leadership role. However more recently, women have made greater efforts into promoting peace issues within a holistic notion. For instance, the agenda of the Beijing World Conference on Women (1995) included a declaration on the contribution of women to a Culture of Peace. Likewise, since its inception in 1994, the UNESCO's transdisciplinary Culture of Peace program has always emphasized the crucial role of women in building a culture of peace despite the problems of conflicts and violence that disproportionately impact on women.

For many years, I have been involved personally and socially in women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in my homeland, Nigeria. These NGOs focus in particular on development issues and problems facing Nigerian women. To date, however,

there has been no research on the actual and potential role of such women's development NGOs in building a culture of peace in Nigeria, even though these organizations have been very active in promoting the goals and strategies set by successive international women's conferences. I felt it timely and important therefore to contribute to the field of peace research by exploring and analyzing whether one specific women's development NGO might be building a culture of peace in Nigeria, and if so, how and with what outcomes. This study also focused on issues related to peace education. There is clear and strong consensus among practitioners and scholars that a culture of peace can be built effectively only through appropriate educational processes and strategies. Hence a component of this research critically examines the orientation and practices of the selected women's development NGO's in educating for a culture of peace. Prior, however, to a detailed presentation of the research problem, it is helpful to outline a conceptual framework for the study.

### **Towards the Concept of a Culture of Peace**

After the series of world wars and the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which Carson (1987) called a test for humanity, it cannot be denied that the world needs "peace" or more precisely attitudes, policies, and strategies whereby conflicts are settled nonviolently rather than through physical violence. But unfortunately a cursory look at the world today depicts a vivid presence of direct violence as tragically illustrated by the Gulf War and actual or threats of armed conflicts in many regions or countries. However, while faced with these continuing episodes of direct violent confrontations between and among states and groups, it is vital not to succumb to the belief and argument that such violence is inevitable as an outcome of "human nature".

Although people living in social groups have resorted to fighting to settle their differences, historical records have also shown that they have also been able to live at peace with each other. As the well-known Seville statement (Adams, 1989) drafted by an international group of eminent scientists and social scientists has persuasively argued, there is ample historical, anthropological, and other evidence that human beings have lived and can live in non-violence. The various forms of physical or direct violence, ranging from wars and criminal violence to domestic abuse and bullying in school, are social conditions and hence can be deconstructed towards non-violent resolution of conflicts and non-violent relationships and institutions (Barnaby, 1988).

The "peace movement" has often been identified in the popular imagination with the anti-war or disarmament movement. But now an expanding movement of peace educators, researchers, and activists has shown that the idea of peace cannot only be linked to the

scourge of wars or more micro-levels of direct or physical violence (Burns and Aspeslagh, 1996). In sum, peace is multi-dimensional and seeks to transcend the culture of violence in all its various forms and levels.

UNESCO (1995) in promoting a trans-disciplinary approach to peace developed a **Culture of Peace** program, which conceptualized peace as a set of values, attitudes, practices and conduct by which nations and peoples can live together in non-violent relations, a situation of harmony between individuals, social groups, between a state and all its citizens and between humans and their environment. According to UNESCO a culture of peace is essentially linked to the universal values of personal peace, cultural solidarity and tolerance, sharing and free flow of information, demilitarization from macro to micro levels, environmental care and sustainable development, economic security and development, political security and democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, equality between men and women, and empowerment of women for full participation.

Furthermore, educators and activists in multiculturalism have also recognized that a culture of peace requires that in the contexts of cultural diversity, relationships between different ethnic and cultural groups need to reflect mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and harmony (Toh and Floresca-Cawagas, 1987; Dei, 1994). They recognize that socio-cultural and psychological violence is vividly expressed in cultural domination, racism, sexism, religious discrimination and intolerance such as depicted in the horrors of the holocaust and the recent tragic examples of genocide and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda.

Also worldwide, influential environmental movements have demonstrated that humanity needs to learn to live in harmony and balance with nature and its entire species because ecological violence continues to threaten the survival of humans and the earth itself (Suzuki, 1997; Fein, 1988; Selby and Pike, 1988). Sustainability and sustainable development are essential building blocks of a culture of peace

A holistic culture of peace, therefore **must** go beyond the problem of wars and other expressions of direct or physical violence. Based on their faith, Christians have advocated that peace is not merely the absence of war, nor can it be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Instead there is no peace without justice (Vatican Council, 1978). Peace scholars such as Hicks (1986) and Brock-Utne (1985) have described peace as both the absence of direct violence and the absence of indirect or structural violence. By structural violence is meant the existence of structures and relationships of social and economic inequalities that underpin poverty, unemployment, and disparities at local and global levels (Hicks, 1988; Toh, 1987; Webb, 1986).

Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1987) have likewise elaborated a framework for peace education to illustrate this holistic concept of peace and have come up with these six clusters of militarization, structural violence, human rights, cultural solidarity, environmental care and personal peace. Reardon (1982) in her own contribution to the holistic concept of peace described peace as a situation in which neither the overt violence nor the covert violence of unjust systems is used as an instrument for extending the interests of a particular nation or group. She said it is a situation where human basic needs are met, where justice can be obtained, conflicts resolved through nonviolent processes, and human material resources are shared for the benefit of all people. Reardon (1992) therefore advocated a change in the hitherto concept of peace which she claimed was the product of a war system to what she labeled a paradigm of peace. She explained:

If we are to experience an authentic fulsome peace, we must think peace. If we are to think peace we need a paradigm of peace to move us from a warring society to a parenting or caring society in which all adults parent the young and care for the vulnerable. (p. 392)

Fell (1988) too aptly quoted a definition of peace given in the resolution of the 18th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, as follows:

Peace cannot consist solely in this absence of armed conflict but implies principally a process of progress, justice and mutual respect among the peoples designed to secure the building of an international society in which everyone can find his true place and enjoy his share of the world's intellectual and material resources. Peace is an active challenging option in the lives of all. (p. 72)

Hence, in studying the role of my selected Nigerian women's NGO in building a culture of peace, I will be sensitive to the multiple dimensions of conflicts and violence that undermine women's well-being. Given the holistic nature of the concept of a culture of peace, this study necessarily includes this spectrum of dimensions. Limiting the study to only one or a few dimensions would present only a partial understanding of the theory and practice of the concept.

### **Education for a Culture of Peace**

Barnaby (1988) and other peace researchers and activists have argued, that war is not inherent in human nature but rather it is a social construct. Just as war is learnt, peace can be learnt. Conflict is inherent in life but people can and must work to resolve them constructively and peacefully. The questions then are: Can a culture of peace come about

through education? Can a culture of peace be taught? Can a culture of peace be learned? (Reardon 1992). Building a culture of peace requires the vital dimension of education at all levels and in all forms, whether formal, informal or non formal (Reardon 1985).

Educating for a culture of peace or peace education has had a long period of evolution beginning with the emphasis on demilitarization and the abolition of wars or what has been referred to as disarmament education (Reardon, 1988; Smith and Carson, 1998). Peace education today has evolved to encompass issues of indirect or structural violence and other forms of nonphysical violence. Hence, global education, development education, human rights education, multicultural education, and environmental education are all meaningful dimensions of peace education (Sleeter & Grant, 1998; Reardon, 1992; Fein, 1990; Pyke and Selby, 1988).

Peace educators have also stressed that the process of educating for peace is as crucial as the content or knowledge (Smith & Carson, 1998; Choldin, 1992; Bailey, 1991; Hicks, 1988). Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1987) have articulated three pedagogical principles of peace education, namely holism, dialogue, and conscientization. According to the holistic principle, educating for peace must take into account the interdependence and inter relatedness of key issues and problems of conflicts and violence. Similarly, to be holistic is to ensure that all forms of education (formal, informal, nonformal) are utilized appropriately, and that all sectors of society are involved. The principles of dialogue and conscientization have been inspired by Paolo Freire's (1973) work with marginalized peoples in the South. Peace education then cannot rely on "banking" strategies but must encourage learners to contribute their own insights, experiences and realities in developing a critical understanding. Third, educating for peace is a vehicle for societal transformation. It helps people in "doing, acting, and becoming" (Reardon, 1988). Reardon's (1992) paradigm of peace involves concepts, language, images and metaphors of peace to help organize a peaceful society in which we can conduct human affairs in a more humane manner.

Hence in my study, it will be essential to look not only into the goals and content of the selected women's NGO's work, but also the processes and strategies of how the NGO tries to build a culture of peace.

### **Women and a Culture of Peace**

Women have been taking lead roles in defining social concepts and global issues in areas such as development, democracy, human rights, world security and the environment (Bunch, 1995). Women have therefore contributed significant efforts in movements for

peace in diverse cultural, social and geographical contexts. Women are highly visible in peace building groups and initiatives (Sylvester, 1992). Polls show that women oppose budget increases in military expenditures and deployment of new weapons more frequently than men (Brock-Utne, 1985). It is therefore common to think of women as being pro-peace. Women in general have sometimes been characterized as “natural pacifists” with a “proverbial” interest in peace (Aronof, 1986). Women’s struggle for peace is connected to the concern for human life, for children, for themselves and for other women.

Mahatma Gandhi viewed women as the incarnation of *ahimsa* and added that due to a different socialization process, women have tended to grow up more peacefully than men and more capable of solving conflicts in a nonviolent manner. Peace often starts in the minds of women, Mahatma Gandhi added (Gandhi 1992) Margaret Atwood once commented that as far as she heard, war and rape were two activities not extensively engaged in by women (Vellacott, 1985). While most of the world’s violence is perpetrated by men, most of its nonviolent nurturing is done by women (Brock-Utne, 1985). Almost all of the women’s human rights organizations of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw world peace as part of their vision for a new society (Ruether, 1987). However women have traditionally not been well represented at international peace negotiations. As noted in the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting Peace and Cooperation, which was proclaimed by the UN Assembly in December 1982:

Although women non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been working in the field of disarmament and arms control, more opportunity is still needed for women to participate in national and international meetings on peace, conflict resolution, the disarmament and meetings of the Security Council.

UNESCO (1995) took it a step further and declared not only would women benefit from peaceful structures, they also have a role to play in building and cultivating values, attitudes, relationships and structures encompassing a “Culture of Peace”. It adds that a culture of peace is consistent with the women’s movement theme that equality, development and peace are inextricably linked. There can be no lasting peace without development and no sustainable development without full equality between men and women.

A vast body of thinking, policy making and action has expanded over the past three decades on the role of women in national and international development. Although initially, Western economists have tended to view development in predominantly “economistic” terms, but the paradigm debates (Toh, 1987) have led to a more holistic conception of



development which should lead to peace. Young (1993) for example, gives a useful definition of development which is pro-peace. For her development should be

**viewed as a complex process involving the social economic, political and cultural betterment of individuals and of society itself. Betterment in this sense means the ability of the society to meet the physical, emotional and creative needs of the population at a historically acceptable level, and to free human labor time from an incessant treadmill of basic need production. It thus involves increasing standards of living but not conspicuous consumption, and it implies a form of society, which allows for equal distribution of social wealth (p. 14).**

During the first United Nations Development Decade (1960-70), questions such as "have women been equally affected by development?", "have men and women been equally empowered to influence and control the natural and social environment" and "to have power over events?" (Young, 1993), were noticeably absent in discussions of development. Development practitioners never considered women's needs. Women were thought of as part of the household, which is headed by the male. The assumption was that the benefits trickled down to the women as a member of the family unit (Moser, 1993). Women's activities as cultivators of land, processors of food traders, wage workers, unpaid laborers did not enter into planners' concept of development (Charlton, 1984; Ostergaard, 1992; Moser, 1993; Young, 1993).

However recently, more attention to subsistence agriculture has led to a greater appreciation of women's work. Concern for wealth distribution has led to the awareness that women constitute a large portion of the poorest of the poor while still providing almost all the family's basic needs. Through the 70's, the rise of women's movements on development issues and supportive organizational development in United Nations other aid agencies led to a decisive link between women's rights, equality, equity, development and peace (Young, 1983; Charlton, 1984; Ostergaard, 1992; Moser, 1993; ILO, 1980).

The declaration of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-85) as well as the four International Women's conferences were also vital forums for promoting the connection between development and peace especially as it impacts on the status of women (Pitila & Vickers, 1984; United Nations, 1995). As elaborated in Chapter 2, theorists and practitioners within the women's movement have advocated a succession of paradigms or frameworks on women and development problems, namely women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), gender and development (GAD), gender, environment, and development (GED) for promoting greater equity and participation of women in development which they claim would lead to world peace.

The initial women and development (WID) conceptualization was critiqued as uncritically accepting the assumptions of modernization theory. Its programs generally stressed western values and targeted individuals as the catalysts for change (Rathgeber, 1990; Visvanathan, 1997). WID depicted traditional societies as authoritarian and male-dominated and modern ones as democratic and egalitarian. WID assumed wrongly that women were not integrated into the development process. It accepted existing social structures, and did not question why women had not benefited from development strategies. It treated women as an undifferentiated category overlooking the influence of class, race and culture (Rathgeber, 1990; Visvanathan, 1997).

By the 1980s, it was discovered that the WID concept did not resolve the marginalization of women both in the North and South. The issue of power and powerlessness needed to be addressed (Parpart, 1995; Rathgeber, 1990). Such critique of WID led to the formulation of the WAD (women and development) and interrelated GAD (gender and development) perspective. In contrast to WID, WAD and GAD recognized the central role of power in explaining the root causes of women's marginalization vis-à-vis men (Young, 1997; Moser, 1993).

In recent years, the dimension of environmental violence and environmental care has also been increasingly recognized as vital to women's development and peace. Gender, environment, and development (GED) came into mainline thinking after the Earth Summit in Rio where the full integration of women in the tasks of solving environmental problems and promoting sustainable development was called for. There is a commonly held belief that women are responsible for much of the environmental destruction taking place in rural areas. Laying blame on the women is to ignore the globally linked causes of environmental destruction, which have created and continued to create a situation of scarcity that often forces women into ecologically destructive actions (Wiltshire 1992).

The women and environmental movement is based on the full recognition of the fact that without a healthy environment there is no life. Women's mobilization for the environment therefore engages two battles, first against the ecological degradation that surrounds them and second against traditional power structures that subordinate their needs (Suliman, 1991). Wiltshire (1992) has contested the northern developmentalist myth that the poor are destroying the environment, that population growth is responsible for environmental degradation and that the South women need to be taught by northern experts how to recover their environment. She also drew attention to the consumption pattern and affluent life style in the North and of the elite of the South, which she claimed is equally

destructive to the environment. Since then, many have called for people centered approaches to natural-resources use (Braidotti et al, 1997).

Parallel to the crucial issues of structural violence and sustainable development, the expanding women's human rights movements have also been addressing women human rights violation issues as inimical to building world peace. Human rights, from feminist perspectives, are crucial to addressing global challenges and peace in the twenty first century (Bunch, 1995; Friedman, 1995). Until the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the rights of women had received little political attention internationally. The United Nations had failed at the conceptual level to declare women's rights concerns as part of international human rights law, and at operational level it has failed to integrate women's human rights into the mainstream human rights agenda (Stamatopoulou, 1995).

In looking at human rights from women's perspectives, certain questions are important: Who has been excluded from exercising the rights of citizenship? What has been the impact on women of narrow definitions of human rights? Why have so many degrading life experiences of women not been understood as human rights issues? The lack of understanding of women's rights as human rights is reflected in the fact that few governments are committed to women's equality as a basic right issue. Women's rights are violated in many ways. The problem therefore is that women's voices have been missing from the diverse groups participating in who defines legitimate human rights (Bunch, 1995). Violations of women's rights is an aspect of violence against women which Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1975) identified as hindrance to women's development and peace. In 1979, the principle of nondiscrimination on the basis of sex as well as other women's rights issues became the object of a specific treaty, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Stamatopoulou, 1995).

The contributions of women to issues of development, equality, human rights, environment and building more peaceful societies will continue to generate interest and will need further study (UNESCO 1995). This my study therefore sought to participate in this emergent research endeavor by looking critically at one women's development nongovernment organization's (NGO's) contribution or lack of contribution to a culture of peace in Nigeria.

### **Nigeria and a Culture of Peace**

A multidimensional framework for understanding a culture of violence as well as a culture of peace, which I have sketched above, is most relevant to the societal context of

my home country, Nigeria. Since independence in 1960 from the British, the Nigerian peoples have witnessed a full range of conflict, peacelessness, and violence. Militarization has been tragically demonstrated in the major civil war of "Biafra" as well as in continual episodes of military-led coups.

Out of thirty-eight years as an independent nation, Nigeria has been ruled by six military regimes for twenty-eight years during which human rights violations have been well documented. In a society characterized by enormous ethnic, cultural and social diversity, conflicts and tensions among and between groups have continued to forge a culture of divisions and distrust in Nigeria (Nigeria Human Rights Reports, 1996).

There are about 300 recognized ethnic or tribal groups in Nigeria which can be further divided into sub-groups of considerable social and political importance. The most important ethno-linguistic categories are the Hausa/Fulani, the Yorubas and the Igbos. The main Nigerian languages are Hausa (spoken in the north), Yoruba (spoken in the southwest), and Ibo (spoken in the southeast). Other languages include Edo, Fulani and Efik. The Hausa and Fulani live in northern Nigeria, above the Niger and Benue Rivers. They speak Hausa and are primarily Islamic. The Yoruba culture is dominant in the southwest and as far north as Ilorin. Many Yorubas in the northern part of the area are Moslems due to the historic influence of the Emirate established at Ilorin in the 19th century. The Igbos is the largest tribal group in southeastern Nigeria. Overall the Nigerian population believe in the major faiths of Muslim (40 percent) Christianity (40 percent) with another 10 percent adhering to indigenous religions and another 10 percent not professing any faith (United States Government, 1992).

In recent years, world attention has also focused on the plight and repression of minority groups such as the Ogoni peoples who are resisting the economic activities of oil corporations such as Shell on their lands. The Ogoni peoples' struggle is one exemplar of the dominant paradigm of development that has been implemented by successive governments (Osaghae, 1996). It has also brought to the forefront the issues of group rights. Consequently, this structural violence imposed by the dominant modernization paradigm has generated widening inequality between the rich and poor even though Nigeria is one of the oil rich states of Africa and a major exporter of cash crops like groundnut, palm oil, rubber and cotton (The Economist, June 1996).

Nigeria may not be at war, but it is a very violent society. At domestic, community and societal level, Nigerians live with violence. Over twenty six years of military rule has created a highly militarized society where there is gross denial of human rights. There are arbitrary arrests, detention, killing and exile. Police and armed personnel harassment of

civilians are common (The Economist, 1996). Violation of human rights is at its highest level in Nigeria than anywhere in the world. There is no freedom of speech, no respect for civil liberties, no freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Government has used the military to stop students and women's non-violent protests resulting in deaths (United States Government 1995, 1996). No sector of the community is spared violations of rights, not even the disabled. Eleweke (1999) commented, in spite of the lofty ideals presented in the Nigerian National Policy of Education and on Special education, there is no known legislation and provision made for individuals with disabilities. Educational and other services for individuals with disabilities are in shambles and discrimination against them have continued.

At societal level, there are increasing signs of a culture of violence. It is not uncommon to see children fighting in the streets. It has also become common for people to hire thugs to beat to death or kill outright someone who has offended someone. Acid attacks on people, especially women, by men who consider themselves jilted has become a serious problem (LRRDC, 1992). While rape is rampant, women are still shy and fearful to report to the police because of the pervading ridicule and cynicism, and the fact that men police officers handle rape cases (LRRDC 1992). Violent crimes as in thuggery, assassinations, armed robbery, arbitrary arrests, detention, killings, police and armed personnel harassment of civilians, lack of free speech, denial of civil liberties, people's deprivation of peaceful assembly and association, are quite common (LRRDC 1992). Citizens live in perpetual fear of violent crimes. Public stoning of people who are deemed to be witches and burning of thieves with tires around their necks still exist in the Nigerian society (LRRDC, 1992).

Nigeria's military budget is twice its spending on health and education combined, while millions go hungry, are homeless and have no access to health facilities. Educational facilities have grossly deteriorated and yet Nigeria is a major oil producing country (Collier, 1996). Cultural domination of one tribe over the other, and religious intolerance in some parts of the country have caused violent eruptions in some parts of Nigeria.

Yesufu (1996) has described the economy in Nigeria as that of growth without development. He added that from pre-independence and a little bit of post independence up to 1965, Nigeria's economic growth including the agricultural sector was positive, until Nigeria discovered oil and launched into uncoordinated and ambitious development plans. From then on, Nigeria came into a period that was marked by a political fracas, which resulted in a civil war which also led to the adoption of the World Bank/IMF Structural Adjustment Program against all good sense and wishes of the people bringing untold

hardship to the teeming masses and the embrace of corruption as a national ideology (Yesufu 1996).

Nigeria now is mired in huge debts, facing severe economic crisis (The Economist, June 1996). Corruption has gone so deep that it cannot be dug out, a situation which George (1987) called a depressing and nerve-wrecking example. It is estimated that 40 percent of the population live in what is called "absolute poverty." with a high incidence of illiteracy, inequities, unequal educational opportunities, serious drop in quality of education, massive poverty, and gross unemployment all of which exist along with opulence in some sector of the society. Much remains to be done to improve and sustain the quality of life for large numbers of the people (Yesufu, 1996).

The last three decades have witnessed the rising concern about women and development. It has now been established that development does not affect men and women equally (Steady, 1990). In Nigeria, there is discrimination against a section of society, the women, who constitute 52 percent of the population (Nigeria Population Commission, 1993). Apart from a small urban elite, the position of women in cultural context, is still a very traditional one. The overall position of the individual Nigerian woman depends on her ethnicity, social, and economic status (UNICEF, 1994).

Nigeria is patrilineal and in general women are considered to be of less importance socially and economically. Their contributions are less recognized than those of the dominant male. Illiteracy level is quite high among women in spite of the universal, compulsory, and free primary education. The lack of qualified personnel, inadequate health facilities to deal with health emergencies and risk of pregnancies, contribute to the poor health profile of women and children (UNICEF, 1994). In spite of legal guarantees of equality, women are deprived of social rights, civil rights, economic rights cultural rights and personal rights. Life long traditional attitudes and traditional practices have excluded women from consideration. The ruling class does not always concede power to women. Unfortunately women too have been socialized into seeing themselves as inferior. Many are not even aware of their rights (LRRDC, 1995)

Today's Nigerian woman, like most women in the South or Third World, could be classified as "underdeveloped" and marginalized, whereas a close look at society reveals overwhelming evidence of the contributions which women have made in the past. Historical evidence shows that women in Nigeria have made substantial contribution to society and wielded political authority and economic influence in pre-colonial times (Mba, 1985). They also wielded military power (Awe, 1992). Women in Nigeria, have played significant historical roles. Bolanle Awe (1992) called them "saviors of their societies."

Unfortunately, colonialism with its Victorian view of women, brought with it class and gender division (Mba 1985)

In these contemporary times, even though there has been some marginal gains since the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, women's position is still quite precarious. Some women have continued to play significant roles in national life, either by their own efforts or by virtue of being married to prominent men. But these women are a small proportion of Nigerian women. Some tend to come from the elite group, which is privileged to have access to education and financial resources. The gross inequities among and between the women in Nigeria is very significant (UNICEF, 1994).

Direct physical violence against women is almost a normal way of life (LRRDC, 1995). This is manifested in domestic violence, spousal abuse, girl child labor, genital mutilations and forced early girl child marriages (Mama, 1995). There are drastic consequences for girls who resist these early marriages. Mama (1995) recalled the case of twelve-year old Hauwa who died after having both legs amputated. Her husband, a sixty-year-old man, attacked her with an axe after she had repeatedly run away from him. Widowhood is at times a crime in Nigeria. When a man dies his wife who is close to him is the prime suspect. The initial assumption by his family is that his wife killed him especially if they do not like her. The man's family will not hesitate to beat out the wife from her home. There are no inheritance laws for the women (LRRDC, 1995).

Structural violence against women which is marked by sexism, patriarchy, inequality, and discrimination embedded in cultural and religious values and policies that limit women's participation in decision making processes (LRRDC, 1992) is also what totally leaves out women in the highest ruling body in the country, while demographic figures reveal that the population of women exceeds that of men (LRRDC, 1995).

Compounding the problem of poverty and unemployment is the threat of social and ecological disintegration. Ecological violence is manifested in the fast disappearance of usable land, the basis of food production. One of the major challenges, which Nigeria faces, is the problem of sustaining economic development without further degrading the environment. Incidents of oil spillage and the consequent destruction of farmlands, fishing and hunting grounds are a major problem. Gas flaring and irregular disposal of garbage have led to air pollution. There has also been human and animal illness and loss of livelihood from improper disposal of toxic waste from factories, poor pipe borne drinking water. Urban slums and shantytowns are a growing phenomenon (Adeola, 1996; Okediran, 1997).

Erosion has resulted in loss of farmland; coastal erosion and gully erosion have become deleterious to agriculture. Desertification and depletion of soils have resulted in lower yields and decreased incomes from farm resources. Although the entire populace suffers from the consequences of these degradation, the overall effect has been increased poverty for women who are the greatest tillers of the land (Ogunleye, 1995). All these environmentally destructive activities have continued to put women who are the major consumers of environmental pollution and degradation at risk. Rural and urban migration has resulted in urban slum, overcrowding creating general overpopulation, displacement, very wide urban/rural disparities and homelessness (Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), 1996).

In sum, the present realities of a culture of violence in Nigeria provides a very relevant societal context for conducting this study. It is pertinent to examine how this culture of violence is being transformed to a culture of peace in Nigeria through the efforts of a selected women's development NGO.

#### **Statement of Research Problem**

In the fields of social and economic development, many women's organizations have demonstrated the vital contributions of women in diverse areas of development such as agriculture, education, training, health, forestry, population, nutrition, human settlements, transport, water supply, sanitation, programs, micro and small scale enterprises, human rights and environment (Canada International Development Agency (CIDA, 1989). Yet it is a known fact that after four or more decades of international development, women still face problems of underdevelopment and marginalization especially in the South. As outlined in the foregoing conceptual framework of a culture of peace, this continued "underdevelopment" of women is a result of the persistent violence against women at various levels (Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies 1985).

It is therefore pertinent that women's organizations in their work in development have a more defined focus on peace as the antithesis of violence and a prerequisite for development. Where there is no peace, there is no development and where there is no development there can be no peace. It is also now a well known fact that some women development organizations who claim to be working to promote certain values while seeking equality with men, could themselves be instruments of violence in forms of domination, discrimination against, and oppression of other women. They could be unpeaceful in their relationships, internally within membership, externally towards other



NGOs, towards clients, recipients, and participants of their projects and programs, towards members of the communities in their environment, and towards the environment itself.

Guided by the conceptual framework outlined above, the central research question in this study can therefore be expressed as follows:

**Does the work of women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the field of development contribute to a culture of peace in Nigeria?**

This central research question encompasses a number of more specific themes of enquiry. Do women's development NGOs manifest a culture of peace in the way in which they structure themselves, in terms of their organizational and institutional environment and also in their various levels of relationships? Do the structures of women development nongovernmental organizations reflect participation of all segments of women in the society? Do women's development NGOs uphold development policies that ensure equitable distribution of societal resources and wealth? Are the methods of disseminating information on local material, human and cultural resources by women development organizations, appropriate in maximizing economic benefits to the poor majorities? Are the development activities of women organizations conscientizing whereby the oppressed understand the political roots of their poverty and are ready to liberate themselves? Do women's development NGOs have mass-oriented development programs that harmonize with and are not destructive to the environment on which long-term human survival depends?

To address the research problem, one specific women's development NGO, the Women, Law and Development Center (WLDC) which has a training center where hundreds of women participate in its programs monthly, was examined as one potential organizational exemplar to determine the contribution, positively or negatively, of women's development NGOs to building a culture of peace in Nigeria.

In answering the central research question, this study addressed the following more specific questions regarding WLDC, the selected women's development NGO:

**1. What are the contributions of WLDC towards transforming the Nigerian society towards a culture of peace? Do the goals, visions, values, policies and practices of WLDC contribute to a culture of peace? Does this women's development NGO help women challenge their own oppression, dismantle the culture of violence and build a culture of peace? Do the development activities of WLDC help to raise the understanding of the root causes of militarization or physical violence in the lives of women? Do the educational strategies and pedagogical principles being used by WLDC contribute to a culture of peace?**

Are the women participants empowered to build communities based on nonviolence? Do the NGO's educational programs, procedures, and principles reflect dialogical, holistic and/or transformative principles of peace education? Are the dimensions of a culture of peace, militarization, social justice, human rights, environmental care, cultural solidarity and personal peace, being addressed in the NGO's programs? Does WLDC foster critical analysis of structures of social and economic inequalities and motivate the women to act for greater social justice?

**2. What are the meanings and understandings of the multiple dimensions of the concept of a culture of peace by this women development NGO leaders, staff and active members and facilitators?**

**3. Does this women's development NGO promote a culture of peace at the various levels of its organizational relationships?**

**a. at internal level:** how nonviolent, democratic, participatory, equitable, and empowering is this NGO's leader/staff relationship? What is the degree and quality of democracy and participation of members within the women's organization? How is power and authority practiced? What are the modes of conflict resolution within, between and among members?

**b. at external level:**

**(i) NGO/program participants:** How peaceful is the relationship between the NGO and program participants? What assumptions do the leaders of NGO and program educators hold about the participants? What are the participants view of the programs offered by WLDC?

**(ii) NGO/Community relationship:** What is the quality of relationships between the organizations and the wider community in which it undertakes its work? Does WLDC have a close link and relationship with its immediate community, serving the needs of the community? Does it intervene in community or societal issues related to a culture of peace?

**(iii) NGO/State relationship:** What is the relationship between the state and the NGO and its impact on the goals of building a culture of peace? Is WLDC a conscience of the people, effectively lobbying government for changes, addressing societal problems or is it an organization that has been co-opted by the government?

### **Research Site**

My research site was the Women Law And Development Center (WLDC) which was established to enhance the integration of women into development both as participants and beneficiaries (Moser, 1993; Margolis, 1993).The founders of this NGO responded to the

United Nations initiative, and so it is one of the many women bureaus, women's units, women's ministries, women's centers, and women's organizations that have surfaced (Young, 1993). Like many of the organizations, it is set up to promote equality for women through programs and projects. It is primarily designed as a development organization. But also like many of the other organizations, it was only recently able to forge a linkage between development and peace, when violence was determined as the greatest impediment to women's development and peace, the antithesis of violence, was determined as a precondition for development. Like many of the organizations, WLDC is working within the framework of equality, development and peace which was adopted as an organizing theme for women's activities in development.

The need for formal and non-formal training of women in women issues is just being recognized in Nigeria. Although there are very many women development NGOs in Nigeria, very few have established training institutions and centers for women. In fact there are only two such institutions in Nigeria, one in the North and the other in the South of Nigeria. The one in the north is the Center for Women Development (CWD) in Abuja, and was established by the wife of one of the former military presidents in Nigeria, Miriam Babangida. The one in the south is the Women Law and Development Center (WLDC) established by Professor Jadesola Akande, a forerunner in the promotion of equality for women in Nigeria, a retired Professor of Law and a former Vice-Chancellor of one of the universities in Nigeria, Lagos State University (LASU). She is also the International President of a pan-African women's organization, the African Association of Women for Research and Development (AAWORD).

I have chosen WLDC for this study because of several considerations. The organization has a large membership of about 50 women as active members. Over 200 women participate monthly in its various empowerment programs. The center is centrally located in Lagos, a cosmopolitan and commercial center of Nigeria, the former capital of the country which has a population of about 12 million. This location provides easy accessibility and outreach to a large number of women, from diverse cultures in the community, who avail themselves of its programs.

The Center is a training ground for modeling and mobilizing women for popular participation in development. It is also a place for research, a resource center moving women towards self actualization and integration into the mainstream of national development. It holds conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures, and debates policy implications for the enhancement of the dignity of womanhood. It also enjoys wide international organizations support and patronage (Women Law and Development Center

(WLDC) 1992). It is important to determine this NGO's contribution to a culture of peace in Nigeria.

I am personally connected with this center through my women nongovernmental NGO's activities. I am the Secretary of AAWORD Nigeria Chapter, which is hosted by this center. The Project Director of this organization, Dr. Keziah Awosika is the national president of AAWORD Nigeria Chapter. This gave me easy entry and research access to the WLDC.

### **Personal Journey**

This research was inspired by my extensive involvement in women-in-development issues since 1985, as the Executive Director of a women development nongovernmental organization (NGO), Women Advancement Forum, whose motto is Awareness, Advocacy and Action, as Secretary to the Association Of African Women For Research And Development (AAWORD), as Program Officer of Soroptimist International, as Coordinator of Women-in-Development (WID), Nigeria Network of Non-governmental Organizations (NNNGO) and as Secretary to the National Association Of Nigeria Women In Business (NANWIB).

In all my adult years, my concern has always been for poor women. Pictures of women with babies straddled on their backs begging in the streets, or old women sitting dejectedly alongside the streets without any form of hope, just waiting for the pennies that trickle in from passersby or motorists have always aroused deep emotions in me. I always wondered why their lot has to be so miserable in a world where Mahatma Gandhi says the earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. For me, gender issues mean taking a stand against oppressive structures that limit the access of a section of the community to benefits, equal opportunities for all, equal distribution of resources, elimination of injustice and empowerment of the oppressed.

Also through my exposure to peace education in the University of Alberta since 1996, I have come to realize the important inter-relationship of peace and development. I now understand more fully that where there is no development, there can be no peace. Absence of war does not necessarily mean peace, for the presence of structural violence even without physical violence also results in physical hardship, premature death and deprivation of basic needs. My program in International/Intercultural education at the University of Alberta has also clarified for me the theory and practice of peace education, which I believe women development organizations, can benefit from in their work.

As an educator I know that education can empower, raise consciousness and enable learners to understand the source of their oppression and want to be moved to transform their marginalized realities. It is therefore essential that organizations address the basic roots of oppression and operate within a paradigm, which recognizes development primarily as a process of peace, democratization, emancipation and empowerment.

In Nigeria, a holistic understanding of peace education is still relatively unknown. Yet peace education can address a wide range of issues relevant to the Nigerian context. Consciousness about peace; violence, development, human rights, environment, cultural/ethnic solidarity and the interconnectedness of these issues are needed for peace and development. As the United Nations (1994) has stressed, local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and needs to be linked with the advancement of women, who are a crucial force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels. I was therefore interested in knowing if women's development NGOs activities contribute to a culture of peace to transform the Nigerian society from its culture of violence.

### **Significance of the Study**

The world community is commemorating 2000 as the International Year for a Culture of Peace. Hence, this was a timely study, which yield theoretical and practical insights and lessons on the building of a culture of peace in Nigeria. This study provided a deeper conceptual and theoretical understanding of the concept of a culture of peace especially as regards women development NGOs. This study serves to illuminate ways in which women's development NGOs can contribute to a culture of peace in other South societies marked by serious problems of violence, injustice and human rights violations. Hopefully this research will strengthen the organizing and mobilization of women in their attempt to link the themes of equality, development and peace in a holistic, dialogical and empowering way. Since the study was in Nigeria, hopefully lessons can be gained for the African experience as well as parallel South contexts.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Peace movements, which sprang up everywhere from the early twentieth century, were based on a mood of optimism, a belief that scientific progress made war unnecessary and obsolete, and a conviction that war was irrational and an invitation to mutual suicide (Osborne, 1987). The horrific destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II sparked a worldwide campaign against nuclear weapons that continued during the cold war arms race between the superpowers (Prins, 1983; Thompson, 1982).

Disarmament activists sought to educate and mobilize citizens through formal and nonformal strategies on the urgent need for demilitarization (Sharp, 1989). Since the 1950s however, a more comprehensive and holistic peace education movement has developed in response to a whole range of problems and issues of peacelessness and violence. As earlier noted, peace cannot be just the absence of war. Violence is expressed in many forms and levels, spanning the fields of development, human rights, environment, intercultural conflicts and even personal or inner peace. The more recently articulated concept of a “culture of peace” hence encompasses issues and problems rooted in direct physical violence or militarization, as well as structural violence or social and economic injustices generated by inequitable development paradigms, human rights violations, environmental destruction, ethnic or cultural intolerance and personal peacelessness.

This chapter will present literature from two complementary fields of research and social practice that conceptually guide this study namely: (a) women's contribution to a culture of peace; and (b) the role of education in a culture of peace

#### **Women and a Culture of Peace**

In pursuance of its vision of building the defenses of peace in the minds of men and women and to transcend a culture of war and violence, UNESCO (1995) launched a trans-disciplinary program to foster values, attitudes, concepts and practices based on nonviolence, social justice, human rights, sustainable development, and democracy. UNESCO called for nonviolent relations not only between states but also between individuals, between social groups, between a state and all its citizens, and between human beings and their environment. The belief and hope is that as the culture of violence, in all its multiple forms, has pervaded every aspect of people's lives, so too a culture of peace will

transform every aspect of human behavior, both individual and institutional. The movement of a culture of peace has its source from every tradition, culture, language, religion, and political perspective. Its goal is a world in which this wealth of cultures lives together in an atmosphere marked by intercultural understanding, tolerance and solidarity (UNESCO, 1995).

The culture of peace consists of values, attitudes, behaviors and ways of life based on the principle of nonviolence. In practice, it is the transformation of violent competition to cooperation for shared goals, requiring conflicting parties to work together. A culture of peace is a vast project linked to economic security and development, political security and democracy, military security and disarmament. A culture of peace grants respect for human rights and hinges upon the celebration and acceptance of peoples' right to be different and their right to a peaceful secure existence within their communities. Nonviolence, in a culture of peace, is a struggle for justice, courage and strength, eliminating anger, and enlisting all men and women, both young and old in the process of transformation (UNESCO 1995).

A culture of peace also means a transition from state dominated societies to the civil and democratic societies where there is citizen participation both in national and international affairs resulting in global solidarity. A culture of peace is a process in which everyone contributes for the benefit of all. It involves sharing and free flow of information and access to relevant information and instruction which enables and empowers every individual to participate with some sense of responsibility in political and social life. To genuinely benefit the poor, a culture of peace demands that development must be participatory and people centered since development requires investment in human capital. A culture of peace is based on the universal values of respect for every human being, equality between women and men and the full participation and empowerment of women. A culture of peace also addresses the problem of over exploitation of the environment.

Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1990) invoked a meaningful metaphor about weaving a culture of peace.

Peace builders may be seen as trying to weave a cultural tapestry of peace, a task which as in the art of weaving demands much patience, concentration and creativity. Threads of different colors and shades will need to be selected for weaving a culture of peace. (p. 390)

According to Toh & Cawagas (1990) there are seven principles, norms, values which are indispensable in building this culture of peace. These are compassion, conscientization,

constructiveness, conciliation, communion, commitment, and contemplation. A culture of peace requires that the violence of economic and social deprivation is confronted. Poverty and social injustices such as exclusion and discrimination weigh heavily on women. Efforts to move towards a culture of peace must be present in all sectors of human existence (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1990).

In poor Third World or South Societies the injustices and oppression experienced by women are accentuated by poverty, militarization, lack of workers rights and sexist cultural traditions. Rural women despite substantial contributions towards agricultural production while fulfilling domestic duties are under-rewarded in income or ownership of resources, including land (Momsen, 1991). In industrial sectors including the free trade zones, women provide cheap, exploited and politically repressed labor under unhealthy or hazardous conditions. Other forms of services or informal work include prostitution, stage dancing, massaging, domestic work - all these subject women to indignities, exploitation or even violence (Karl, 1990)

In war zones and military conflicts, women often suffer the additional trauma of sexual violence. Culturally the weight of patriarchal traditions including those embedded in religious/spiritual institutions and structures have also been a major factor underpinning the injustices suffered by women worldwide (Vellacot, 1985). Some of the often culturally based sources of violence and discrimination against women include painful and cruel rites, reduced access to education, the burdens of double day faced by working women as males or husbands shun household tasks, domestic violence and double standards of morality (Karl, 1990). Structural and personal violence against women marked by sexism, patriarchy, inequality, rape, wife beating, discrimination is usually embedded in cultural and religious values. For example, the Pauline section of the New Testament stresses male domination. The fourth Sura of the Qu'ran says if a woman does not listen, first admonish her, then sexually withdraw from her and finally beat her lightly (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Women are direct and indirect victims of war and violence. When men go to war, women lose sons, brothers, husbands, lovers, and fathers. In periods of war, women are not only tortured and slaughtered like men, they are commonly raped (Brock –Utne, 1989). Women in South nations are caught in a vicious cycle of indebtedness, oppression, and militarism fanned by the arms race.

Betty Reardon (1992), one of the pioneers in peace education, has challenged our contemporary realities of a war system as opposed to a peace system using the gender centered concept of nurturing. If we are to think peace, we need a paradigm of peace to



move us from a “warring” society to a parenting or caring society, in which all adults parent the young and care for the vulnerable.

In this quest for building a more peaceful world, Reardon (1988) equally highlights the crucial contributions of women. She says the acquisition of peace knowledge helps women to become peacemakers and peacekeepers, to subvert the “war-system.” The war system refers to the practices, institutions and interrelationships which are essentially violent, and which destroy relationships, impede social development and human fulfillment. The alternative is to enthrone a “peace-system” where the society becomes peaceful and the natural order becomes what nature ordains, “... an organic peace that sustains healthy persons and creative societies” (Reardon, 1988 p.51).

UNESCO (1995) recognizes women's role in giving and sustaining life. Women have been provided with skills and insights essential to peaceful human relations and social development. Through different socialization modes, women subscribe less readily than men to the myth of the efficacy of violence in bringing peace. Women can also bring a new breadth, quality and balance of vision to a joint effort of moving from a culture of war towards a culture of peace. In weaving this culture of peace, women have been organizing themselves into various groups addressing issues that would lead to overall peace.

### ***Women and Demilitarization***

Long before the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1975) recognized the role of women in peace, women have already been very much involved in peace building and the anti-war and anti-nuclear movement (McAllister, 1982). Austrian born Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914), the first female Nobel Peace Laureate, was one of the earliest women known to have been involved in peace activities. She was able to persuade Alfred Nobel to establish the Nobel Peace Prize (Brock-Utne, 1985). At the beginning of World War I, women from 13 countries came together in Hague to protest the war. They started the Women International League for Peace and Freedom, The Dutch Women for Peace and against Nuclear Weapons and the Nordic Women for Peace which lobbied for all acts of aggression to be abolished (Oslo, 1980). In 1981, the Women of Greenham Common in Wales marched 125 miles to protest against the cruise missiles that government planned to install in all of the 102 NATO bases in Britain. At the foot of Mount Fuji in Japan, some *Shibakusa* women built a cottage where they maintained a permanent peace and protest camp (Brock-Utne, 1985).

As a social group, women have been appropriately identified as being pro-peace. Women are highly visible in peace movements. Polls show that women oppose increases in

military expenditures and deployment of new weapons more frequently than men (Brock-Utne, 1985; Sylvester, 1992). In spite of all the barriers of gender discrimination, women's interest in peace has been powerful. Women have been highly visible in the forefront of movements for nonviolence and peace worldwide. Women usually assume roles of peacemakers in families, in communities and in societies even though they have often always been victims (Brock-Utne, 1985).

Peace Pilgrim, the indomitable American woman (1951-1981) covered 25,000 miles on foot for peace, vowing to continue to walk until human beings have learnt the way of peace (Peace Pilgrim 1982). While some feminists have strongly attributed the roots of wars and other levels of direct or physical violence to patriarchy (Aronoff, 1986; Vellacott, 1988; Saraiccino, 1988; Sylvester, 1992), others have explained male-female differences in violent attitudes and conduct in terms of socialization and education. As Brock-Utne (1985) and Reardon (1988) have argued, education for a culture needs to begin from the earliest age, for all males and females.

In all the earlier women's international conferences, women's roles as peace makers and peace educators were mentioned in the following statements:

Women and men should be encouraged to instill in their children the values of mutual respect and understanding for all nations and all peoples, racial equality, sexual equality, the right of every nation to self determination and the desire to maintain international cooperation, peace and security in the world (**Mexico Plan of Action, 1975, paragraph 55**).

Training to take into consideration in educational programs and methodologies the special perspective of education for non-violence mainly with regard to relationships between women and men. Such courses should stress the fundamental importance of the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race and sex (**Copenhagen Plan of Action, 1980, paragraph 167**).

Women of the entire world should participate in the broadest way in the struggle to strengthen international peace and security (**ibid paragraph 76**).

It was at the Nairobi conference that the issue of women's involvement in peace issues and **peace education** was extensively discussed, as exemplified by the following statements:

Peace can be effectively promoted through the development and strengthening of values such as tolerance, racial and sexual equality, respect for and understanding of others and good neighborliness. This can be achieved through **peace education** directed especially towards children and young people. Women are often the one who provide this education. To

understand what peace is and could be, peace research must seek to understand the situation, needs and perspectives of women. Women should also actively participate in peace research to ensure that their voices are heard. Peace education should be established for all members of society, particularly children and young people (**Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, 1985, paragraph 255**)

Governments, non-governmental organizations, women's groups and the mass media should encourage women to engage in efforts to promote education for peace in the family, neighborhood and community. Special attention should be given to the contributions of women's grass-roots organizations. The multiple skills and talents of women artists, journalists, writers, educators and civic leaders can contribute to promoting ideas of peace if encouraged, facilitated and supported (**ibid paragraph 273**).

Suitable concrete action should be taken to discourage the provision of children and young persons with games and publications and other media promoting the notion of favoring war, aggression, cruelty, excessive desire for power and other forms of violence, within the broad processes of the preparation of society for life in peace (**ibid paragraph 274**).

Opportunities should be provided for women to organize and choose studies, training programs and seminars and to undertake research relating to peace... Appropriate resources should be provided to peace researchers and co-operation among peace researchers, activists, government and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged and fostered (**ibid paragraph 275**).

Women should be encouraged and given financial support to take university courses in order to obtain the necessary qualifications for careers related to peace and international security (**ibid paragraph 276**).

### ***Women and Development***

A growing body of advocates have been calling for a close linkage between the concepts of development and peace. There can be no peace without equitable development for all human beings, and no development without peaceful conditions in society. The organizing theme and framework for women's activities in development, **equality, development and peace** means that women would benefit from peaceful structures, as opposed to violent structures which hamper them (United Nations, 1995).

The following excerpts from the four international conferences for women illustrate the emphasis laid on peace and women participation as a pre-condition for development.

Greater and equal participation of women at all levels of decision making shall decisively contribute to accelerating the pace of development and the maintenance of peace (**Mexico Plan of Action, 1975, paragraph 120**).

**The full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields (Copenhagen Program of Action, 1980, paragraph 98).**

**Women should be an integral part of the process of defining the objectives and modes of development as well as developing strategies and measures for their implementation (Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, 1985, paragraph 111).**

**Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, paragraph 182).**

**We acknowledge that social and economic development cannot be secured in a sustainable way without the full participation of women... equality and equity between women and men is a priority for the international community and such, must be the center of economic and social development (Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development Declaration, 1994).**

In recent decades, considerable attention, evaluation and political action have been given to the position of women in societies. The growth of women's movements in both North and South nations provides a substantial push for the role, status, and contributions of women as a societal group to be justly and compassionately recognized and rewarded (Vellacot, 1985). A wealth of evidence has now emerged to confirm the structural inequities and sexist and patriarchal domination suffered by billions of women globally. As the well-known statistics indicate, women are "half the world's people; do two-thirds of the world's working hours; receive one-tenth of the world's income and own only one-hundredth of the world's property" (Vickers, 1992). In the rich industrialized countries, economic growth and modernization have not necessarily meant automatic equity for women in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres of life. Sexist structures, values and norms still operate to decrease the opportunities for women in some elite professions, especially in scientific-technological-managerial fields and in executive management levels, including high bureaucratic and political posts (Vickers, 1992). "Equal pay for equal work" is often not yet implemented while sexual harassment and sex-role stereotyping in formal education and media channels remain major problems. Not least, various forms of violence, including rape and domestic violence, are becoming frequent experiences for women (Copelon, 1994).

In South societies, the injustices and oppression experienced by women are accentuated by poverty, militarization, lack of workers rights, and sexist cultural traditions.

Rural women, despite substantial contributions towards agricultural production while fulfilling domestic duties, are under-rewarded in income or ownership of resources, including land (Momsen, 1991). Culturally, the weight of patriarchal traditions, including those embedded in religious/spiritual institutions and structures have also been a major factor underpinning the injustices suffered by women worldwide (Vellacot, 1985). Painful and cruel rites, reduced access to education, the burdens of the "double day," domestic violence and double standards of morality are some of these often culturally based sources of discrimination and violence against women (Karl, 1990; Momsen, 1991).

In short, there can be little or no peace unless there is development that is just and equitable for women. Since the 70s, women have been organizing around development issues, taking multisectoral approaches. It is important to recognize, however, that these programs/projects have undergone shifts in conceptualization, analysis and implications for action. In this regard, probably the most useful distinction has been between the popularly known WID (Women in development), WAD (women and development) and GAD (gender and development).

At the end of the first UN development decade (1950-1960), despite noticeable growth rates in developing or South countries, the rates of unemployment, population growth and disparity in peoples incomes were also increasing. By this time it had become clear that in spite of rising GNP, the essential needs of people were not being met. At the same time, South nations were being depleted of natural resources at an alarming rate-either in the form of direct imports to industrialized or North nations or as raw materials for production of potentially exportable commodities (Young, 1993; Anand, 1980; Charlton, 1984).

The evidence worldwide also clearly demonstrate that among the poor majority, women as a social group, experienced great marginalization. In this regard, the research of Esther Boserup (1970) played a pioneering and influential role in identifying women's work and contribution in the field of agriculture. It documented and discussed in detail the negative impact of mainstream development processes on women. She showed how colonialism and the forms of modernization it brought lowered women's status while raising men's, by imposing new patterns of sex roles on farming and trading and by carrying such inequalities to the new and urban sectors. Though women have the major input into agricultural production they effectively lost the informal rights to the land they farmed. In her words women's roles have changed from that of "decision making cultivator" to that of "family aid" or "hired hand" (Boserup, 1970). In Boserup's view, when development excludes women from full participation, it denies its benefits to women and it functions far

less effectively. She therefore advocated greater roles for women and called for an integration of women into the development process. Many of the ideas introduced by Boserup have become major themes in the women in development or WID movement (Roodkowsky, 1980; Moser, 1993).

As Tinker (1997) has usefully reviewed, WID policies and strategies sought to integrate women in economic and social development programming. Besides the UN agencies, aid institutions of North countries (e.g., USAID) began to give "particular attention to those programs projects and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort" (Tinker 1977:35). WID emphasized the productive role of women as well as the strategies to minimize the disadvantages of women in the productive sector (Visvanathan, 1997). For such integration to occur, some legal administrative changes were necessary. However, as stressed by post-WID analysis and perspectives, WID thinking still basically accepted the wider structures and assumption of the dominant modernization paradigm of development (Visvanathan, 1997, 18-23). Planners believed that as reforms are instituted, women will be able to benefit equitably vis-a-vis men from modernization. For instance, income generating projects accompanied by education and training would improve women's participation in the modern economic sectors (Charlton, 1984). Appropriate technology would also help relieve women of various backbreaking tasks (Anand, 1980). By the late 70s however a growing body of theoretical and practical work had emerged to question the limitation of WID.

The "women and development" or WAD perspectives was based initially on neo-Marxist and dependency theorizing on development which critiqued the modernization paradigm for ignoring class based inequalities at national and international levels. As Bandarage (1984) argued "liberal feminists using a WID framework tend to focus narrowly on sexual inequalities ignoring structural and socio-economic factors within which gender inequalities are embedded." WAD's position was that women have always been part of the development process and therefore integrating women in development was a myth (Rathgeber, 1990; Young, 1993; Visvanathan, 1997).

WAD criticized Boserup and other WID advocates for over relying on technological and cultural factors in women's inequalities. Rather, the sexual division of labor is related to the social relations of production and reproduction. As Beneria and Sen (1997: 46) noted, it is vital to analyze interconnections between the social relations of accumulation, class formation and changes in gender relations: both historically and in the current era. Hence the integration of women into the modernization paradigm of capitalistic development has not

necessarily improved the status of women. A key example here is where local and multinational industries, such as textiles and electronics worldwide, have been hiring women at very low wages for long hours in unhealthy and hazardous conditions. Often denied the right to be unionized, these South women workers are now integrated as exploited and subordinated labor in the global economy (Anand, 1980; Elson & Pearson, 1981; Fernandez-Kelley, 1983).

Another related theoretical criticism of WID has been raised by Mohanty (1991) in terms of WID's representation of women. She claimed:

It (WID) assumes an historical universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination. Instead of analytically demonstrating the production of women as socio-economic political groups within particular local contexts this limits the definition of the female subject to gender identity completely bypassing social class and ethnic identities" (p. 83).

Through the 80s, further analysis of women and development issues led to a shift from WAD to what is referred to as GAD or gender and development perspective. Although as Young (1992:51-53) pointed out there are overlaps between WAD and GAD, several key ideas and themes underpin GAD. First, Gender and Development does not focus on women as an entity but on the relations between men and women in various circumstances. Second, GAD does not see women as recipients of "development" although they are considered as active agents of development. It does not assume that women have perfect knowledge or understanding of their social situation because, while women as individuals may demonstrate an understanding of their subordinate position, they may not necessarily understand the basic roots of their discrimination and subordination. Third, GAD has a holistic perspective as it looks at the total concept of social organization, economic and political life in order to understand the rationale behind certain aspects of society. Fourth, GAD perceives development as involving the social, economic, political and cultural betterment of individuals and of society itself which implies the ability of everyone to meet his/her physical, emotional and creative needs. Fifth, GAD accepts welfare and antipoverty approaches as preconditions for equity rather than being sequential alternatives. Sixth, GAD focuses on women's access to cash through collective strategies for increased bargaining power in the economic system. GAD unlike WID highlights the role of the state in promoting women's emancipation, with the local communities providing support for women. GAD assumes that political and economic power is the first step for women to surmount poverty (Young, 1992).

Visvanathan (1997) has similarly provided a useful summary of the major emphases of GAD in contrast to WID and WAD. "GAD rejects the public/private dichotomy. It gives special attention to the oppression of women in the family by entering the so-called private sphere. It emphasizes the state's duty to provide social services in promoting women's emancipation. Women are seen as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development assistance. GAD stresses the need for women to organize themselves for a more effective political voice. GAD recognizes that patriarchy operates within and across classes to oppress women. GAD focuses on strengthening women's legal rights, including the reform of inheritance and land laws. It talks in terms of "upsetting the existing power relations in society between men and women" (Visvanathan, 1997:19).

In sum, a critical understanding of women development issues and problems within a holistic culture of peace paradigm needs to move beyond the WID to WAD and GAD perspectives. Furthermore, over the last decade or more, the recognition of environmental problems has also entered into the development discourse on women. In all South regions, environmental degradation and destruction have impacted severely on women's livelihood and subsistence (Shiva 1988; Rathberger 1990; Chimedza 1993). This analytical deepening has been referred to as "women, environment and sustainable development" or WED. As Braidotti et al argued, "within the sexual division of labor, their (women's) work has always entailed a close relationship with nature. Women are depicted as "naturally" privileged environmental managers who, over generations, have accumulated specific knowledge about natural processes that is different and more appropriate than that of men in general. This approach perceives the woman/nature relation as one of reciprocity, symbiosis, harmony, mutuality, and inter-relatedness due to women's close dependence on nature for subsistence needs" (1997:56).

In the WED perspectives, there has been a focus on indigenous women's knowledge concerning management of water, forestry, and crop systems. For instance, in Ghana, women's knowledge of forests fruits and vegetables have been valuable in gathering forest resources (Kettel, 1993). Concerns for gender and environment have also emerged in Latin America with the destruction of the rain forests. In India, the impact of environmentally damaging strip-mining operation on women's farming practices is being examined. Researchers have found a marked difference in the attitudes of men and women towards the development of mining operations. Women tend to take a longer term view, measuring the cost of environmental destruction and loss of agricultural lands (Rathgeber, 1995).

These exemplars do not however imply that women never harm the environment. For example, African women, as Chimedza (1993) argued, sometimes engage in



environmentally destructive behavior even when they are aware of the adverse effects of their actions. Women have been known to fell scarce trees to provide fuel wood for their families. This was not motivated by profit but necessity. They were forced to impose their poverty on the environment. Such cases highlight the need to address the issue of poverty if the environment is to be sustained.

Since its emergence, WED thinking has been enriched by the field of feminists discourse popularly known as “ecofeminism.” As Gaard (1993) noted, ecofeminism argued that no attempt to liberate women or any other oppressed group will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature. Ecofeminist movement works on the premise that the earth is at a turning point and women's efforts are critical at this time. Ecofeminism is a holistic value system with some basic precepts namely: the need for social transformation, a reconstruction of values, promotion of equality, nonviolence, cultural diversity, reverence and empathy for nature, and awareness of the interconnectedness of all life processes (Birkeland, 1993).

One of the most influential ecofeminist voices from the South is the Indian scholar and activist Vandana Shiva (1989). According to Shiva (1989), the modernization paradigm of development has impressed Western market oriented and patriarchal production systems. These systems have destroyed pre-colonial modes of sustainable development based on the “feminine” principle that creates and preserves life which has been practiced by poor rural Indian women for a long time. As Braidotti et al summarized, Shiva promotes “the validity of subjugated and marginalized people knowledge in the search for sustainable models for development and environmental protection” (1997:89).

In acknowledging Shiva's significant insights and advocacy of linking environment with gender and development issues, some commentators have however noted some limitations in her analysis. Agarwal (1997:72) for example usually emphasized the need to differentiate between women of “different classes, castes, races, ecological zones and work”. Further “by locating the problem almost entirely in the Third World experience of the West, Shiva misses out on the very real local forces of power, privilege and property relations that predate colonialism. What exists today is a complex legacy of colonial and pre-colonial interactions that defines the constraints and parameters within which and from which present thinking and action on development resource use and social change have to proceed” (Agarwal 1997:73).

### ***Women and Human Rights***

The concept of women's human rights implies that the status of women has both legitimacy and intrinsic value. Politically women suffer repression because the image of the political actor is male. Human rights violations are gendered and many forms of discrimination or abuse occur because the victim is female. The tendency is still to see oppression of women as natural rather than as a political reality maintained by patriarchal interest, ideology, and institutions (Bunch, 1995). The real question then is who defines legitimate human rights issues? Good governance and good political sense require that women from diverse groups participate in decisions that affect them.

The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights clarified the issue of the rights of women thus: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," but then International law has not proved to be relevant and credible in improving the circumstances of the world's women. The practice and attitude has been that separate status exist for men and women. Women have not been recognized as individuals with their own identities, persons with their own aspirations strengths, weaknesses, tastes, and ideas Women's disadvantages are often based on structural injustice. They face the challenges of social, economic, political and cultural practices that operate to their disadvantage (Sotela, 1994).

The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies not only identified violence against women as the major reason for their underdevelopment, but also, as Fitzpatrick (1994) claimed, that various forms of violence against women have gained recognition as human rights issues. She identified some of these forms of violence as: domestic violence (murder, rape and battery by husbands or male partners) genital mutilation, or female circumcision; gender based violence by police and security forces, including torture of detained women; gender based violence against women refugees and asylum seekers; violence associated with prostitution and pornography; and violence in the workplace including sexual harassment.

Cook (1994) added that religions and cultures have often been sources of women's discrimination. Thus Jaising (1995) focused on the persistence of India's cultural practices that discriminate against girls and women resulting in countless deaths, abortion of the female fetuses, discrimination against the girl child, *dowry death* which occurs when a wife and her family cannot meet the demand of her husband for additional money or property or when a husband wishes to gain an additional dowry by remarrying, the woman is tortured to death or even burnt while family claim the death as an accident and, *sati*, which involves the burying or burning alive of a widow along the body of her deceased husband.

UNESCO has emphasized that a culture of peace is based on values attitudes, behaviors, and ways of life that reinforce non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person. However the evidence worldwide indicates that the latter requirement is still unfulfilled for women as half the world's population. In equality issues, women have focused on legal issues, equality rights, human rights, family law, legal reform, inheritance laws, violence against women and so on. Equality is the key to meeting other requirements for a culture of peace (UNESCO, 1995). These include respect for the human rights of women, the release and the utilization of women's creative potential in all aspects of life, power sharing and equal participation in decision making by women and men; the reorientation of social and economic policies to equalize opportunities coupled with new and more equitable patterns of gender relations. Women's capacity must be utilized to the fullest and to the benefit of all in order to progress towards a culture of peace. Their historically limited participation has led to a distortion of concepts and a narrowing of process (UNESCO, 1995).

Since the adoption by the General Assembly of an International Bill of Human Rights for Women called the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), many women's organizations have been working for the protection of the rights and dignity and needs of women. Although the gap between women and men in terms of human rights promotion remains great, such advocacy has yielded progress across many specific areas. This was evident in the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights at which several clauses on women's human rights were included in the final declaration and framework for action. For human rights to be respected and effective they must become part of the culture and traditions of a given society (Cook, 1994).

In spite of the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against of all Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW), violence against women continued to be the greatest social problem of women's rights violation (Fitzpatrick, 1994). Violence denies women their fundamental humanity, and their freedom to be women (Romany, 1994). It also maintains patriarchy. International Women's Rights Action Watch and Women's International Human Rights Law Rights Organization are using the language of rights and international laws in quest for women's equality, protection and individual dignity to advance claims for social justice at international and local levels for women (Ilumoka, 1994; Sotela, 1994).

Women's rights is an equal opportunity concept which have been impeded by civil and political limitations placed on them, social laws economic and cultural laws and an

emergent one is their marginalization even in the spiritual realm. In addition to the original issues being mentioned as violations of women rights, like equal pay for equal jobs, equal opportunity, and so on, some other issues have gained currency in public debate about women's rights. Gender based violence has become a human rights paradigm (Bunch, 1995). Some of the other issues are lesbian rights, reproductive rights, welfare and poverty, and child custody. Rights of women of color is gradually seeping especially in the discourse on feminization of poverty (Stetson, 1997).

Charlesworth (1994) believes that international human rights law has not been applied effectively to redress the disadvantages and injustices experienced by women. In this sense respect for human rights fail to be universal. She argues that there is basic lack of understanding of the systemic nature of the subordination of women as a human rights violation and lack of state practice to condemn discrimination against women.

Schrøder (1992) claims that the Declaration of Human rights is a continuation of earlier patriarchal declarations and policies because it did not define the female world policies as part of the human race and hence, has called for rectification and an anti-patriarchal declaration of women's human rights. Fitzpatrick (1994) also argues that CEDAW did not actually use the word violence, although six of the articles bear some relationship to a form of gender violence and which did not specifically prohibit gender based violence or place any responsibility on state parties to take action to reduce it. She therefore urges that the deficiency in CEDAW be rectified through interpretation or through a drafting of a supplementary separate instrument. Sotela (1994) who believes that domestic violence usually starts from a dependency relationship suggests that women begin to impart to the younger women the values of education and work.

On the review on Women's International Human Rights: Which Way Forward, some ideas were offered. Cook (1994) recommends that progress of women rights need to be reviewed, to identify challenges and prospects. Charlsworth (1994) thinks that because legal rights do not offer anything to women, as their disadvantages are often based on structural injustices, winning a case in court will not change this, but engaging in discourse to formulate political and social grievance will offer a significant vocabulary which is recognized by the powerful. Romany (1994) argues that rights are defined by those who talk about them, so women should engaged in "rights talk" to wrest some of the power of defining and speaking about rights from a narrow androcentric view. Kuenyehia (1994) focuses on the deprivations suffered by women as a result of programs fashioned by international financial institutions. She claims it is important that the social cost of these programs be considered carefully and every attempt be made to alleviate them so that the

people most adversely would have a chance to enjoy their human rights. Ilumoka (1994) suggests that economic, social, and cultural rights of women are contained in three main international legal treaties: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ECOSOC), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. However, in spite of these instruments, women are facing severe socioeconomic problems especially in countries undergoing structural adjustment programs. She then questions the validity of rights discourse and claims that rights discourse in Africa could not be meaningful, unless there is a basic needs strategy.

Beyani (1994) specifically looked at the African Charter of Human Rights and People which was adopted under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which established human rights standards of regional application and a machinery for the protection of human rights in Africa. The Charter raises the issue of diversity versus universality in the protection of human rights of women. This Charter went beyond the universal one and lays gender specific obligations upon states in Africa to eliminate discrimination against women. It recognizes specifically the rights of women and children and the necessity for the protection of those rights by the state. In short there is a more effective guarantee for women in this African Charter. Again, in spite of this, male attitudes towards the treatment of women have dominated the conception of human rights and their application to women, in a lopsided manner, especially in an African context.

Coomaraswamy (1994) argues that for human rights to be effective they have to become a respected part of the culture and traditions of a given society. She warns against dividing the world into bipolar categories, and contributing to the concept that those in the West or North are "progressive" and those in the East or South are "barbaric" and "backwards". Also those in the East and South must be equally cautious not to subscribe to the reverse notion that accepts the division and believes that the East and South is "superior," more "communal" and "less self centered", believing that human rights law was instituted by colonizing powers to replace indigenous, religious, and social traditions.

Mahoney (1997) also warns that there will always be a backlash to human rights for women. She describes backlash as the politics of resentment, the reaction by groups which are declining in a felt sense of importance, influence and power. She adds that reaction is not only to women's rights but also to other society's "outsiders" like the first nations, people of color, feminists, lesbians and gay. She says resistance to human rights operate when specific efforts are made to improve the status of minority groups and women. Backlash promoters usually see these efforts as threats to their economic and social well

being, and so fears, resentment, ignorance and intolerance are manipulated for the purpose of rolling back the progress and recognition of human rights in both public and private spheres.

As this concise review has sought to outline, these are the issues and problems of conflict and violence in all its forms as they relate to the well being of women, that I will consider while investigating my selected women's NGO in Nigeria. I will be attentive therefore to the ways in which this NGO's vision and practices may relate to such issues and problems and thereby building positively or negatively on a culture of peace in Nigerian society.

### **Education for a Culture of Peace**

As earlier noted in chapter one, the role of education in building a culture of peace is vital. Through all modes and levels of education, whether formal, nonformal and informal, peace education develops in learners a critical understanding of root causes of conflicts. From such understanding, learners are then empowered to act to build a more peaceful world.

It is important to acknowledge however, that peace education is not a recent phenomenon. The early twentieth century saw a remarkable interest in peace and peace action and an equally remarkable growth in organizations dedicated to peace. Early peace movements devoted considerable time, money and effort to producing and distributing leaflets, organizing discussion groups and debates establishing magazines and working in the schools. Teachers were particularly prominent in those peace movements. (Osborne, 1987).

Although interrupted by the outbreak of war, the peace movements recommenced after the war, still with the active involvement of teachers. Children were taught that the well being of a community depended on the responsibility and good behavior of its members (Young, 1987). There was a widely used handbook of moral and civic education in France which devoted space to internationalism. However, it can be said that until the 60s the stress on education for peace tended to be on disarmament. The peace movements hitherto paid attention to the abolition of war and nuclear weapons. However, over the past four decades, the concept of peace education has become a multi-dimensional movement. It is now widely recognized that peace does not come merely from the absence of war or direct physical violence. Equally important is the understanding of peacelessness caused by indirect or structural violence based on social or economic injustices (Hicks, 1988). In this sense the focus of peace education has broadened to include not only negative peace

(absence of war) but also positive peace (ways of creating more just, harmonious and sustainable societies) (Hicks, 1988; Kniep, 1985).

Peace education advocates that a society or world characterized by injustice, oppression and exploitation may seem superficially peaceful in the absence of actual physical violence, but in reality, a veiled violence is constantly inflicted on the lives of human beings. Peace education perceives social injustice and its perpetuation to be the root cause of structural violence (Kniep, 1985). When it comes to the notion of justice, many people find the world, in some sense, unjust. The injustice could be disparities of income, lack of political power, loss of human rights, racial or religious discrimination, and repressive state policies in order to maintain order (Pearson, 1985). Doug Roche (1985) protests that we live in an age of contradictions. While there is famine in Africa, mountains of surplus food rot in North America. While the world boasts of magnificent technology, this has resulted in mass unemployment. Peace education therefore, has the responsibility of helping learners to analyze and understand the root causes of injustices and to empathize with the plight and suffering of the poor and marginalized people of society.

Sharp (1989) identified five approaches to peace education. Peace education as “peace through strength” is an approach endorsed by governments, armed forces and citizens who believe that peace can be achieved through armed deterrence, thus the need to maintain one's military superiority. A second approach is peace education that focuses on mediation and nonviolent resolution of conflicts. A third approach believes that peace education can be a search for personal peace which rests on the basic assumption that wars begin in the minds of men and women and hence peace depends upon the creation of peace-loving individuals who will have both the cognitive and affective drives to work for a peaceful world. The fourth approach makes a claim that peace education can aspire toward building a world order which overcomes the sources of much of the international tension, conflict, and armed violence that characterize the modern world. A fifth approach conceptualizes peace education as the abolition of power relationships in a commitment to a set of values which embodies such principles as social justice, democracy, and economic well being. This approach also focuses on structural violence as the main factor which helps to reproduce the conditions that lead to conflict on a local, national, and international plane. The emphasis here is on raising awareness of structural violence and identification with the struggles of oppressed peoples (Sharp, 1989; Hesbourg, 1993).

Sokolova (1995) summarizes well the multidimensional conception of peace education when he lists a whole range of the most critical issues of human existence: domestic, personal, social and structural violence, problems of underdevelopment, with a

focus on the poverty of majorities suffering chronic lack of basic needs because of unjust and exploitative social and economic systems, unemployment, unequal North/South relationships, exploitation and denial of basic rights, humane respect for nature, intercultural respect and solidarity, militarization and the abolishment of nuclear weapons.

In their framework for peace education, Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1987) focused on six clusters of interrelated issues and problems of conflict and violence, namely militarization, structural violence, human rights cultural solidarity, environmental care and personal peace. Kniep (1986) focused on the interdependent nature of the world and said this lies at the very core of peace education. Peace education is the study of universal human values, global systems and history of contacts and interdependence among peoples, cultures and nations. Peace education offers the opportunity to see cultural differences, to experience commonalty in human differences and to be more aware of different social organizations and traditions around the world. The global, economic, political, ecological, and technological systems are highly complex and interwoven. In peace education they are not just studied but lived. Peace education creates the awareness of all the realities of all the systems. Peace education helps to develop the skills for living and coping with an increasingly complex world.

Bailey's (1991) challenge for peace education was not only for young and old to learn to live in harmony with each other and the world in which we live. She said it is an education where we learn to understand that others may be different, yet we will learn to respect and value those differences rather than despise, fear or denigrate them. It is also where consequences of our actions on others can be examined to ensure that such actions do not harm others. It is also where science can be used to benefit the world and not destroy it, whether through creating toxic wastes or creating weapons of destruction. Bailey added that the structures of society can be based on cooperation and sharing and all individuals can be nurtured to develop to their full potential. Mitina (1994) saw peace education as a learning process in "new thinking." For her, new thinking involves the understanding of the interrelatedness and interdependence of this world we live in and the rejection of war and the use of military power. Mitina added that there must be a search for political ways of settling conflicts. There must also be the recognition of certain universal values which constitute the center piece of peace education. These values will unite people of different cultures and social systems. It will generate a new awareness and consciousness which is needed to sensitize people to the fact that they are living in an integral, interrelated world, and that all belong to the same species living on the same planet with a sacred right to exist, to develop and to determine their own lives (Sokolova, 1995).



### ***Disarmament Education***

In peace education, the issue of militarization concerns not only the needless, wasteful and destructive effects of increased spending on the arms race or the ascendancy of military dictatorship and armed conflicts in many states and regions (Fitzgerald and Bloch, 1987). It is also equally important to explore the internalization and institutionalization of values, attitudes, and practices based on militarism and violence at all levels of society, including violence in the media and even war toys. Everywhere, the incidence of violent crimes is rising so much that even sports fields have become arenas of violent conduct (Toh & Cawagas, 1990). The recent shootings in schools and other institutions in North America also illustrate the tragic consequences of militarism and micro levels of physical violence. Peace education therefore, deems it vital that learners from an early age recognize the peaceful effects of a nonviolent culture. Toh & Floresca-Cawagas (1987), in their contribution to peace education, noted that militarization, structural and institutional violence today has reached such massive proportions that human survival itself is at stake. Thus they recommend disarmament education which will enable the informed and concerned citizens to speak and lobby against nuclear and conventional militarism in their own countries and in other countries. Such huge investments on arms should be converted to providing basic needs - food, housing, health care, jobs, education - for the poor. Peace education should help in transcending direct violence or militarism in homes, schools, classes and communities. "Continuing the spiral of militarization and counter-militarization can only mean deaths, maiming, and the escalation of economic and ecological destruction and the diversion of scarce resources to the military away from the needy majority" (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1987:8). NGOs such as Project Ploughshares, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and Greenpeace have active public education campaigns to persuade governments and citizens to abolish nuclear weapons, nuclear testing and the arms trade.

### ***Development Education***

Development education grew out of the mounting concern, since the sixties, over the growing disparities between North and South countries in the global systems. Despite economic growth, as measured in neoclassical indicators, the poor majorities have remained marginalized. Originally the emphasis of development education was on the "Third World" which has been deemed as economically disadvantaged and poor. But the notion of "Third World" has been expanded to encompass all those areas and groups who

are, in some way, marginalized by the workings of the economic and political systems. These include women, the aged, the homeless, the unemployed, ethnic minorities, the indigenous people, and even "the poor remote and un-influential parts of wealthy countries" (Greg, Pyke and Selby, 1987). Development is essentially about and implies change for the betterment of the individual, the society in which the individual exists and the world at large, the realization of material and nonmaterial human rights, just as underdevelopment is about the effects of malnutrition, hunger, disease, human rights denials and all such indignities (Kniep, 1985). Development is also about justice and peace. McGinnis (1984) said, where there is justice, there will be peace. As Pope Paul (1974) stated, if you want peace, work for justice. In short, the development dimension of peace education highlights the key concept of structural violence which is a manifestation of inequalities in relations between groups, communities and nations in the areas of income, health, education and other aspects of social and economic well being. Justice essentially means giving each person his/her due. Peace education examines how much of this is being effected in the world systems, at personal, communal, and global level. Peace education has the responsibility of helping us understand and empathize with the plight and suffering of the poor and marginalized groups of the society (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1986).

As Sherlock and Hubert (1989) grimly state, it is a tragic fact that today when human civilization has progressed tremendously in the scientific and technological spheres, there are still billions of people who remain hungry throughout their life spans. While spaceships are regularly launched into the heavens, while deadlier and more accurate missiles are invented by millions of scientists and engineers, while a minority of privileged human beings can consume excessively and trivially, a large portion of humanity remains desperately poor and unable to meet their basic needs.

There is no doubt that the world has at least enough natural resources and can produce goods to feed, clothe, house and serve the basic necessities of the entire global family. The phenomenon of hunger is therefore primarily a problem of maldistribution of these resources which underpin unequal economic and social structures/relationships among nations and within individual societies. Clearly if the tragedy of world hunger is to be transcended, a higher degree of social justice must characterize the institutions, policies and distributive mechanisms of a nations and the world economic system (Sherlock & Hubert, 1989).

Peace education therefore needs to cultivate in learners a critical understanding of alternative paradigms of development. As analysts such as George (1976) Amin (1976) and Toh (1987) have emphasized the dominant modernization paradigm of development has

benefited disproportionately the elites and powerful agencies of both North and South societies (e.g. transnational corporations IMF/World Bank) To challenge and transcend structurally violent development, an expanding movement of NGOs, (non governmental organizations) concerned individuals and aspects of official agencies is therefore promoting an alternative peace paradigm of development PEACE stands for participation, equity, appropriateness, conscientization, and environment (Toh 1988). Some exemplars of development education in building a culture of peace include formation of grassroots self reliant development communities, campaigns to cancel the huge debt owed by South countries, regulation of transnational corporations, fair and ethical investments, authentic land reforms and appropriate technology (Anand 1980; Clark 1993; Korten 1992; George 1994, Hedley 1993).

### ***Human Rights Education***

The sanctity and importance of various human rights and freedoms can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, successive international legal instruments and even the National Constitution of several countries. But in practice such human rights are often neglected, abused, or violated. Furthermore the unpeaceful conditions of militarization and structural violence deny many people, especially the poor, several fundamental rights. These include rights to adequate food, shelter, education, and other basic needs and freedom from exploitation and repression (Lomasky, 1994). Human rights nowadays as both a concept and a reality has evolved into a comprehensive dimension of human life and humanity (Witte & Vyver, 1996). Human rights encompass those rights that make a person human and enable one to develop fully as a human being and at the same time allow people to live in community and realize the richness of their talents, culture, resources and nonmaterial gifts. They are rights that guarantee the freedom of individuals to be able to participate in the activities necessary to facilitate peace and harmony in society. These rights are difficult to sustain unless basic economic, social and cultural needs are enjoyed by the people (Selby, 1987; Romany 1994).

Although the term "human right" became recognized only in international law with the 1948 Universal Declaration, the concepts of rights of individuals and peoples can be traced as far back as the oldest religions and civilizations. Human rights are a distinctive set of social practices tied to a particular notion of human dignity (Donnelly, 1989). Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and other religions or spiritual beliefs teach about respecting the dignity and rights of the human being. While some traditions highlight rights along individual dimensions, others emphasize a more communal focus. This is especially

true among indigenous or tribal peoples whose concept of spirituality is reflected in their way of life and their relationship with the earth and all life forms (Donnelly, 1989).

Peoples have a right to self-determination which enables them to work out their own development priorities, goals and directions. Democracy not only encompasses rules, institutions, and systems which uphold civil and political freedoms, it also upholds economic, social, and cultural relationships which are equally democratic, just and equitable (Knop, 1994). Human rights need to be seen and practiced as a holistic concept which every individual and all peoples should enjoy (Vincent, 1986). Human rights are upheld by institutions, structures, relationships and systems that allow everyone to live in dignity as a human being without transgressing the individual's as well as collective rights of all people in a society and across nations (Diokno, 1983). Human rights education therefore promotes the notion that for civil rights to be meaningful, social and economic rights must also be provided (Vincent, 1986). It is the foundation for social justice, equality, and empowerment which are central to the whole notion of human rights. It creates conditions under which irrationality, domination and oppression can be overcome and transformed through deliberative and collective action in struggle to secure the rights of the individual and the collective (McLaren, 1989).

Diokno (1983) saw the connection between human rights education and national identity. Recognition of human rights is to recognize limits to government's authority. Informal channels of human rights education should be established to ensure that authoritarian governments do not suppress or distort the contents of such education. As Eide (1983) emphasized, political literacy which is a component of human rights education is also needed to critically analyze and contribute to national policy making. Policies cannot be fully left to politicians, bureaucrats and experts. Integrating the nonviolent exercises of people's power into all educational processes will enable citizens to become more prepared to pre-empt any tendencies towards authoritarianism, whether that of military-backed dictatorship or centralized state socialist regimes. Diokno (1983) also established a link between human rights and development. He said the purpose of development is not merely to eradicate poverty or to provide a constantly improving natural standard of living. The purpose of development is to enhance the dignity of all people. He believes that respect for human rights contributes to development.

As earlier discussed, another dimension of human rights now recognized as much neglected is the issue of gender. Throughout the world, women are vital co-producers of national wealth from the land, in factories, and at home, yet they remain marginalized, exerting less political influence compared to the men, receiving unequal social economic

services and rewards such as wages, nutrition, health and education (Sotela, 1994). Toh (1991) has recommended non-sexist and gender-equity perspectives in the human rights education. Such education will encourage all learners, male and female, to be aware of injustices experienced by women at work and at home due to male domination and patriarchal traditions. The socialization process in institutions, languages, pedagogy and counseling should not depreciate women's inherent worth as equal human beings. Women should not denounce their rights to fully participate in social economic and political life. Human rights education teaches that all men and women are equal and equally human (Eide, 1983).

Children's rights are also central in peace education for human rights. Amidst the conflicts and violence which beset all parts of the world, the most vulnerable members of the human race, the children, bear the most suffering. Poverty and inequality underlying the structural violence found within and among nations account for the needless death of millions of thousand of children each day from poverty related diseases in the South or Third World. Many millions exist in conditions of ill-health, hunger, and destitution (UNICEF, 1995). The enormous debt burden faced by many South governments are reflected in rising mortality rates among infants. Many children continue to live on the streets. Given the more vulnerable and dependent status of children, they become easier victims of exploitation (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1990). However it is now increasingly becoming recognized that children deserve to enjoy the fulfillment of their human rights. A world wide movement has therefore grown to draw attention to the lack of fulfillment of the rights of millions of children, and to institute measures to protect and uphold children's basic rights. These rights have been enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990) which states that respect for human rights begins with the way society treats its children. The Convention recognizes that human beings owe the child the best they have to give and that young children be taught and groomed in such a way that they do not imbibe the prejudices of the society (Brock-Utne, 1984).

### ***Education for Cultural Solidarity***

McGinnis (1984) called peace education an educational process which increases the level of respect, sensitivity and knowledge about and among varied cultural and racial groups. It incorporates the beauty and riches of all groups into the whole system and it increases an appreciation of commonalty and diversity among people as an enriching condition. It eliminates the invading complexes - both superior and inferior, which might be experienced by any group (McGinnis, 1984). Pyke and Selby (1988) state that monocultural education

stunts the growth of critical thinking. Peace education acknowledges the fact that global issues and problems are transnational in scope and therefore can only be solved through multicultural action which comes through multicultural education and cooperation.

Kniep (1986) focused on the interdependent nature of the world and says this lies at the very core of peace education. Peace education is the study of universal human values, global systems and history of contacts and interdependence among peoples, cultures and nations. Peace education offers the opportunity to see cultural differences, experience commonalty in human differences and be more aware of different social organizations and traditions which constitute the world. Peace education creates awareness of all the realities of all the systems. Peace education helps to develop the skills for living and coping with an increasingly complex world. Sokolova (1995) believes there are universal values that unite people of different cultures and social systems to generate a new awareness and consciousness to the fact that people are living in an integral interrelated world, and that all belong to the same species, live on the same planet and all have a sacred right to exist, to develop and to determine their own lives.

In sum, education for cultural solidarity within a culture of peace draws inspiration and strategies from the field of multicultural education and/or intercultural education. As theorists and advocates such as Sleeter and Grant (1988; 1992), Banks and Banks (1983), Dei (1994), and Lynch (1986) have shown, multicultural education is vital in helping multi-ethnic and multicultural societies in building mutual respect and tolerance among different ethnicity and cultures. When applied through a critical paradigm, multicultural education promotes solidarity for each other's rights and identity.

### ***Environmental Education***

Responsible scientists and concerned people all over the world are increasingly alarmed over the rapid deterioration of the natural environment. The range of ecological problems is wide and continually expanding. These problems include global warming through the green house effect, the depletion of the ozone layer, the destruction of rainforests in all continents, accompanied by secondary consequences like landslides, silting and losses of crops, pollution of air, land, and water lakes due to toxic industrial wastes (Barnaby 1988, Kaufman & Frantz, 1993). Although all countries and peoples have a share in such ecological destruction, the evidence also indicates links with national and global structural violence. Powerful agencies, local and international elites, and the industrialized nations have pursued modernization policies which aggravate unsustainable development (Ellwood, 1996; Suzuki, 1997).

Peace education as environment education thus explores the question of humanity's relationship with the environment and encourages the critical ability to consider in what ways people need to modify their behaviors, expectations and values so as to bring greater harmony, peacefulness to that relationship (Kaufman & Franz, 1993). Environmental education emphasizes the interdependent nature of all components of the biosphere, including human communities and thus directly link the future of the planet's life support systems to human behavior and development decisions (Kaufman Franz, 1993; Suzuki 1993). Environmental educators would assert that a new ethic embracing plants and animals as well as people is required from human societies to live in harmony with the natural world on which they are dependent for survival and well being. Accordingly the task of environmental education is to foster or reinforce attitudes and behavior compatible with this new ethic (Naess, 1990). Still others visualize a peaceful world as a living harmonious relationship with all the elements of our planet earth, where everyone can share responsibility and benefit equitably of the lands, waters, air and other forms of common heritage (Mische, 1989).

Fein (1990) has usefully analyzed three broad but overlapping conceptions of environmental education: education **in** the environment, education **about** the environment and education **for** the environment. Education **in** the environment is the experience that promotes environmental awareness. Education **about** the environment not only focuses on concerns but it includes learning on how to most responsibly use the environment. Education **for** the environment aims to promote a willingness and ability to adopt lifestyles compatible with the wise use of environmental resources. This education helps to develop an informed concern and sense of responsibility for the environment which will contribute to environmental improvement.

Peace education raises awareness about development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (WCED 1987). Toh (1991) suggests that unless we live peacefully with the earth and practice environmental care, the survival of human species will be in great jeopardy. Of all the species that make up life on the planet, human beings, are the most critical actors in the ecological system. Peace education in environmental issues emphasizes the interdependence and symbiotic relationship of living and nonliving things and the special role that human beings play in the ecological system. They are taught to respect and acknowledge their unique place in the planet and to understand that individual actions contribute to the sustaining or destruction of the whole ecological system (Mische, 1989).

Huckle (1988), in his analysis of "environmental politics" established the link between democracy and environmental welfare. Huckle's contribution centers around "eco-socialism" which represents the theory and practice of "eco-development" leading to "economic equity, social harmony and environmental balance." Riddle (1991) said we must first seek to satisfy basic needs, encourage self-reliance, and sustain the natural process on which future development depends. In sum a culture of peace cannot be sustainable unless all human planet interactions and relationships are underpinned by the principle of sustainability.

### *Search For Personal Peace*

One dimension of educating for a culture of peace that is increasingly receiving greater attention is personal inner peace. As Selby (1993) noted, peace education is not only about the journey outward but also the journey inwards towards personal and spiritual growth. Toh & Floresca-Cawagas (1987) are concerned about the growing evidence of personal alienation and peacelessness in the midst of excessive materialism and consumerism. The excessive pressure of modern living and the "rat race" have brought mental stress to some resulting in neurosis and various addictions. Peace education will help develop inner peace and equilibrium to cope with the pressures of advanced industrial life (Cox, 1986). Among faiths and religions, there has been a quest to attain peace of mind, heart and spirit. Toh & Floresca-Cawagas (1987) however, suggested a look at "spirituality where the revealed, philosophical, contemplative, and meditative insights or skills found in various faiths and spiritual beliefs could be accessed to help cultivate a sense of personal peace." It is therefore not surprising to find, especially in North societies, an increasing openness to the values, spirituality, and strategies (e.g., meditation) of South regions. One of the outcomes of educating for peace is that individuals have a change in attitudes and values which may contribute to peace at personal as well as global levels.

Eckardt (1980) for example, mentioned the indicators of particular attitudes and personality traits which are related to war and peace. One pole of the attitude spectrum which he called "compulsion" is defined as readiness to use force and punishment to control human behavior and resolve social conflicts. The other pole which he called "compassion" focuses on peace-mindedness and world-mindedness, and is also defined as readiness to use persuasion and reason to guide human behavior and resolve social conflicts. Peace education helps cultivate the latter.

In sum, according to Cox (1986), the building of a peaceful world necessarily requires that we have to work on ourselves and cultivate a strong sense of personal peace.



As Bretherton (1991) also aptly cautioned, there are some peace activists who are domineering, who exhibit anger, who want their own way, who do not listen to others, who exploit the more peaceful nature of their colleagues. Therefore peace education must, of necessity, educate the emotions as well as the mind. Nonetheless, while agreeing that the search for personal peace is vital in building a culture of peace, peace educators emphasize that personal peace must go hand in hand with outer or social peace. For example, although achieving personal peace is a goal of peace education, it is clear that no one can truly have personal peace until the whole world finds justice (Sherlock & Hubert, 1989). A peaceful world would necessarily look at the well being of all peoples and also maintain relationships and systems that are just, equitable, and nurturing (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1990).

According to Boulding (1992) authentic inner personal growth and development needs to be set in broader contexts of both political and planetary awareness. The skills and attitudes needed here are critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, assertiveness, self respect, respect for others, ecological concerns, open-mindedness, vision and a commitment to justice. Development of the individual's personal peace is vital to the attainment of global peace because the individual values, attitudes, layers of consciousness, can directly or indirectly help to sustain or resist and transform the structures and relationships making up groups, communities, societies and the international family of nation-states (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1995).

### **Pedagogical Principles of Peace Education**

Education for peace is underpinned by some critical pedagogical principles. What is important in peace education is not only what is taught but also how it is taught. Hicks (1988) noted that if one is teaching for peace and not merely about peace, a close relationship needs to exist between ends and means, content and form. While peace education presents many facets, it is crucial that learners are not left with a fragmented understanding of issues. Peace education therefore is necessarily holistic, emphasizing the interrelatedness of all issues and problems of peacelessness. It also seeks to develop critical and democratic thinking. In peace education, banking, which is passive receiving of fixed body of knowledge is rejected (Freire, 1975). Dialogue is central to a peaceful pedagogy and as noted earlier, peace education seeks to facilitate a process of empowerment and conscientization (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas 1987).

Peace education in practice and in consequence is a vehicle for societal transformation. One of the goals of peace education is to transform (Kniep, 1985). The

primary function of education is to help people in *doing, acting* and *becoming* (Reardon 1988). Peace education in its transformatory form seeks non-violent alternatives to direct violence, social justice in place of injustice, ecological balance in place of environmental damage, and meaningful democratic participation in place of alienation. Working for peace is working for the kind of relationships among persons and groups and for the kinds of institutions that promote the well being or development of all persons. Well being necessitates the growth of persons in dignity, in self determination, and in solidarity and service with their fellow human beings (McGinnis, 1984).

According to Reardon (1988) peace education must educate for true integrity in the area of wholeness and relationship to others, to society and to the natural order. In her holistic perception she proposed that integrity should be grounded in stewardship, citizenship, and humane relationship. She also added that education should be “transformational.” Reardon has identified several negative **R**'s, that are impediments to transformation: resignation, repression, reduction, rejection, redress, retribution, and reservation. Hence, she proposes the positive **R**'s that promote transformation: reflection, responsibility, risk taking which is peace making capacity, reconciliation, recovery, reconstruction and reverence. Akin to Freire's (1973) model of critical consciousness raising, Reardon's (1988) transformational approach of learning involves a cycle of confronting reality, capturing visions, formulating images, articulating preferences, constructing models for planning, taking action on policies, reflecting on and evaluating changes and back to confronting reality.

Peace education is education for action, education for practical achievable change, and education for practicing values (Reardon, 1988). It tries to catalyze learners to undertake action on the basis of their peace-oriented consciousness and self realized responsibility. Such action includes both personal action or what individuals can do to make their personal and interpersonal environment more peaceful, and social action or what individuals can do in solidarity with each other as groups, movements, institutions, citizens, communities, for peace (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1989).

The transformational purpose of peace education is a process of conscientization, the awakening of the poor to the roots of their poverty and the structural violence in their lives. Apathy and hopelessness are replaced by self confidence and hope. Of this, Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1990) said, the poor themselves will begin to actively struggle in nonviolent ways for changes which will bring humane development, social justice, equity, and radical redistribution of wealth. For the elite sectors of the society, conscientization will involve an awakening of their conscience to the consequences of injustice. When

conscientized, they will be willing to have less so as to allow redistribution of national wealth and resources to the poor majorities. They would be willing to sacrifice their skills and expertise to serve the underprivileged and they would reject reliance on militarization to protect their power and privilege

Peace education is an exercise in social empowerment. It enables people to work together with confidence and self esteem, inspired by the vision, hope, and imagination of those of past generations who were also striving to transform the future (Sharp, 1986). Peace involves cooperation and non violent social change aimed at creating more equitable and just structures in a society. Therefore peace education is not a tool kit that can be brought out during an emergency but rather a set of interwoven attitudes and skills which consciously can become an integral part of a person (Hicks, 1988).

In this regard skills for nonviolent conflict resolution are very crucial in peace education pedagogy. Conflicts are unavoidable happenings in the realities of human relationships whether between and among members of a family, community or organization, friends, colleagues, employees, and employers, citizens and leaders and even among nations (Wallis 1982). In peace education, the transparent recognition of the existence of such conflicts is viewed as constructive, but besides encouraging learners to critically understand the root causes of the conflicts, peace education emphasizes the vital need to resolve the conflicts through active non-violence. The principles of peaceful conflict resolutions are deemed to be helpful for long-term and sustainable solution of the underlying problems which produce the conflictual symptoms and consequences (Toh & Cawagas, 1990).

Finally Slaughter (1988) believed that education must look into the future. He proposed that a futuristic education should deal with fears about the future. Studying the futures helps people develop a deep sense of optimism. The purpose of futures in peace education is not to predict like forecasters but to understand alternatives in a wide range of choices. Hence he coined the term "preferable futures". Any fears which arise will be acknowledged, focused and directed towards constructive and creative ends. She added that an education that does not consider the future is repressive. Peace education has future components to help understand and have a grasp of the present. A range of alternative futures both probable and preferable, are presented so that we can understand the scenarios which are most likely to lead to a more just and less violent world.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This study was oriented to a qualitative research approach. The use of qualitative methodology as a research tool has increasingly grown in recent years. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) and Merriam (1998) all identically defined the essential characteristics of qualitative research thus: (i) Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach, it has the goal of eliciting understandings that people have constructed, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world, (ii) it has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the primary and key instrument of data collection and analysis, (iii) there is the use of field work where the researcher goes physically to the people, conducting observations, asking questions and interacting with the research participants, (iv) there is an inductive orientation to analysis. The qualitative research approach demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied. (v) the findings are richly descriptive. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) however added that qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply outcomes or products.

Merriam (1998) identified the five major types of qualitative research as (i) basic or generic qualitative study (ii) an ethnographic study which is employed by anthropologists to study human society and culture (iii) phenomenology is a study that focuses on the essences of shared experiences. (iv) grounded theory that is grounded in and emerges from the data (v) case study which is an intensive description and analyses of a single unit or bounded system. Merriam (1998) added that any of these approach has been used singly or combined depending on the creativity of the researcher.

Patton (1990) said a qualitative method of inquiry provides the researcher strategies to acquire first hand and in-depth knowledge of a social situation or problem. The methods provide intricate detailed reflective insights which would have been more difficult to convey with quantitative research methods. Patton perception agrees with Merriam's that qualitative research is descriptive and it perceives social life as the shared creativity of individuals. It is this "sharedness" which produces a reality perceived to be objective, extant and knowable to all participants in social interaction.

In describing the merits of qualitative research methodology, Erickson (1986) states that qualitative research most essentially describes the key incidents of the research in

relevant descriptive terms and places them in some relation to a wider social context. Qualitative inquiry cultivates the most useful of all human capacities, the capacity to learn from others. The process of doing qualitative research reflects a kind of dialogue or interplay between researchers and their subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Qualitative researchers set up strategies and procedures to enable them to consider experiences from the participants' perspectives which are accurately captured and blended with the researchers' perspectives who is called the participant observer (Erickson, 1986).

In the qualitative approach, according to Filstead (1970), individuals are considered as active agents who define the nature of reality for themselves and the meanings that it generates through interaction and contacts with respective objects and people. It is based on the premise that people respond and react to the meanings they associate with particular things or people. These meanings are modified and articulated through interpretative process (Blumer, 1969). Peshkin (1993) further elaborates on this form of qualitative research when he notes that interpretive methodology embraces:

the non-exhaustive subcategories of good research outcomes that explain or create generalizations, develop new concepts, elaborate existing concepts, provide insights that change behavior, refine knowledge and identify problems, clarify complexities and develop theory. (p. 25).

Ladson-Billings (1994) also added that this method of inquiry is a mixture of scholarship and story that captures lived reality. This in effect suggests that the human actor does not have a fixed pattern of responses to newly arising situations. On the contrary, the paradigm holds that people develop patterns of interaction through the mechanisms of negotiation and interpretation. Thus qualitative methodology emphasizes the subject viewpoint in order to understand interaction process and social change. It allows the researcher to get close to the data (Filstead, 1970). In general, the significance of qualitative research methodology is that it helps in discovering questions and puzzles for theory and rules that might solve theoretical puzzles.

Data for qualitative analysis typically come from fieldwork. During field work the researcher spends time in the setting under study, a program, an organization, a community, or wherever situations of importance to a study can be observed and people interviewed (Patton, 1990). Data are collected on the premises and supplemented by the understanding that is gained by being on location (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). It includes methods such as interviewing, focus group discussion and participant observation. It is intended to clarify the meanings people held about their realities and experiences and how an individual or a group

interprets their subjective experiences (Filstead, 1979; Bogdan & Taylor, 1973, Merriam 1998).

One of my justifications for doing this research on women was to address the problem of the invisibility of women. Women are always invisible under loads of data about people or persons or hidden under information about men. Women should become visible as subjects, to legitimate their experience and perspectives (Roberts, 1983; Parpart, 1995). Most development theories have evolved and developed as if women did not exist. Because they are not seen, they are not considered. Quite a number of indicators always have inadequate information about women who are usually lumped with others and lost within groups (Chesman, 1978). Visibility is demanded for women because they are perfectly capable of gathering information about themselves. Women can identify their problems, they understand their life situations and therefore information gathered by women would yield results very close to reality. More direct information on women 's performance, activities in various domains, access to facilities, and utilization of such facilities, would induce greater gender sensitivity (Roberts, 1983). As Filstead (1979) noted, social reality is constructed through a process of negotiation of those meanings. I hope I have achieved this through this research and the methods I have used.

This research falls into the category of the **basic or generic qualitative research** as identified by Merriam (1998) who used as one of her examples the study of women's development. This study has used a women development NGO as a case, but it was not an intensive description and analyses of that single unit (Merriam 1998). Rather this study sought to understand a phenomenon, a process, and participants perspectives of a culture of peace, a world view (Merriam 1998) as it relates to women NGOs. Data was collected through interviews, observation and document analysis. Findings are a mix of description and analysis that uses concepts from the theoretical framework of study (Merriam 1998).

### **Data Collection/Research Site**

Data collection was at and around my research site, Women Law and Development Center (WLDC). I arrived in Nigeria on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1997 to meet the severe fuel shortage prevalent in the country, which made movement extremely difficult if not impossible. Nonetheless, I found my way to WLDC using public transportation as the four tires including the rims of my car had been fleeced away by someone where it was parked in storage. This was my welcome to Nigeria after one and a half years being away. However, my initial visit to the center was much warmer than expected. I instantly noticed the

extensive reorganization that had been effected while I was away. The office expansion, additional staff, extended resource center, the presence of a full time Consultant, no doubt indicated that the Center had been on the move. It was pure pleasure and delight meeting the old staff and getting introduced to the new ones. At the eventual meeting with the Executive Director, I was briefed about the activities at the center while I, in turn, gave information about my research and what it would essentially constitute. From then on it was action after action.

WLDC was a beehive of activities. The center organized two major workshops outside its regular programs, during the tenure of my research. This was quite a feat. There was a workshop on *Democratization and Poverty Alleviation Strategies* for the Tejuoso market women. This suffered a minor setback however, at the hand of security agents who, for unknown reasons, barred the workshop from the original location. The workshop turned out to be quite successful with the market women fully sensitized to the issues. The second workshop on *Good Governance and Economic Growth: Seeking the Causes and Cures for Corruption* was quite illuminating with a powerful keynote address and subsequent discussions.

I was told I just missed some other major workshops, on *Vision 2010: Is there a Women's Agenda*, on *Leadership Training and Violence Against Women* held in Owerri and on *Sensitization Workshops on Beijing and CEDAW*. Through the Center, I participated in several other various programs organized by other NGOs that network with the Center among which were the one week international conference on *Women in the Rural Environment*, *Obafemi Awolowo Foundation's Post Credit Summit Symposium*, National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ)'s annual lecture on *Gender Equity in Democracy: Imperative for National Development*. I also had the opportunity to be nominated to attend a Federation of Association of Women Educators (FAWE) workshop on *Capacity Building for Women's Organization* in Ghana. In addition to these, I participated fully in the Monday administrative meetings, which were designed to evaluate the previous weeks' activities and plan for the current and subsequent week. I was impressed by this strategy which was participatory.

Although I had to contend with concrete problems like unsteady flow of electricity, toxic fuel, ineffective telephone and other communication systems and some other problems and difficulties nascent to Nigeria, the research went well. I was able to collect adequate data for my study. My research was quite a fruitful and enriching experience. It provided me the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the theories of the movement dedicated to women and development issues and a better appreciation of the interconnectedness of the

organizing themes of **equality, development and peace** which has been adopted by the women movement. I had immense cooperation from all the women I came in contact with during the course of the research. On the whole it was a worthwhile experience. It gave me access to several other people like Leentje from Germany, who like me, was a researcher at the Center.

For record keeping purposes all data were labeled, and titles ascribed to each document. Record of interviews was kept, including a description of the settings. Photographs were taken in appropriate situations with permission of participants.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Merriam (1998) called qualitative data, nothing more than bits and pieces of information found in the environment. Qualitative research uses a variety of methods to generate multifaceted information. It frequently includes the researcher as a person in an attempt to develop special relations with the people studied (Reinharz, 1992). As the researcher I combined many methods so as to cast my net as widely as possible in the search for understanding critical issues in my participant's lives (Reinharz, 1992). These methods included in-depth interviews, participant observation, document analysis and a one-day workshop (which I facilitated) as a site for focused discussion. My role as the researcher was to ensure that the participants offer information in a way that was voluntary and authentic, reliable and valid (Kosmidou & Usher, 1991).

Data collection covered a period of six months from mid June to mid December 1997, and the following methods were used:

### ***Interviews***

Merriam (1998) described interview as a person to person encounter in which one person elicits information from another, a conversation with a purpose of obtaining valid and reliable information. It has become the principal means by which qualitative researchers seek to achieve the active involvement of their respondents. Patton (1990) called a process to find out from people those things which cannot be observed like feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Reinharz (1992) said semi-structured or unstructured interviewing as a data-gathering technique, typically includes opportunities for clarification and discussion. Interviews give space and opportunities for the research participants to voice their narratives and stories with regards to the issues raised in the study (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992). Weber (1986) also said that interviewing can be a conversational relation between two people, in which they come to know as much about each other as they learn about whatever



is the topic of the conversation. Sarbin (1986) says interviewing has been given a new home in the world of narrative construction, with the interview serving as an instrument for story making and story telling.

As the principal means to ask questions, to probe, to clarify and to achieve the active involvement of my respondents (Reinharz, 1992), I used semi-structured interviews. These are interviews which are guided by a set of questions and issues to be explored but which the exact wording nor the order of questions is predetermined (Merriam 1998). I treated respondents' answers to questions as stories or narratives rather than as response to be coded in a standardized manner (Mishler, 1986). As the interviewer, I communicated genuine respect and acceptance of the participants (Ellis, 1992). The participants' viewpoint unfolded as the conversation or interaction in interviewing develops. It allowed immediate follow up clarification and probing (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Altogether I interviewed 20 women connected to the Center comprising:

- (a) 2 Executives/Senior Officials of the organization, the Executive Director and the Project Director, who have the ultimate responsibility for the planning and implementation of programs. Their views were valuable to the research.
- (b) 4 members who were also resource persons of the organization, the full time Consultant at the Center, the project officer and two members of the organization, who were also resource persons
- (c) 6 women participants/beneficiaries of the training programs that have been run by the Center. The choice of these women was guided by a set of criteria reflecting diversity of geographical/cultural leanings, age, and level of education.
- (d) 7 women leaders of other women development organizations that networked or have collaborated with the center on various programs and in various capacities
- (e) 1 woman who was the women in development (WID) officer in one of the international organizations that funded the Center's programs.

All interviews were taped recorded with the permission of the interviewees in order to keep a factual record of all questions and answers. These tapes helped to portray the women's emotions through their voices which was recorded and interpreted (Maxwell, 1992)

### ***Participant Observation***

According to Merriam's (1998) various levels of relationship between observer and the observed in a qualitative research, I was a participant observer, or researcher participant (Gans 1982) an activity she described as schizophrenic in that the researcher while participating tries not to become totally absorbed in the activity, but stays sufficiently

detached to observe and analyze. The others are complete participant, observer participant and complete observer.

I was a participant observer at the Women Law And Development Center (WLDC) for six months, a period long enough for me to fulfill the purpose of the study. It was an activity in which I became a part of the reality that was being investigated. There was a relationship between me and the group I worked with. I did exactly what Halcoms (1985) recommended. I entered into my participant's world and observed As an overt observer (Patton's 1990) I did not have to worry that every body at the center was behaving quite differently from the way they would normally because they were conscious of being observed. The Center was too busy to attempt to put on a show for me. I was part of the Monday morning staff meeting and I believed that what I saw was the normal way of conducting the meetings. The aims and purposes of the Monday meetings were collaborated and confirmed by various women connected with the Center. Moreover I made it clear at the beginning that my research was not an evaluation of the Center. That helped to make sure no one was on edge, nor suspicious.

I observed what happened and what did not happen (Patton, 1990). I was not told what to observe and what not to observe. I had all the freedom that I needed. I was an outsider yet considered an insider in a special non-threatening role. There were no limitations placed on me as an observer. I was an "objective" recording machine and an empathetic human being (Bogdan, 1972). My goal was to know and hear the issues from the point of view of each subject in the organization without affecting that view. I maintained a role of personal limited involvement, a relationship conducive to collecting good representative data. The subjects became familiar with me and were always at ease in my presence. We developed a relationship characterized by trust and a free and open exchange of information. I was a neutral figure and passive in the sense that my role did not in any way affect nor change the situation in a way that might have shaped the data (Bogdan, 1972). I was a participant observer of the various selected gender and development training programs organized by the Center during my research. The schedule and duration of these observations were arranged in consultation with the Directors of the Women Center. I recorded my observations through note taking on site and reflective journal writing.

### ***Document Analysis***

Documents help to give background information and usually help to discover what has happened in the past. Historical analysis is particularly useful in obtaining knowledge

which was previously unexamined and to re-examine questions for which answers are not as definite as desired. Documents also help to verify accuracy of statements made about the past in order to establish relationships and determine the direction of cause-effect relationships (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

I collected several documents and written materials which I believed were authentic (Merriam 1998) put out by the organization relating to the Center's vision-mission statements, programs and policies. I also had free access to its numerous publications on various themes, plus copies of the Center's monthly newsletter. I looked through newspaper clippings, documents relating to the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for Women and Development, the National Policy on Women in Nigeria, documents relating to the Beijing conference, and other governmental and inter- governmental documents on women's work in development. All these were useful, because through critically examining them, they helped me understand the Center's contribution to a culture of peace in this qualitative analysis.

### ***Journal Writing***

I kept a journal called field notes, containing my participant observations, as well as feelings and other informal reflection and experiences on my research. Journal comprises of diary, personal records, emotional highs and lows, jottings, quick notes about what one will write later, good for a recall of a lot of details, the log, or running account of how the time and money is spent, and actual field notes (Bernard, 1989). All these helped me to keep track of the development of the project, how the research was going on.

My field notes were personal records of my progress and my reflections containing three parts which helped me visualize how the research plan has been influenced by the data. The three parts were (i) the descriptive part which contained the bulk of the data, the meat and potatoes of the field work (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) which was virtually a description of people, objects, places, events, conversations, (ii) the analytic part which was my learnings about the practices of the research, and (iii) the reflective part, which was the more subjective part, which were the records of speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, strategies, reflections, hunches as well as patterns that emerged (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

My journal contained what I was learning and what I would do next and even speculations about the outcome of the study (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). After returning from each observation, interview, or other research sessions, I wrote out what happened. My journalizing was important because the tape recorder missed the sights, smell, the

impressions, the extra remarks said after the interview (Bernard, 1989). My field notes captured all these.

Also journal writing helped me to be self reflective, keeping an accurate record of methods, procedures and evolving analysis. Journal writing for me was a good exercise at writing. Merriam (1998) said that a qualitative researcher must be a good communicator, not just possessing oral skills, the ability to emphasize with respondents, the ability to establish rapport, ask good questions, listen intently but must also be able to write as an enormous amount of writing is involved in qualitative research.

### ***Workshop***

As part of the research methodology, I conducted a Culture of Peace workshop for the women participants. Through the mediation of one of the directors at WLDC, we were allowed the use of the premises of Friedrich Ebert Foundation, one of the international funders in the country. We had the benefit of diplomatic immunity, as I was worried that the workshop might be disbanded by government authorities since we were to discuss sensitive issues.

The workshop constituted a series of group discussions which connoted a group of people sharing questions and insights and looking for changes that common values compel them to seek (Reardon, 1988). The intention was to create further opportunity to validate some of the views expressed in earlier interviews. The workshop approximated a focus group discussion. It was a time of fruitful discussion which yielded deeper insights into the research problem and gave opportunity for more data collection.

The participants had very useful contributions to make. The workshop centered on the various themes of a culture of peace which are violence/peace, personal peace/societal peace; cultural solidarity, intercultural understanding and tolerance; sharing and free flow of information, media and social inequities; militarism and demilitarization; environmental care and sustainable development; economic security, equitable distribution of wealth and resources; respect for fundamental human rights and freedom of every person; political security and democracy; empowerment of women and full participation of women in the development process.

The forty workshop participants were from within the center and without, but everyone there had connection with the Center. The participants were the directors, the executive of the Center, staff of the Center, the consultants, the facilitators, the participants of the various center's programs and activities, the women leaders of some of the organizations that network and collaborate with the Center, the women in development

officer from one of the funders that fund the Center's activities, and the Executive Officer in charge of UNESCO's culture of peace program in Nigeria, who gave some insight into a culture of peace from UNESCO's perspective.

The workshop was a group activity, an exercise in participation. The workshop gave space and opportunity for the research participants to voice their views with regards to the issues raised in the study (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992). This research tried to understand the work of WLDC in an in-depth way and also provided the opportunity for exploring the possibility of integrating education for a culture of peace into the work of the Center. The workshop, apart from yielding more data for the research, was also intended to sensitize the Center to the possibilities for societal transformation through education for a culture of peace. The workshop explored the potential relevance of a holistic peace education framework to the educational training program of the Center. In this way the study was not merely an analysis of current realities but also an opportunity for all specific dimensions and aspects of a culture of peace framework to be examined in-depth by the women at the Center. For example, how do issues of development and environment relate to building a culture of peace through training and empowerment? How do issues of women's human rights relate to development and a culture of peace? How do women working on gender and development issues at WLDC see personal peace issues as contributing to a culture of peace? These were some of the issues in the study that were addressed at the workshop. The workshop attracted a good level of press coverage.

### **Data Analysis**

Merriam (1998) said that data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. It is a complex process of making that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. These meanings or understandings or insights constitute the findings of a study. Findings can be in the form of organized descriptive account, themes and categories that cut across the data or in the form of models and theories that explain the data (Merriam 1998).

My data analysis was in two parts. The informal analysis which I started in the field was based on the periodic review of my field notes as I kept a focus on the themes that I would later pursue. The formal analysis started with the systematic arranging of the interview transcripts, journal, which included my field notes, and some other materials that I have accumulated to increase my understanding. This formal analysis involved working with data, after transcribing and typing all the collected information. I organized them, break them into manageable units, synthesized them, discovering what was important and what

was to be learned and deciding what I would include in the report and what would be left out (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

Data obtained from the different research methods were sorted and critically interpreted based on the themes and dimensions of a culture of peace. These dimensions included the internal structures and relationships of the women's NGO selected for study. However I went beyond this level of analysis and constructed some categories and themes which emerged because they were either persistently mentioned by the participants or they make sense in the light of the data (Merriam 1998).

Merriam (1998) and Patton (1990) said that the type of research has a major effect on the analysis. My analysis was determined by the type of my qualitative research. This research has a **critical** orientation which is a critique of power, privilege and oppression (Merriam 1998). I have reported my research analysis in a **descriptive-interpretative** way (Merriam 1998). Patton (1990) said that description should be balanced by analysis and should lead into interpretation. He added that an interesting and readable report provides sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation and sufficient interpretation to allow the reader to understand the description. Raw data were reported descriptively and patterns discovered were presented as interpretive commentary. I have endeavored to integrate and achieve a balance between description, and interpretation so that my report remains interesting and informative relating it to my conceptual framework of a culture of peace and the categories that have emerged, which was aimed at presenting an interpretation of reality as the participants saw it (Merriam 1998)

### **Reliability And Validity**

I employed a combination of methods to corroborate each piece of data, to reduce error and maintain reliability and validity (Murphy, 1980). Reliability refers to the degree of consistency or whether the methods can be relied upon to produce the same results when used by someone else (Murphy, 1980). Validity which is both internal and external refers to the extent observations and statements are true reflections of reality, and measure what is to be measured. Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality. Do they capture what is really there? External validity is concerned with the extent to what the findings of the one study can be applied to other situations. How generalizable are the results of a research study (Merriam 1998) The term also denotes credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness in explaining phenomenon.

I adhered to Lather's (1991) suggestion that in order to fulfill the minimum requirement of assessing validity, I needed to undertake triangulation of methods and data

sources to strengthen reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam 1998). I also endeavored to develop trust and rapport with the participants through relating with them in collegial and dialogical ways. I avoided projecting an attitude of someone who is an “expert” in Culture of Peace and peace education. My own experiences and background in women’s NGO circles, as well as the fact that some of the WLDC leaders, staff and members already knew me, also helped in strengthening trust and rapport.

### **Research Ethics**

Merriam (1998) said while policies guidelines and recommendations for dealing with the ethical dimensions of qualitative research are available to researchers, actual ethical practice comes down to the individual researcher’s own values and ethics. It is the researcher’s conscience makes the decision being with faced with behaving in an ethical manner at every moment .

I however strictly observed basic ethical guidelines. I ensured that participants entered the research voluntarily. I made them understand the nature of the study and the obligations involved, and that participants were not exposed to risks that were greater than the gains they might derive (Taylor, 1987). Confidentiality of data and the anonymity of the research participants in the study were observed. I assured the Center that this research was not an evaluation exercise. Rather, the research sought to determine the Center’s roles in building of a culture of peace and transforming the Nigerian society.

Finally, as the researcher I tried to display some sensitivity (Merriam 1998). I was sensitive to the information being collected. I was also sensitive to the women participants, to their rich experiences, knowledge and to their cultural diversity. My nationality as a Nigerian and my previous connection and networking with WLDC in organizational capacity, facilitated such interaction.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CULTURE OF PEACE IN THE WLDC**

#### **Introduction**

The three analysis Chapters, Four, Five and Six seek to determine if the development activities of women NGOs contribute to a culture of peace in Nigeria. Specifically Chapter Four responds to the first group of the research questions to determine if the goals, visions, values policies, practices, programs and institutional structures of the selected women NGO, WLDC contribute to a culture of peace in Nigeria.

#### **Goals, Visions, Policies and Practices, of WLDC**

I needed to know if the goals, visions, policies and practices of WLDC contribute to a culture of peace. The WLDC goals as defined by one of the founders reflects an empowerment approach to development. She said:

*Our goal is to ensure that women are the architects of their fortune, empowered sufficiently to appreciate and have the capacity to build and do what they want to do.*

Olu, another leader, described the goal of the organization thus:

*The visions, values and goals are all interrelated because the vision is for women to know their position, to be self confident to be able to take position of leadership in all spheres of life, n the home, in the workplace, in politics, in the decision making body so that at the end there will be nothing in particular stopping women from taking up any post and running for any decision making position.*

Likewise, Kaz, another director, stressed that:

*Our goal is to empower women to make them agents of change in the society and to be able to fight for their own empowerment.*

In the interviews, the WLDC officers strongly emphasized the theme of gender inequality, a form of structural violence which they believed should be addressed at the Center as a move towards empowerment. Busy said:

*Women have come to realize that they have specific needs which must be addressed in a special manner, that they themselves must champion their cause otherwise they will keep on being neglected. Gender inequality is a major handicap to the development and empowerment of women. So these problems need to be addressed. The initial problem was creating awareness. Now women have gone a long way. They are now educated on all the issues. The next line of action is to take the bull by the horns and seek their*



*rights. Women's development is entangled with their equality with men. If this is not addressed, development and empowerment of women will be hampered. As a peace issue, there cannot be peace without equality.*

Likewise, Kaz agreed that:

*... There is a lot of disparity even among Nigerian women. Some Nigerian women must be ready to give up some of their wealth to help their fellow sisters who are marginalized and not so privileged.*

The WLDC development goals, visions, policies and practices of WLDC tend towards Moser's (1993) empowerment approach for emancipation and full participation of women, one of the themes of a culture of peace. **Empowerment** was a word strongly used by the officers at WLDC. Empowerment focuses on increasing women's control over choices in their lives. It seeks to address self reliance and confidence so that they will become active players in the society (Ostergaard 1992). Empowerment recognizes the triple role of women and views the work of women's organizations and like minded groups as the key elements of change. Empowerment seeks to raise women's consciousness so that they can challenge their status in society. Empowerment works on practical gender needs to build support base in order to address strategic gender needs (Young 1993)

The women at WLDC while pursuing empowerment, as an ideology, an issue that would lead to peace in the lives of women, had a focus on unequal gender power relations in a male dominated society. WLDC aimed at equality in control over productive resources strategies of conscientization and mobilization for collective action. Women at WLDC used the goal of empowerment to overcome an oppressive system which works to the disadvantage of the oppressed and to the advantage of those with political power. WLDC saw empowerment as a collective power and community action to overcome structural inequality (Young 1993) WLDC resolved that empowerment involves the essential step of conscientization of recognizing that problems cannot be solved and needs attended by operating within the present system of allocation of resources but that there are aspects of structural inequality which have to be challenged and changed (Young 1993). This means collective mobilization to overcome institutionalized gender discrimination (UNICEF 1994).

Moser (1993) maintained that the empowerment process has **three** critical dimensions. The first stage involves the essential step of conscientization, of exposing the unequal gender relations, of recognizing that a community's problem can only be solved by eliminating structural inequities. It is a critique of the way power and development are interlinked. The second stage involves critically challenging these relations and providing

means for women to make their own choices and speak out on their own behalf. The third stage creatively seeks transformation and the shaping of new social relations. It is a process where women are in control of their own lives (Moser, 1989). Mohanty (1991) lent a voice to this approach and considered it holistic in that it linked gender subordination with other forms of oppression based on nationality, class, and ethnicity.

WLDC women have moved through these three processes of empowerment: conscientization, challenge and action as Rim, one of the officers, explained:

*The Center has been more interested in giving women the skills, the empowerment to act on their own behalf. We always encourage women to be in control, to take the initiative in some of the situations. There were times when we not only raised awareness in them, we mobilized them to action. We discovered that many of them are now adequately sensitized and are aware of the issues, the next stage is to learn to act. Usually they are quite articulate in whatever language they operate in. So we encourage them to go on their own to demand their rights in a peaceful manner.*

This is consistent with the statement in the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies

*...training should not only help in the search and acquisition of new skills and knowledge it should also help participants to acquire and strengthen values like justice, honesty, truthfulness and solidarity among oppressed groups.*

Tade, a top official, cited an instance where the Center encouraged a widow to take action, to seek legal redress and challenge the denial of her rights to inheritance in a court of law.

Tade explained further:

*Apart from organizing enlightenment programs and relevant training and educational programs including train the trainers program for women, we undertake advocacy on behalf of women. We then motivate them to action when and where necessary. There has just been a landmark judgment to grant a widow the right to inherit her husband's property. We were very instrumental in this. We have been advocating for widows' rights with other women's groups and this was pleasing to us.*

There was no precedent to this type of action. Most widows had been intimidated to silence but this one was motivated to action. With the support of the Center, the widow went to court and for the first time in Nigeria, a widow won a landmark judgment granting her rights to inheritance. The denial of inheritance has been seen by many as a violation of the human rights of women. It has also been a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women in denying the women economic power and independence thereby prolonging their vulnerability and dependence. The WLDC not only helped women

to know their rights and to recognize violations of these rights. It has also encouraged women to step out and claim their rights.

This was corroborated by Alhaja, a program participant and a market woman leader, who mobilized women to intervene on behalf of mothers whose children were being killed by the military in quelling student's demonstrations. Thus the women at WLDC have taught women to become activists in the struggle against discrimination and violations of women's rights thus getting empowered to struggle on their own behalf.

WLDC possibly conscious of the limitation and danger of having a wide array of goals and objectives that cannot be met or that would put its credibility at risk (Burkey 1993) had defined and limited its major goals. WLDC's goals of empowerment also requires building up in the people, the confidence, skills, assets and freedoms necessary to achieve this goal (Clark 1991). To such end the Center utilizes the DEPENDS approach which focusses on development of infrastructure, economic growth, poverty alleviation, equity, natural-resource base protection, democracy and social justice (Clark's 1991). It is a concept of just development at its broadest, improving the society and enabling the people to achieve their aspirations, a process of change that enables people to take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potential.

WLDC achieving goal of empowerment also included the political approach (Ostergaad's 1992) which essentially saw women as political actors who, individually and collectively, demand a change in unequal structures and shifts in power relations within the society. This approach aims to see women participating fully with men in determining and directing their common future which is envisaged as a more equitable just society for all, a policy that promotes a culture of peace. The marginalization of women and their exclusion from public life was a situation that hinders equality and having a voice in the decision making process. The women at WLDC's final word on empowerment saw the need for the institutionalization of policies to enhance the participation of women for empowerment. While some WLDC officers acknowledged that women were participating more in public life, the level of performance was still far too low relative to the population of women. Although women are now contesting elections, sometimes with the encouragement of male peers, many are still not successful. According to Limbo,

*... Women are being recognized now more than before as human beings, not as occupants, or as properties. But there are still problems of legislation. Laws still need to be put in place to empower women more. As a lawyer, I know that not much is being done in the area of law. Nigeria has signed a lot of treaties especially the CEDAW but it has not yet reflected in our municipal laws. This and other issues need to be addressed for further changes in the situation of women.*

From the interviews with leaders and staff, the WLDC claimed to endorse a GAD approach which has a holistic approach to empowerment. During the interview the issue of male role in this GAD approach came up and so I wanted to know if there were male members in the organization. One of the directors, Tade, replied with an emphatic “no.” She explained:

*We do not have male members. We are interested in empowering women and we make no apology about that. When the women have got to the position that they can compete on equal terms with the men, then maybe we can decide to bring them in on membership.*

But Shane, another staff member, had a different view. She believed that the attitudes and practices of many men are the major problems women face. She said:

*The inequalities and the lopsided system that women experience all stem from the men and the patriarchal system. Therefore, the men should be given opportunity to see and hear the issues first hand.*

The Center expressed no apology for its specific women focus. It said it was involved in gender training as a response to the powerful need for social and political movement for emancipation and empowerment and so did not need to include the men at that stage. Gender training for the Center has gender equity, equality and emancipation and empowerment as its objectives, the agenda is to meet gender needs.

Esha, a member of one of the organizations that networked with WLDC, thought the Center should change its policy right away and allow some male into the organization. From her own experience, it yielded results faster than any one could imagine. She said her organization had men as members. She recounted the benefits.

*In my own organization, we have male members. In fact the gender specific name of the organization Women in Nigeria, has not deterred the men to come forward to request to be members. The men have shown a remarkable sense of sensitivity to women's issues, and are quite sympathetic and appreciative of the issues. The men have claimed that they joined the organization just to understand what is it women want. But now they find themselves actually promoting the cause of women.*

Reinharz (1992) confirmed that such men refer to themselves as “co-feminists.” Although some feminists like Henley and Daly, (1975) would agree strongly with Tade. But a culture of peace perspective on this issue would consider the presence of some men in an organization like the WLDC to help promote gender solidarity. UNESCO has in fact began

to have a focus on the male role in fostering the culture of peace. The male is essentially seen as the aggressor. But there are males who are actually opposed to violence against women like members of the *White Ribbon Movement* in Canada and *Males Against Violence Against Women* in the United State of America. UNESCO promoted a Conference in Oslo examining the role of masculinities in the promotion of a culture of peace. It is good and desirable that WLDC is sensitive to the needs of women, it is also necessary to work along with men who are sympathetic to the cause of women.

### **Spreading empowerment**

Rim explained the Center was aware of its limitations and so could not reach every woman in Nigeria to empower them, even with the best intentions. Hence it has a policy of setting in motion a multiplier effect. This it achieved by training trainers who later go out to train others in their communities. She explained the process:

*We also have a focus on spreading empowerment. When we have trained all, in empowerment and leadership programs, we train some to be trainers. So we organize Train the Trainers programs. These trainers we expect that when they have received the training, will go outside to train other women in their various communities in issues that they have learnt.*

Kaz confirmed that training for multiplier effect was to help reach a wider spectrum of women - help them achieve self-improvement and prepare them for their role in society which are goals of empowerment.

Turk (1992) asserts that training is an accepted form of knowledge, skills and attitudinal development which helps adults to keep pace with accelerating life involvement and the enlarging concept of human capabilities. Folley (1987) concurs that the trainer brings in a change in response to a given environment or a set of circumstances, and when such change has occurred then learning has taken place. The WLDC recognized that training ensured the rights of the individual to learn. Training the trainer would achieve the goal of emancipation for more women much faster. Training the trainer is a tool of social empowerment and social transformation (Turk 1992), a pre-requisite for societal peace.

In further identifying the goals and visions of WLDC, the women sought to further justify the adoption of empowerment as a policy and approach, because they said women's needs were usually ignored and not integrated into national planning. When needs are not met there can be no peace, when problems are not solved personal peace looks unattainable. Hence, one of the Center's strategies is to do what the government has failed to do. The WLDC not only provides information and awareness raising programs but is

also involved in training women in specific skills to address their own identified needs and problems. This training seeks to help women empower themselves to identify, name and meet their own needs. Tade, one of the executives of the Center, emphasized that:

*... undoubtedly the most pressing work before us is to build our Center as an autonomous institution so that we can make our visions real in a permanent form and so that we can even be more effective and be able to reach many more women. and help resolve some of their needs.*

According to Kaz, one of the members:

*Nigerian women still have a lot of hurdles to cross. In education there is a lot of disparity among Nigerian women. In terms of being in leadership position, politically we are behind our East African sisters. We are still struggling with violence against women while they have gone on to putting women in position of power.*

Women's needs were variously identified by the women. Alhaja M, a program participant, and a market woman described women's problems thus.

*Women have been relegated to the background in that we are not given the opportunities that we are supposed to have. For example a woman is not allowed to own a house whereas the law says every adult can own a property. In most families parents would rather send their sons to school if they have financial problems even when the daughter is more brilliant, because according to them the girl will soon give up her name. So there has not been the equal opportunity we are talking about.*

Limbo defined the problems and claimed that they varied from one segment of the country to another. The problems reflected the diversity of the country. She said:

*Yoruba women in the South who have always been deemed to have more education and so have high self esteem and confidence, now have all that eroded because of the recent restructuring (structural adjustment) of the society. The Ibo women in the East still have the widowhood problems where women cannot inherit from their husbands or even father's property. A large percentage of women in the northern part of the country are illiterate because the women are encouraged to marry early.*

Limbo declared that human rights denial was another major problem so that women in Nigeria are marching on very slowly in the home, in their work place, and in politics. Denial of women rights is disempowering, as she puts it:

*The pace could be faster, women need to go faster. We have to overcome the bias of the community. Women have to believe in themselves. Women have to build up our self-esteem.*

Feko said that lack of information about human rights issue was a critical problem for women because with denials of rights women cannot be empowered. She exclaimed:

*There is not enough awareness about women and human rights for empowerment . For instance, even me, with all my education, a master's degree, I do not know my rights as a woman. If a woman at my level does not know about her rights it means that enough is not being done in that area. I have only been slowly learning through attending seminars and workshops.*

She commented that women organizations have the primary responsibility of presenting this information to women because the government will not do it. She added:

*Knowledge is power, information is power. Women NGOs should tell women more about their rights. They should do more awareness raising. When people raise issues of human rights the Government is not happy and usually feels threatened. When women's rights are being discussed there is the assumption that women are plotting to take over. There is a lot of ignorance about human rights issues.*

Remi identified poverty as another problem that does not promote women's empowerment. She said:

*Poverty is a woman's problem and having too many children is one of the known causes of poverty. There is a Yoruba proverb, which says that anyone who has too many children is looking for poverty. Women always have too many children and because of that we cannot look after ourselves, so we suffer.*

Simi identified poor health as a contributing factor to poverty and underdevelopment of women. She claimed the cost of medical care was very high, and this has continued to contribute to poverty. To all these, Olu added the lack of basic amenities - no water, no electricity, no roads, no petrol, dearth of housing, inadequate living space for families, and inadequate funds for children's schooling. Funkie, a center staff and facilitator, commented:

*Apart from lack of education, women have problems everywhere. The problems exist from cradle to grave. From the time they wake up to the time they go to bed. Women have a lot of problems - no water, no light, no medicines, no transportation, dirty environment, pollution, no money to meet emergency needs. Even the diseases that we thought had been eradicated are now coming back. Tuberculosis is now rampant, kwashiorkor is back. The economic situation is killing everybody. Everybody is poorer than they were and the worth of the naira is getting worse.*

Alhaja O, another participant and a market woman, saw inadequate supply of money in circulation as a problem which has prevented women from making enough income to contribute to the traditional capital, *esusu*, necessary for their trading, leading in turn to poverty, without money women cannot be empowered, she added

At this point I asked the women what they thought had brought about this high level of poverty. Every one had the word SAP or the IMF's Structural Adjustment Program, on her lips. As exemplified by Alhaja's comment,

*Since government went to borrow money, they now talk about SAP and foreign exchange ... We spend naira here but everything is calculated in dollar. Before, there was enough money in the market for all of us but now all has been taken away by SAP. Government tells us we owe money (national debt). Some people have the Government's money. Those who have stolen money should go and pay it so that the rest of us can have peace.*

Alhaja reminded the women how the market women participated in the debate about taking the IMF/World Bank loan and strongly advised against it. However, the Government did not listen to such voices against more international debt and the SAP regime. By proceeding to accept the loan, a majority of Nigerians are now suffering from the consequences. The women clearly identified the origin of pauperization of women and linked them with the issues of the global economy controlled by the powerful states and agencies like the IMF. The WLDC leaders and staff hence, understand well the negative impact of globalization on women. As analysts like Vickers (1991) have noted, the world economic crisis has caused household income to decline, even as food prices increase and employment opportunities drop. Likewise, Ghosh (1996) has affirmed that economic liberalization puts women in a very vulnerable position. Reed (1996) argues that it is not the needs of the South nations that are being served by the economic restructuring process but that of the rich industrialized societies.

In sum, the WLDC leaders and members seemed acutely aware of the high level of structural violence in Nigerian society that impacts severely on the well being of women and keeps them marginalized and disempowered. Tade painted a picture of dependency

*People are tired and frustrated, they cannot gather enough strength to take actions to benefit their lives. The society feels emasculated having been under the military for so long, and this has made the people become so apathetic. They have been emotionally crushed by the army, so people are resorting to the comfort of religion where they can leave everything to God Almighty. They do not want to do much for themselves anymore. It is a dangerous stage for people to get to.*



These various description of women's needs, problems, and concerns fall into what Molyneaux (1985) has called women's and gender interests which translate into gender needs that can either be "strategic" or "practical" (Moser, 1993). Strategic gender needs are those arising from women's subordinate position to men in the society. These relate to gender divisions of labor, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, and equal wages and women's control over their bodies. Practical gender needs do not challenge the gender divisions of labor or women's subordinate position in society, but could arise out of them. Practical gender needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, practical in nature and often concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provisions, health care and employment (Moser 1993). Ostergaard (1992) classified these as felt needs.

I believe that since the Officers of the WLDC were able to articulate these strategic and practical gender needs and concerns, the Center was able to design development strategies to resolve these problems and pursue its goal of empowerment. A problem identified is half solved. Meeting the needs of women and solving them positively contributes to a culture of peace. Tade clarified:

*Our objectives are that women should know their position, be self confident, be able to take position of leadership in all spheres of life, in the home, at work, in politics, in the decision making arena, to ensure that women are the architects of their own fortune, empowered sufficiently to appreciate and have the capacity to build and do what they want to do and so they can make changes in society.*

Alhaja, one of the participants at the Center, tried to identify what she called the major problem of women as follows:

*The men always have the upper hand. There are some men who will not allow their wives to go out to work and yet they do not have money. They spend only what the man brings even if it is not enough. There are some men who because they have lost their jobs will tell the woman to go and work or sell something, and when she does, they take all the money from her. At times they still beat her on top of it.*

Alhaja here was relating the marginalization of women to domestic violence which Fagan and Browne (1993) have called ecology of aggression. In addition to this, Limbo declared that men felt "threatened" by anything women did, even by training programs designed for women. She claimed that most times she has heard men say that women want to "take over but they would not be able to do it." Hence women should just be "content" with their roles and "stay where God has placed them." She said that men prefer that women be excluded from all sectors of public activities and kept at home where they "belonged" as one

Nigerian male scholar (Yesufu, 1996) implied when he advocated that domestic science be taught to women to make them “better housewives” and that there was nothing “degrading” in it. In reality, it was very “honorable” to be a housewife. It was the counterpart of the male being a husband, he added. Yesufu’s view represented a category of men, and even some women, in Nigeria who believe that a woman’s place is in the home and that is where she should be kept.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) has identified that patriarchy has been the biggest problem the Nigerian women face. It is within marriage that the Nigerian woman suffers the most oppression. Married she becomes a possession, voiceless and often rightless in her husband's family, except for what accrues to her through her children. She has to submit to dominance by her husband or face blame from the total society. Furthermore, women are overworked, as generally men do no housework or childcare of any sort. Hence the woman struggles at two fronts, the home and the workplace. Traditional support systems, grandmothers, siblings, younger relatives, and co-wives are being withdrawn by such new social developments as compulsory education, urbanization, and capitalist atomization of the family (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1985). Childless marriages are blamed on the woman; it is never admitted that the man can be sterile. A childless woman is often considered a “monstrosity,” as is an unmarried woman or a divorcee who is subject to jokes and innuendoes of scandal and sexual harassment.

The interviews generally demonstrated a high level of awareness of the WLDC women. Most of them had also been involved in all the four world conferences for women. The women seemed committed to the issues of empowerment and development as they conceived of them in their organization’s framework. In contrast, according to Tade, even though those in authority had knowledge of these high profile women’s conferences and because they had officially sponsored women participants to the conferences, they had not been sensitized to any great extent. There had been no significant changes in their views and treatment of women. Tade criticized government leaders for hoisting some programs in order to proclaim their “involvement” in women’s issues. She was certain that there was no deep commitment as confirmed by the lack of governmental action.

The women at the WLDC believed that women themselves were central to the development of women. They have identified the issues of subjugation as the main problem of gender and development. In my observation, I am inclined to believe that these women do not feel despair or helplessness, in spite of all the pressures, obstacles, and the difficulties of organizing, the lack of time, and the overworked nature of their lives. There was no evidence of despondency here but a great awareness of the issues and the

determination to move and find solutions to the problem, thus reaching for its goals of empowerment and helping women to be agents of change in their own situations.

The women were not under any illusion about the problems, concerns and limitations Nigerian women face. A clear perception of the problems helped to keep the Center focused. Eyo summarized women's limitations in Nigeria thus:

*All documented evidence shows that women's development in Nigeria is at a very low level. There has been more deterioration in the recent past than there has been progress. Development in terms of awareness, education and information in this country is most uneven. There are parts of Nigeria where women do not know the name of the President of the country.*

These views concur with the situation report by UNICEF (1995) on women in Nigeria, which concluded that:

... Despite the rich natural base, a reasonable infrastructure and relatively well developed manpower that Nigeria possesses, there has not been enough growth and development in the economy to raise the standard of living of the people more so women and children. Lack of political stability, under-utilization of resources, poor maintenance of capital stock, managerial weaknesses as well as certain socio-practices appear to have hindered the uplift of the status of women and children. (p. 51)

From a culture of peace perspective, this was an appropriate method that optimized the use of resources, both material and human. It was also conscientizing as the marginalized groups could come to some awareness about their situation and are empowered to inform themselves. It is consistent with the demand and statement issued by UNESCO at Beijing on "Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace." The UNESCO (1995) statement declared that there should be efforts to ensure women's equal access to all forms of learning opportunities and decision-making with a view to enhance women's empowerment. The statement emphasized the promotion of relevant education that imparts knowledge of human rights of men and women, and encourages new approaches to development that take account of women's priorities and perspectives.

### **Selection of Program Participants at WLDC**

I needed to know if the selection of programs participants at The WLDC was peaceful and equitable. This would confirm if the resources and opportunities were adequately expanded to reach a wide range of women or if it was limited to just a selected few. The Center is situated in Lagos and so its immediate area of operation was Lagos State, which has a vibrant community of about 12 million mixed and diverse people. WLDC did not limit its operation to Lagos State. Its activities have spanned across the entire country. WLDC said

that while it defined and selected its participants, it did not eliminate nor exclude anyone who was interested in its programs. The WLDC claimed its target community was every woman in the society. The director elaborated:

*Because this is a Women Training Center we do not limit ourselves, we reach out to every woman. We deal with women at the grassroots; we deal with women who are professional; and we deal with women who are in between. We deal with the educated and non-educated ones, because every woman needs some sort of empowerment.*

With regard to the WLDC's selection process of participants for its programs, the Center leadership clarified that it had a network relationship with many other organizations who selected their own program participants. As Kaz noted:

*Our participants are selected basically by invitation. But we have also responded to applications. There are times when people have heard of our programs, and have requested to be on the program. We try to accommodate them if they meet the criteria that we have set for those we invite.*

At times more names than needed were sent and WLDC did the final selection based on the qualification and experience of the nominees. WLDC did not limit its invitation to nongovernmental organizations. It usually extended its invitation to Women's Divisions of governmental agencies hoping to raise the level of awareness of their staff. According to Limbo:

*We have a list of women's development organizations that are engaged in the empowerment of women, organizations that have women education as their focus. Depending on our program, we select the appropriate and relevant organizations- we then ask them to send nominations for the program. At times we involve sectors of governments institutions that have women's desks, women's bureau, women's unit, and so on.*

Olu added that some of the programs had specifically been addressed to a particular segment of the society. For example, the WLDC invited both NGOs and non-NGOs to a program on leadership training and women leaders. At another time, the Center had a program on women's rights to address the problems of violations of women's rights. Police have always refused to allow women to take bail. The Center invited the police and specifically requested that women police officers should be sent for the program. There had also been complaints that at times the women police officers were even more severe towards women than the male officers. There was also the issue of police' role in situations of domestic conflicts where women have always been treated roughly and the Center thought it was time police men and women were aware of the issues of human rights. The Police Officers Wives Association, one of the organizations that network with the WLDC,

was involved because it was believed that the wives of police officers would be able to convey some messages of sensitization to their husbands at home. The WLDC also involved the market women associations as participants, who were selected in-house.

The WLDC hence, selected women for the programs based on the criteria that they were interested in women's empowerment and also belonged to organizations through which they could work. This was explained further by Bola:

*We mainly train people who are themselves in some organizations. That way they already have a target group. So whatever we teach them they can replicate and teach others in their groups for multiplier effect Also we target people who have executive powers to replicate the programs.*

Olu added that the Center had, at another time, focused on young girls who had dropped out of school. The WLDC seemed quite equitable in the selection of its participants. Consistent with the principles of inclusiveness that needs to underpin a culture of peace, there appeared to be no favoritism or preference for any group or any sector. All that was needed was that those chosen met certain criteria, as laid down by the Center. The Center left the primary selection to the participating organizations, which seemed quite fair and this eliminated lobbying at the Center by prospective participants.

I wanted to know if the WLDC knew and understood its participants and how aware it was of the characteristics of its participants. Were the participants seen or treated as mere recipients of programs? Gbemi, a member of staff, explained:

*We closely observe our participants at these training programs. We take interest in them. We take note of their verbal and nonverbal messages. From their responses we are able to determine how serious and interested they are in the programs. So far we have always picked up positive vibes from them.*

Fola affirmed the enthusiasm on the part of the women participants, especially the women from grassroots contexts. She said the women always displayed a high level of excitement at the sessions, which made the Center conclude that it must be doing something right. Dupe described the Center's perception of its program participants thus:

*We always try to fuse agendas and this is responsible for the heightened interest. Members of our community are always enthusiastic about our programs because we try to meet their needs. In fact their needs are our primary interests. They enjoy coming and participating in our programs because they benefit. These they have told us themselves.*

Limbo added that the participants, including market women, always displayed a sense of commitment to the programs. She singled out the market women because the Center was aware that it was a significant display of commitment for market women to leave their stalls

and wares to come for workshops and other WLDC programs. She explained that generally, the market women were the most difficult group of women to get to take time off to participate in programs. Many programs for many market women have been aborted because of absenteeism.

Limbo claimed that it was out of the regards the Center has for its participants that it ensures they have access to all the information that they need for empowerment. The Center helped its participants keep abreast with what was happening in the international scene. This was to help monitor how Nigeria was doing in relation to other countries. The Center tries to implement the principle, "Think Globally Act Locally." In Kaz' words:

*We try to document as much as possible what is happening all over the world. We document how Nigeria is getting along on the international scene. Then we focus on how much effort the country is making to honor and meet with its obligation concerning international treaties, international agreement that they have signed and ratified, how much does it reflect in our municipal laws, specifically as it affects women. Then we present it to the women in basic terms .*

Sharing and free flow of information is vital for the development of a culture of peace. The WLDC has a library where information is made accessible to women, and educational and information materials are distributed free of charge. All these supplement the workshops and seminars that point out gender bias and provide capacity building and development for women (Moser, 1993). Limbo explained the Center's rationale for establishing the library, making it free and accessible to all women as follows. It is still linked with the goals of empowerment:

*Women are encouraged to develop a reading culture so that they can access the information that is up to date, so that their view is broadened, their horizon is widened and so that they can do things for themselves. They are taught to acquire skills in all spheres of life, which will help them to be employed especially where there is male domination. Women are empowered when they are made to understand their roles and how to overcome and get rid of superstitions which had impeded development, that certain roles are cast for men and certain roles are cast for women. The women are encouraged to access some of these information themselves. This is empowerment. We go to all lengths to provide all these information and structures. We encourage the women to access them.*

She added that the provision of this facility was not limited to the Center's participants. The Center wanted to share information and knowledge with all women. Because of the connection of one of the directors to the university as a former professor, many female undergraduates involved in gender-based research found at the Center useful books and

information. The Center is connected to a network of worldwide book suppliers, especially those on women, like Women INK, a supplier of books on women and development. She explained that the library was not a lending library but a reference library, where many can come to read or even photocopy a few needed pages as long as they observe copyright laws.

The Center claimed it networks with United Nations Information Center (UNIC) and receives printed documents from UNIC, which it shares with others. The Center has also produced materials for specific programs to help elaborate on the concepts. At other times, it had produced and distributed materials for public enlightenment and awareness. The Center has also produced posters conveying different messages and concepts to women. These posters have been widely distributed to other women organizations and displayed in places where there is a large flow of traffic, in private offices and in international agencies offices. The Center has contracted artists in the production of some posters. According to Bos:

*I believe we are quite relevant and effective in sharing and supplying information. We have a library which we make accessible to all. We distribute our newsletter Gender Views, free. We go to the grassroots and leave materials there. We try out all our information and educational materials and make sure they work before we distribute them. We make posters and distribute them free. We use radio jingles to convey specific messages. Above all we try to get evaluation so that we keep improving in our strategies.*

In addition, the Center used its own newsletter **Gender Views** to reach out to the women and to the community, to effect its involvement and participation in its programs. At other times, the Center had used other information strategies to reach out to the community, like radio jingles, which had been produced in English, Pidgin English, and some local languages to convey specific messages to the community, and relayed on national radio network for all sectors of women all in attempt to empower them.

### **Participant's Perception of WLDC**

Having heard from the leaders, officers, and members of WLDC, regarding its goals, vision, policies, programs and its perception of the programs participants, I thought it was appropriate that I hear from the program participants themselves to address the issue of validity of the Center's claim through triangulation. I sought the participants view of WLDC and the programs the Center offered to see if they perceive WLDC activities as that promoting and contributing to a culture of peace and if they have had any transformatory effect in their lives. Conscientization and empowerment have as it goals transformation. My

own observation which I will indicate as I go along formed the third aspect of the triangulation.

In general, the participant's reactions and responses to the programs organized by the WLDC were basically positive. Alhaja O, a market woman and a program participant, confirmed that the WLDC usually met the needs of the grassroots women. She talked about the Beijing issue:

*When we went to ask Madam about Beijing, we told her that everybody is talking about it but we do not know anything about it- all we know is that the rich and educated women went to Beijing. We complained that we were left out and so the Center then organized workshop to tell us what they did in Beijing and how it affects us. She even gave us the small books (pamphlets about Beijing. Since then we know that men cannot cheat us again and that Beijing is for us grassroots women too.*

One woman revealed that she enjoyed the programs and that they were not a waste of her time. Most women claimed that they were always eager to know if there were more upcoming programs. Many stressed that the programs have totally changed their orientation as confirmed by Kepo:

*I have attended many of WLDC's programs and these programs have not only had an impact in my life, they have also been of immense benefit to me.*

Kepo mentioned some personal gains. Through the programs she has had the opportunity to be made a resource person by some other organizations she had met through the WLDC's programs. She also met some people through whom she has had windows of opportunity opened.

Asked if she felt different about herself and about the world around her after attending these programs, Kemi's response was typical of the responses of some of the other participants. The contents of the programs, she said, were quite enlightening. Her overall benefits were summed up thus:

*These programs have been very good in sensitizing me to a greater interest in women's issues. They have opened me up academically. They have changed my orientation and they have in fact fired a new ambition in me. The one in Owerri made a significant impact on me. It was a trainers workshop which brought women trainees from seven states in the Eastern part of Nigeria together to look at the issue of violence against women and governance. We had the opportunity to discuss and formulate our own approaches and identify our own individual problem in our community. That kind of program goes a long way, plus it gave me opportunity to know that area of Nigeria and meet women from other parts of the country.*



Bola, a program participant from another organization, recounted her own experience. She had her own preferences in some of the programs. She described:

*The one I really love most are the workshops that were held in various communities on the simplified version of Beijing Platform of Action. I was able to understand what Beijing was all about. I used to think that Beijing was for certain classes of women. Now I know it is for me too.*

Alhaja M, a program participant from a grassroots context, gave a sense of how the WLDC was able to reach out to women like her:

*The way the issues were explained gave us hope that we women at the grassroots level were not forgotten. We had the opportunity to discuss the concerns and give our own opinion of the problems and we also gave our solution as to how to tackle the issues in our own way, in our own community. I liked the fact that we could speak in Yoruba and in pidgin English if we chose to and Madam or the program officer translated. I think that type of workshop is most beneficial.*

Tayo, another participant, said she had a very low knowledge of gender issues and had been socialized into believing the subservient roles of women. This changed once she began attending the WLDC programs.

*I have always known that there are things women can do well apart from house keeping, but I never know how to say such things or who to say them to. All I know is that we women are doing a lot, for our children, husbands, and country. Whenever we go to these workshops we learn a lot because before as a market woman all I think about is my business - to buy, to sell, to gain; apart from how to keep my home. Since I started going to these forums, I have gained a lot. There are things I know now that I did not know before and when we go to these workshops we all share what we know. Together we express our views, give ourselves advice, and tell ourselves how to improve ourselves.*

Feko, a resource person as well as a program participant, claimed that the programs were quite diversified and of interest to different sectors of women. Although she was a facilitator, some other programs appealed to her so she registered and sat in class as a trainee. I believe this was a very good testimony to the activities at WLDC. It was obvious that needs were being met and lives were being changed.

Another participant, Mope, claimed that some personal secondary needs of hers were met. Through the programs she had come to a new level of awareness about her children's education. As she explained:

*We learn how to help our children. I have learnt that if you have many children some may have the brain, the ability to go for higher education but some may not. You don't need to force them. They can go to technology*

*school, or learn a small trade, or be an apprentice. It is not only in the university that children can learn. Children need knowledge, which will be useful in future, not certificates that cannot be used. We are now encouraging our girls to have skills that can fetch them an income. It is when they have money of their own that the men cannot cheat them or suppress them. They do not need to go to university to set up a small business of their own. I learnt all these by going to the WLDC women's workshops. Before, I used to force my children to do everything.*

In the context of the Nigerian educational system where Dore's (1976) notion of the diploma disease is most pertinent, this perception is significant. Usually most parents dream for their children to have an array of certificates even when there is a high percentage of educated unemployed. They usually feel that the certificate alone is already an achievement and will not even encourage vocational training.

Of all the participants that I interviewed, I think the one who shared the most significant experience of transformation was Alhaja M, an official of the Market Women Associations. She has been an active participant of the gender training programs at the WLDC and confirmed that some of the workshops have had a strong impact on her. She has made friends with people outside the market women's' normal areas of operation. She reiterated the deep awareness she had gone through when issues about discrimination and patriarchy were discussed. She however, lent her voice to the view that the men should be included in such discourse. Men needed to hear the views of women about the issues. It is only when men listen and "hear" that changes can be effected. She believed that discussions should be also about men and not only about women. She added that the training in the WLDC had filled some gaps in her life. As a trader she had learnt trading skills from her mother but the Center has opened her to other areas and issues which she believed had helped her in her growth.

*As for business, even with its ups and downs I think I am doing fine. What I think I have missed in life I am making up not. I did not have the opportunity of a higher education but what I am learning at the Center is good for me.*

In the past, Alhaja M had been involved in women's activities, in the Mosque, in her neighborhood, and even in the market without relating these activities to gender issues. Since she became involved with the Center, confidence in herself has built up. She has developed strong leadership skills especially after she attended the WLDC's *Leadership Training Program* in Owerri. She revealed that she was being consulted on most issues by her colleagues, and even by the Lagos State Government as an official of the Market Association. She recounted her ability and confidence to mobilize and mediate in conflicts.

For example, when government had a major conflict with the university lecturers and students, the government sent troops to the campus. The market women felt concerned because they all had children in the universities So they sent a delegation to the government to recall the troops and talk the problem over. She claimed that the ability and courage to take such initiatives have come from the training at the WLDC. She has this to say:

*I was made the General Secretary of the Market Women Organization and also I am the Head of the Textile dealers because my colleagues see in me the ability to organize. I find that I am able to be an effective leader. I act promptly anytime there is an emergency. Above all, the men respect us for what we are able to do*

She added she had also benefited immensely from the workshop on *Surviving Violence against Women*. There were many women in the market who were victims of violence and she was able to help them. She is now able to tell the women what to do about violence in their lives. Her perception of violence was limited to domestic violence because that was the focus of the training from the training manual. However the program included training on conflict resolution. She believed she has since developed conflict resolution skills, and better interpersonal skills. The workshop on *Women and Child Abuse* has brought new perspectives to her as a mother. The one on *Poverty Alleviation* which had the largest turn out had shown her more clearly the implications of poverty in the lives of women. The workshop on *Democratization* has opened her eyes to the political situation in Nigeria and what women could and should do. But her greatest achievement is that she has become skilled in mediation and in conflict resolution. As she puts it:

*Any time in our market, that there is a quarrel or dispute among the traders and some other people and they have tried to settle or resolve the problem for them and the people are still quarreling and not responding they will come and call me. When I get there and I will mediate and I will do all that Madam and the other people taught us at Owerri. After that they will stop quarreling . They know that I will speak the truth and I will not take sides with anyone of them. By this they respect me.*

From the training she has received, she was able to demonstrate knowledge and actual participation in informal conflict management processes. She has also become a more effective woman leader in her community, in her market place, and even in her home, as a mother and wife. She assured me that all the time spent in training had not been wasted. She also attended the *Train-the-Trainers program*. She therefore used every opportunity, even at the market association's meetings, to impart to the market women, things she has been taught at the programs thus putting into motion the multiplier's effect. She recounted:

*The training I have received is what I am passing on to other women. Every Thursday we have a general meeting in the market after talking about market problems, I teach them what they taught me in the training program. I know I am a good trainer because of what they tell me after ward. They know I received a certificate for the training. I am teaching them some thing useful. The former Secretary General did not have the opportunity that I have. More women now come to the meetings because they want to hear what I will tell them. We are thankful to WLDC for helping us this way.*

Alhaja M claimed that she has been encouraging more women to participate in the training programs of the WLDC so they too could be transformed. She believed there was then a stronger bond of sisterhood among women in the market. Even the rivalry and envy that used to prevail among women who sold identical items seemed to have been greatly reduced.

Lewin (1987) has said that if training is not designed specifically for the group to be trained, there is no guarantee that it will work. From the testimony of Alhaja M, the Center's training program was clearly transformative. It was an exercise in social empowerment which enabled the participants to work with confidence and self esteem (Sharp 1989). Alhaja's story illustrated how the WLDC was achieving its goal of empowerment.

Although numerous benefits were described by the six program participants I interviewed, they also expressed some concerns about the training programs at the WLDC. For example, they felt that some of the programs were of rather short duration (e.g., three days). Their preference was for programs of not less than a week. In fact, the workshop on poverty alleviation was a one-day workshop and the participants complained that the learning period was too short. As Alhaja M. pointed out:

*We wish Madam would extend the time of some of the programs. We liked the one on Poverty Alleviation. Not only were we learning, we were pleased that we were divided into groups and we were given opportunities to speak our minds. But it became rushed, we could not say all we wanted to say and ask all the questions that we wanted to ask. Poverty is a very important concern for us. In my group we could not discuss all that we have planned to bring up*

From my own observation, a one-day workshop for about 80 women was insufficient. I talked to the Director about the duration of the workshops. I observed that the group discussions were very active but the women did not have enough time to share their group's discussions when everyone reconvened. The Center's explanation for the short duration was the prevalent fuel shortage in the country, and government's reaction to the program. From a culture of peace perspective, issues of poverty underpin the vital

dimension of structural violence, and hence strategies need to be found to provide sufficient time for conscientization on the root causes of poverty and empowerment to overcome structural violence.

Another participant talked about the frequency of the programs. Sade felt that the programs were always too far apart. She said that some participants were ready to come for training even every week. Understandably, the WLDC indicated that funding was a major problem, which will be looked at later. The director also clarified that different programs served different groups and members of the community. Hence they were quite spread out which meant that some groups could not be served often enough.

One participant wished that there were follow up workshops to some of the programs. She explained that one program, at times, was not enough to clarify all the issues and learn all that was needed to be learnt. The WLDC staff, however, suggested that the women now know a lot more than they ever did albeit they would appreciate knowing more. Rim, one participant, summed it up as follows:

*Now I can talk about democratic government, about leadership qualities, about violence against women, about women's rights, about poverty alleviation and so on. I wish more women in my community could come for the programs.*

Another participant, Alhaja, a market woman, would like the Center to establish a literacy program in the market. Her concern was for the uneducated ones among them. She actually added that she was a victim of discrimination. When money became critical in her family, she was kept behind for her brothers to go to school.

*I'm from a polygamous family. My father had three wives and sixteen children. Although I am the first child of my mother, only the boys were sent to school, the rest of us had to help in the trading business.*

Rim revealed that she has always felt left out of school. She said that she was prepared to come for a six to nine months or even one-year program to improve her reading, writing and calculating skills. This coming to some awareness, as Reardon (1998) said about the transformational purpose of peace education, is a process of the awakening of the poor to the roots of their poverty and the structural violence in their lives. Apathy and hopelessness are replaced by self-confidence and hope.

The Center regretted that it could not have literacy programs for market women. It was capital intensive and too prolonged. Moreover, funders did not fund literacy programs because they considered this to be a government responsibility. The director reminded me

that there was an Adult Literacy Commission in the country charged with that responsibility.

From a culture of peace perspective, literacy skills are critical in moving marginalized people to transform to a higher level of awareness. Freire's strategies of emancipation and empowerment focused on the development of a critical consciousness and skills through literacy. It is therefore important for WLDC to find a way for this form of empowerment, if it is serious about helping the women.

From my view, the Center addressed itself more to the strategic needs of women than to their practical needs, such as issues of health and income generation. For example, one of the participants also expressed a desire for some health-based programs. She referred to the scare about AIDS and said that many women are quite ignorant about the disease and would like to know more about it. Feyi explained:

*I appreciate the programs that I have attended at WLDC but I wish they would have a health-based program, like something on AIDS. We all hear so much about it but we know very little. I want to be able to teach young people about it. We want to be able to know about how to prevent AIDS, how not to get ourselves involved, even as married women how to train our children and all like that.*

When I mentioned this to the directors at the WLDC, I was told that the Center was about to implement health related programs because it had just hired a consultant who is a medical practitioner.

Most of the participants responses in spite of the concerns mentioned by the women and from my own observation, collaborate the fact that WLDC development activities were contributing to a culture of peace in Nigeria. I can say that WLDC claim's were not exaggerated. The Center was actually empowering and effecting transformation in the lives of the women, therefore achieving its goals, vision which are not only intrinsically peaceful but also contribute to the peace of the society. If the women's needs were being met they are very likely to experience personal peace which contributes to societal peace in an interrelatedness.

### **Training Strategies at the WLDC**

The WLDC's training strategies is twofold. The first one was that programs were initiated based on the identified needs in the community. On how these were achieved Limbo elucidated:

*The people's needs are our priority. Their needs determine our programs. We, first of all, make a presence in a selected area where we think there are*

*urgent needs and problems. Then we sensitize the people and see how receptive they are to working with us on a program.*

However, in addition to the identified concerns and needs by members and participants, Limbo said that the Center has adapted the 12 critical areas of concern identified by the Beijing Declaration as interests and needs of women. Some of the WLDC's programs have been predicated on these areas, namely poverty, education, health care, violence against women, effects of armed conflicts, economic structures and policies, sharing of power, advancement of women, women's human rights, women and the media, women and environment, and the girl child issue.

Limbo described the WLDC's specific action in this area. She said:

*We had the program "Democratizing the Gains of Beijing" for the grassroots women. The Center produced a document, a simplified version of the Declaration and the Platform for Action. The document contains graphic illustration of these twelve areas of concern. We took these documents to our identified grassroots communities where we sensitized them to these issues and told them to reprioritize their own most critical and relevant area of concerns and start working on them.*

Limbo further explained that although "The Platform for Action" focused on local and global problems, each local community was encouraged to work on the area that was most relevant. For instance the issue of armed conflict was not relevant to any community in Nigeria, at least not then, she said. But poverty alleviation, education of the girl child, physical violence against women, and women and leadership were very high areas of concerns for most communities in Nigeria. Limbo concluded that after the awareness raising programs, some community leaders were then trained as trainers so they could return to their communities to replicate the programs, basically using the produced manual for uniformity but adapting them to suit the specific local needs and circumstances.

The second strategy was the involvement, which is participation and collaboration of all concerned throughout the process of the entire program. Kaz explained:

*We involve our program participants at the onset of a program design. We encourage suggestions from them, these we use to design the programs based on the indicated needs. After the program, we use the participants' feedback to plan future programs. At times, the reaction of participants form the basis of subsequent proposal to the donor since most of our programs are donor driven.*

Rims, another officer at the Center, verified:

*We do the participating line. We learn from our interaction with our communities. Our activities are dictated by the desires of our communities.*

*Through our interaction with our communities we are able to realize our goals and objectives which are usually in alignment with those of our communities.*

Wignaraja (1984) has argued, if you place trust in people they can become responsible for their thought and action. When people feel they have the freedom to think, act and relate to each other, they are enabled to take on a lot of responsibility.

### **Participation at WLDC**

Participation was a big word at WLDC. Participation is one of the seven themes surrounding women and development that have emerged (Rathgeber 1990). For women in development organizations participation has implied the involvement of all concerned. Women have tried to be active participants and not as mere passive beneficiaries. The traditions of men deciding for women have not sufficed since this is the very system which has caused perpetuation of gender inequality and resulted in development interventions which have served the interests of men to the detriment of women (UNICEF 1994)

Participation is the most basic level of community involvement in decision making. WLDC believed that participation would lead to democratization, one of the values it was promoting. WLDC from my findings involved all stakeholders, participants, recipients of programs, network organizations in identifying problems, interests and services. The target communities themselves were allowed to identify the problems which stand in their way of progress and they were encouraged to unitedly and collaboratorily look for ways to overcome them. This research has proved that WLDC has strategized in a participatory way for the involvement of all concerned in addressing issues affecting them.

WLDC's adoption of the gender and development (GAD) paradigm contributed immensely and facilitated this principle of participation. GAD recognizes and stresses the need for women to organize themselves for effective participation (Moser 1993). The shift from a women in development (WID) to a gender and development (GAD) paradigm by WLDC was explained by Koyo

*We had to change our WID approach based on the rationale that development processes would be much better if women were fully incorporated into them. We should no longer focus on women in isolation promoting measures such as access to credit and employment by which women can be better integrated into the development process, to continue to do that will be to ignore the real problem which is women's subordinate status to men. Instead we changed to the GAD approach with a focus on (changing) gender relations.*



Kaz added to this view when she said:

*WID is more about women and welfare issues. We see the issues as bigger than just development. Gender and development is a way of trying to put the two together. Gender speaks about women but it also speaks about the way the society relates to women. As women understand better they are able to conceptualize and articulate their issues. Gender equality helps us to focus on those things that make women what they are and mean what they are. These are societal constructions. It is not about women and development alone, it is about the development of the whole society. We are also talking about how women see themselves as not equal to men in terms of biological differences and in terms of ethnic issues, because those issues also have different connotation for men and women.*

This position was was corroborated by Limbo's remarks who said:

*We have named our newsletter Gender Views so we can shift our focus from women 's problems to where they do not have access to education, where they are confined either to the homes or to the farms, their limited participation in public life and so on to the fact that gender issue is a social construct. So we no longer look at women in isolation but at them in relations to men to determine what roles these men have to play in the situation that women are in.*

Women at WLDC recognized that to do this there has to be collaboration and participation. The long term goals of GAD is to empower women through collective action and to encourage women to challenge gender ideologies and institutions that subordinate women (Parpart 1995).

The WLDC's primary claim was that programs were initiated based on the identified needs in the community. Olu, one of the consultants at the Center, emphasized that the WLDC never planned its programs at the expense of the participants:

*In the design of our training programs, we have the participatory approach, where we try to meet the peoples need because this ensures a good impact at the end of the program. We usually ask for people's need and feed them into the next program or workshop, We also get input from outsiders not just from the training workshops. We get feedback from people and this is the main determinant of our programs.*

In short, the Center allowed these needs to emanate from the community by allowing the participants to identify and vocalize these needs. This was to create the necessary and enabling training environment for its participants. WLDC said it believed in inclusiveness, involving participants in its whole training process. Limbo, the project officer, explained the first stage of inclusivity was to do a need assessment, which formed the basis for planning.

*The WLDC does a need assessment. When the participants for a program have been determined, a draft agenda and an initial sample of the format is drawn up and sent to the organization for review and input, we then call for a meeting with them before we proceed with the program.*

This procedure provides the participants an opportunity to lend a voice to the program. Tade, an executive, added that the Center never assumed nor ever claimed to know the participants' specific needs. The Center recognized the fact that different people have different strategic and practical needs and they all have different ways of naming them. So opportunities were always provided for participants to name their needs themselves. As Tade clarified:

*We give our participants opportunity to speak their minds both before and during our programs. We recognize that the needs of you and I may be different from the need of someone who has not seen the four walls of a university or any higher institution, or of any school for that matter. People's different state in life determines their needs.*

Rims, another officer at the Center, claimed that the Center was aware that collaboration with its participants was crucial to its operations and activities. She verified:

*We do the participating line. We learn from our interaction with our communities. Our activities are dictated by the desires of our communities. Through our interaction with our communities we are able to realize our goals and objectives which are usually in alignment with those of our communities.*

Funkie recalled how the Center involved the market women in a specific program and how this formed the basic component of a program. She recalled:

*We went to the market and while we saw the problems, we did not design a project and take it there. We asked in what ways they would want us to help. We noticed that many children were brought to the market place, and we saw the environmental problems. But we left them to identify the most critical problem. We gave some suggestions and they eventually settled for a first aid program since many of their children were prone to accidents. They rejected refuse collection saying the amount generated in the market was too much and they might not be able to sustain the program. In short we addressed their felt need. They saw it as a need and concluded it will be useful to them and they opted for it. The final implication was that the participants chose the program they wanted.*

From the point of view of a culture of peace, participation by participants in the program design ensures the rights of stakeholders. Eventual conflict, arguments and at times withdrawal by some participants because of some points of disagreement are also prevented (Moser, 1993). The WLDC ensured the right of every participant to speak and be listened

to by hearing from them before designing programs. As earlier discussed, this process is also consistent with dialogue, one of the key pedagogical principles of peace education. This was an appropriate method that is conscientizing as the marginalized groups could come to some awareness about their situation and are empowered to inform themselves and be involved in decision making with a view to enhance women's empowerment (Rathgeber 1990)

Limbo explained how the WLDC effected this principle of participation and community involvement around a specific problem - the widowhood problem.

*As a sort of baseline study, we conducted interviews with women about the widowhood problem. We spoke to various categories of women, women in organizations, victims of this repressive practice, and other opinion leaders in the society. Most of the women we spoke to have resigned themselves to the situation. They were complacent, saying it was a cultural issue and there was nothing anyone could do about it. The victims were women from all classes and levels, educated and not so educated; women who have found themselves thrown out of their matrimonial homes after the death of their spouses and all their joint property carted away by the man's relatives.*

At this stage the WLDC decided that the problem was that of sensitization and emancipation. The Center was aware that there was a prevalent lack of self-esteem among the women, which had probably been eroded by the trauma of the events. The Center then went through various stages to address this problem. One of the directors described the process thus:

*From our discussions with the women we felt that a program that will comprise of issues about women rights coupled with some self esteem and assertive training program with some lobbying strategies will be beneficial to them. We examined the women's' beliefs with them, to see how much they have been socialized into accepting them. Then we talked about how the situation can be improved. When we ultimately got funding for the program we involved women organizations in the vicinity and jointly did the program on Women's Rights: Assertive Training and Lobbying Skills.*

As a result of all these training, one of the women challenged the denial of her right to her husband's inheritance and won the landmark case.

### ***Small groups for effective Participation***

Tade explained that the WLDC recognized the fact that training was not teaching, nor was it just lecturing. The Center therefore encouraged discussions and small group formations in its training sessions for effective participation.

*Our training sessions reflect our participatory principles whose objective is to expose the participants to an open democratic participatory experience so that this becomes a natural foundation for their subsequent work among their people at their own local level.*

Limbo recounted a specific experience at one of the workshops:

*At the Tejuoso workshop, we put people in groups so that they can have a say. They discussed the issues and came out with their findings. We allowed each group to give a report or an account of its findings. It was very participatory. We do not impose at the center. At other times, we invite some women, we give them the issues, we sensitize them, and we are prepared to hear from them. That is a vital principle, we hearing from them.*

Small groups promote the broadest possible participation (Burkey, 1994) with the trainers or facilitators acting as the external stimulus. From my own observation at the workshop on *Poverty Alleviation*, the participants displayed great interest and an acute sense of involvement. They were given the opportunity to express themselves in whatever language they were comfortable with. Breaking them into smaller groups provided opportunity to reach out and learn from each other. When the entire group reconvened each group leader presented a summary of what had transpired in the smaller groups. This process gave everyone the opportunity to listen to each other's views on the issues. Also, as Rimi observed, group discussions provided the occasions for participants to know each other. She offered:

*I enjoyed the group discussions. I learnt a lot. We all had opportunity to speak our minds. It was also good because I was able to know more the other participants. We did not sit like in the classroom. We sat in a circle facing each other. It was a very friendly atmosphere*

This is what Kidd (1988) has called a conducive learning social environment for adults, one of the factors that promote the learning process. The Center incorporated the principles of adult education, the principles of andragogy into its programs, which were essentially participatory and therefore peaceful. These principles took into consideration the women's interests, their learning preferences, and the environment that was suitable for them. The training started with what the participants already knew and what they wanted to know, respecting the many abilities the women brought into the training and encouraging questions, discussion and participation (Knowles, 1973; Kidd, 1973; Turk, 1992). The Center shifted away from banking education that Freirean educators have complained about. The Center's method avoided imposing ideas on the women or allowing them to consume information where the students were the depositories and the teacher was the

depositor (Burkey, 1994). From a culture of peace perspective, group discussions help enhance interpersonal relationship, social integration and opportunity to mix with other people not only to express oneself and have a sense of belonging but also as a way of reducing tension (Winder, 1988).

### ***Trainers Participation in Program Design***

Another level of participation at the WLDC was the inclusion of its trainers /facilitators in its planning and training strategy. Tade clarifies the Center's perspective of its trainers:

*Just as we recognized that training is not teaching nor lecturing, we recognize that our trainers are not teachers and so we take care in selecting our facilitators. We select professionals and competent people in the field who have a knowledge of gender issues and the capacity to train because the quality of the trainers is a crucial determinant of successful training.*

Limbo also confirmed that the Center involved its trainers/facilitators in its planning/training strategy. They were made to feel part of the Center whether as staff, volunteers, or members. Limbo claimed the trainers were always involved right from the conceptualization stage of any program.

*We do not just hand down to our facilitators the training contents. We make them feel part of us. We respond to their suggestions and we allow them to initiate and propose programs. They are free to attend our Monday meetings. So they are quite involved in the processes. Although we have a planning committee, our facilitators and consultants are invited from the start to be part of the planning, designing and implementing the programs. We want to avoid a feedback in our evaluation that the programs are irrelevant to the needs of the people or have consultants telling us we should have done it one way or the other. We also try to get a member of our funding agencies at the meetings to eliminate undue criticisms.*

This was confirmed by Bisay, one of the trainers who appreciated the fact although she was not an executive of the organization but just a member and a facilitator hired from time to time, she had always been made to feel a very strong part of the Center especially in the design of programs. She affirmed:

*I have a very good working relationship with the Center. I have proposed programs to the Center, which had been collaboratively developed by the Center and myself. At other times I have been invited and my opinion and input sought on some programs whether or not I am specifically involved in the training. I have worked extensively with the Center. In addition to being a trainer I was involved in the development of the manual used for*

*leadership training. I was also involved in some of the translation of the Platform of Action from Beijing.*

Feko, another facilitator and also a member of the organization, clarified as follows:

*I am one of the resource persons but at the same time I help with the planning and design of some of the programs ... I know that not all consultants are involved with the planning. Some just come to execute the already prepared programs. But by and large there is usually a lot of input from those of us who come from outside the Center. The Center does not just present us with programs and tell us to facilitate. By the time any program is ready for execution I am very familiar with all the issues. I am usually made to feel part of the programs right from the beginning, that makes me feel comfortable facilitating any program.*

Shade another facilitator but not a member of the WLDC offered:

*Although I am not a member of the organization nor a member of the Board, I am only a facilitator and at times I do rapporteur work for the Center at its Conferences, I am always invited to participate in the designing of programs, or to participate in the brainstorming when a big conference is being planned. Everyone is given an opportunity to contribute to decision making here especially as far as the programs are concerned.*

Fola likewise, explained:

*Our Monday weekly meetings are open to all. It is at these meetings that we put in place strategies on how to run the Center's training programs. It is at these meetings we discuss what we have done in the past, we assess ourselves to determine if we have been able to meet a set goal, or if we are still lagging behind and we determine where we need to put in more effort. We all contribute, we all participate.*

The WLDC seemed to recognize that trainers are change agents (Burkey, 1993). To obtain maximum benefits from them the Center always ensured participation and involvement of trainers in its programs prior to their work. They were always involved in the selection of participants in deciding the most appropriate size of groups for training, the duration, location, and content of the program. This involvement and inclusiveness eliminated conflicts that could arise from the facilitators feeling left out. This is recognition of individual worth, one of the cornerstones of peaceful relationships.

### ***Programs and Language of Participation***

Another area of inclusivity by the Center was in the choice of language. I noticed that the Center has permitted use of different languages for its programs depending on the participants' choice. For some groups of women, training was always conducted in

English. In other places and circumstances it has been accompanied with translation into the local language. When I indicated my observation to Limbo, a staff of the Center, she clarified that at other times the Center had even conducted seminars solely in a local language. An example was when the Platform of Action and Twelve Areas of Concern were taken to the grassroots communities in all nooks and corners of the country.

This concurs with Burkey's (1993) suggestion that training programs should always be held in the language(s) in which participants feel most comfortable with, otherwise their confidence, understanding and participation will be greatly lessened. WLDC respected the rights of its participants to effective communication by not insisting on the official language which is English, as the only mode of communication at the workshops. Instead it allowed these various languages which helped to promote a more peaceful learning environment.

### ***Community Participation in Programs***

It seemed the WLDC had not allowed time, space and distance to deter it from establishing relationships with its outside communities, that is communities beyond its immediate environs. It has gone to Owerri in the eastern parts of Nigeria, reaching out to the Igbo speaking communities in six different states. It also served the northern region of Jos to include another array of ethnic communities. It had immediate access to the population in the Western part of the country, but above all the Center was located in Lagos a cosmopolitan city with a conglomeration of all the tribes. Limbo described the process:

*We are able to reach out to all ethnic groups in Nigeria. The large cities are usually cosmopolitan and we have all the tribes represented. This gives us the satisfaction that we are reaching out to all segments of the Nigerian populace. We tailor our programs to their needs. Together we draw up the line of action. The programs are satisfying to them because they look as their programs.*

The WLDC has been attentive to issues of intercultural and interethnic diversity in the selection of its participants, and also in ensuring the involvement of a wide array of most ethnic groups in Nigeria. The WLDC has thus promoted cultural solidarity among women from a culture of peace perspective.

In another level of community participation, the Center welcomed other organizations and groups in the community to propose programs. Olu, a member of staff, elucidated:

*If a program is proposed by another organization, we consider and examine it to see if it is in line with the goals and aspirations of this office and then*

*we consider if it is within our capacity, how we can manage the time frame for that year and whether there is funding. We look and study it to see how it can be executed, if it is within our capacity we run it for the target community.*

Still another level of community participation was to take the programs to the communities. The Center's community outreach involved, at times, taking its programs to the community rather than waiting for the community to come to it. One such effort was the program offered to girls at the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA). In the words of Bisoy who was part of that program:

*We went to meet the girls at the YWCA center where we had an opportunity to have a workshop with them on sexual malpractice in the society. The program was mainly to enlighten the young women to prevention of unwanted pregnancies and safe sex practices and of course AIDS prevention. The program involved young girls, teenage women, young women and married women of up to the age of 25.*

Another community consideration was the flexibility regarding locations and sites of programs. Training programs were usually held at the Center. However, some of the programs have been held, at times, in other places to provide easier accessibility for participants. Thus programs have been held in hotels and at times in rural sites just to be near the people. The choice of location has always been dictated by the desire to provide opportunity for more community participation.

The Center involvement with the community was not limited to meeting perceived needs. The Center had tried to demonstrate sensitivity to topical issues and so at times it had initiated programs based on themes. This approach helped to heighten the interest of women in participating in the workshops. As Olu explained:

*We could identify a theme like we did in 1994 when we had a conference on African Women and Governance. We knew that the issue of good governance was on everybody's mind and lips so we decided to have a conference to determine what really good governance meant to the people and what can be done to realize it. At the end of the conference, certain needs evolved and we followed them up and planned workshops to meet those specific needs*

Limbo claimed some of the workshops that evolved were those on political literacy in different locations in the country. The women were taught lobbying skills so they learnt to exert pressure on government or other agencies to meet their demands. The goal was to help put women in positions where they can participate in and influence policy and decision



making processes to ensure good governance, which the Center believed a key aspect of women's empowerment.

In addition to all these, the Center also engaged in some cases of direct intervention in the private lives of its women participants, when their rights were being violated, be it in their place of work or in the community at large. In short it was involved in advocacy work. As Tade explained:

*The center is quite accessible to women from all walks of life where they can come and discuss current issues relevant to their lives. The Center's central location is of immense help, women can come and discuss various problems that they think the Center should help look into. Many of our participants know about these service and so they come with issues of violations of their rights and privileges at times at their work place or by local government officials who are notorious for harassing people who are going about their legitimate business. Or by the law enforcement agency or at times in domestic settings. We take on these cases and look into them on our free legal aid program.*

The Center claimed that through its awareness raising programs on women's rights, most of their participants and at times other women in the society have come forward to seek intervention on very many issues such as: succession to parents property; domestic violence; custody issues in divorce at the customary courts; bail granting for women and standing surety in bail by women; problems with local governments over stalls allocation and ground rent in the markets; collection of tax or tolls from buyers who have come to patronize the market women which they consider unfair because they were already paying the right dues to the local government. The Center also looked at women's access to information that help them build their independence; women and taxation where women were not getting any benefit out of taxation; women and housing where landlords threw single women on the streets; women and land problems where government allocated land but mainly to men. If a woman got married land was allocated to the man because he was assumed to be the head of the family. Women have had problems getting access to land for agriculture purposes. Of the role of the Center in addressing all these problems, Tade described:

*We teach women how to cope with all situations. The Center does not stop there, at times we go further to do something about them. We look at all these issues and challenge the various administrative or government bodies involved to start looking at them from a different point of view. We tell the particular agency involved to look at these problems from a woman's point of view and let them see where women suffer mostly and we try to let them see what can be done about those grievous situations and how to rectify them to make life more bearable for women.*

Likewise, Kaz, a top official of the Center noted:

*With our participants we have not limited our contacts with them to just training them or giving them certain skills, there were times when we had actually intervened in issues of their personal lives. There had been times when they just needed someone to speak on their behalf to high level officials like the military governor or the Commissioner. In such cases we have acted as mediators.*

Moser (1993) and Burkey (1993) referred to all these various levels of community participation as “outside involvement,” which they claimed had its advantages. For the WLDC, outside involvement with the community was intense. The WLDC acted as an advocacy organization taking its programs to the grassroots. Collaboration was an obvious part of the WLDC’s involvement in the community. It has recruited facilitators from the community which, according to Burkey (1993), usually increased the opportunity for other people to come in with fresh ideas about the issues at hand. Involving people who were likely to be affected by the Center’s operation had also increased the level of acceptance to the issues being promoted. The WLDC had observed Steers (1991) advice that organizations cannot exist in a vacuum. They must interact with the outside world to have any effective influence.

#### ***Participatory Evaluation at WLDC***

The WLDC’s formal and informal evaluation formed part of its participatory policy. Olu explained. At the WLDC, evaluation provided an insight into the factors that contribute to programs’ success or failure. Programs were evaluated against their original objectives. Evaluation ensured that the next program eliminated or prevented the pitfalls in the just concluded program (Moser, 1993). The WLDC programs go through three phases of evaluation. The first assessment is done by the participants, who are the recipients of the program. The second phase is done by the facilitators and staff involved in the program. This included assessments of participants’ performance, which is essentially an in-house evaluation. The third is by the funders who usually send an assessor to all their programs. Tade, one of the directors, commenting on the importance of evaluation said:

*We are not afraid of evaluation. We see it as a weapon and a viable process that leads to improvement. Our evaluation covers an array of issues like input of trainers, their materials, methods, and impact of training on participants. We send out evaluation forms after each of our programs. We get the participants to fill them in. We collect the forms and analyze them. The information received help us to plan for the next program. At times we receive informal feedback. At times we get letters of commendation. At times we receive letters requesting us to give an enlightenment program*

*based on our performance at another program. These letters usually come from very many different organizations. These help us keep a link with our participants and the different groups. We also include them on the mailing list of our newsletter Gender Views.*

The WLDC, at the end of each program, challenged the participants into reflecting about what they would do with the knowledge gained. As Eyo elaborated:

*Usually at the end of each program we ask the participants what they will do and their strategies for moving on. We also ask them what they will do as individuals and as groups to spread what they have learnt, to ensure that they understand the principles that have been imparted to them. This way they are motivated into doing something as a follow up to the program. Most of the participants see this as a natural follow up to their program that they must do something with the knowledge they have gained. This helps to sustain the awareness and ensure that the message is being passed on. We also see our work in terms of mobilizing individuals and groups to action in a rippling effect*

The WLDC's three-dimensional evaluation tried to optimize trustworthiness and rendered the evaluation of any program more credible and fair (Moser, 1993). This allowed the Center room to revise policies and procedures in order to eliminate any hindrances to greater success and effectiveness (Moser, 1993). Evaluation was both formal and informal at WLDC. Formal evaluation used prepared forms and informal evaluation was done at the Monday's administrative meetings and other informal forums.

The Center claimed interest in evaluating the long-term impact of its programs on the community. As Limbo explained:

*Assessing the immediate impact is easy. But we also want to know the long-term impact of some of our programs. we revisit an issue after a year or two to assess the progress and the development that has taken place. For instance the Center is planning to revisit the Women's Rights issue. This is to measure the current status of women's rights, two years after the last research and publication. It is also necessary to know how many more people have become more aware of women's rights. We have therefore started to seek for responses to the critical questions concerning human rights and have started to assess the progress made in that sector, so as to determine the next line of action.*

Evaluation was seen by the WLDC as part of its implementation process, which gave the Center the opportunity to fulfill its participatory policy. The WLDC claimed it usually had a built-in component in all its programs to monitor the progress of the program, the participants' reactions and the facilitators' delivery. These are meant to provide essential feedback to help towards the design of the subsequent program.

I believe that the WLDC had effectively put in place a participatory policy of collaboration with participants and trainers. The Center believed that this type of involvement and participation would bring awareness and ensure success of its programs. As indicated in the Center's various level of participation, the Center vigorously pursued the policy of involving everyone connected with the program in its design planning and execution.

In sum, without actually putting the label of peace on its work, the goals, vision, and strategies of WLDC were consistent with the building of a culture of peace in Nigeria. The training in leadership and management, conflict management and conflict resolution, and women knowing their rights and being encouraged to go for them are issues consistent with a culture of peace. The Center has actually exerted significant effort in executing paragraph 255 of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies which stated that government, nongovernmental organizations, and mass media should encourage women to promote education for peace in the family, neighborhood and society.

In accordance with paragraph 276 of Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies which emphasized the participation of women in peace research, the WLDC has conducted research on women's rights, which is essentially a peace issue. The issue of women's rights is a strong focus of the Center since one of the founders, a professor of law, has spent much time working with battered women whose rights have been violated.

One could say that the Center believed that the issue of rights for women and all people for that matter was central to peace. For this reason, it has produced a manual on women's rights and run workshops and seminars giving people the tools by which peaceful relationships could be effected. Kaz, one of the directors, explained that a peaceful relationship was essential for the over all well being of society. She offered:

*When people live in harmony with each other, this affects their quality of life. If they are on good interpersonal relationship, it affects how they see each other and solve each other's problems. The level of communication will determine how they come together to ensure adequate security in their neighborhood. Everybody will share with each other all relevant information. Everyone will know what to do if there is no water or no light, because everyone will be speaking with one voice. This will minimize societal and personal conflict, which will improve societal peace. If there is no conflict or if it is restrained there will be peace.*

Similarly, Tade emphasized that:

*If people feel cheated they may respond with violence but if people are empowered and live in a peaceful environment there will be peace. If people learn how to be leaders and treat those they lead with consideration there will be peace. If you put your education and the skills you have acquired to*

*the best use there will be peace. If all people have access to resources without being controlled by a few to the disadvantage of others there will be peace. If relationships are right in the family, neighborhood, and society there will be peace, there will be cooperation and people will come to work together for the good of all.*

With this perception it was obvious that the Center is well aware of key dimensions for the building of peace in Nigeria. Its training strategies and process were not only gender and development oriented, but they were participatory, appropriate, equitable, and conscientizing.

The Center's training programs, seminars, and efforts in nonformal education for women, leadership management training, conflict management resolution have centered on empowerment. The Center believed that without the empowerment of the larger portion of the population including the women, there could be no peace in Nigerian society. These are important ingredients of peace. While operating under the gender and development (GAD) paradigm, the Center was synergistically implementing a culture of peace.

It should be noted that the WLDC does not have any strong **environment** focus in its program. The link between the environment and development was the main issue at the Earth Summit in Rio. When I asked Limbo, a member of staff, about the absence of an environmentally focussed program, she merely said, "*We do not do environment.*" This confirms Eyo's complaint about the inability of some women organizations to see the interconnectedness between all development issues. She was specifically referring to women organizations that claimed they do not do human rights, not seeing human rights as central to development. In the case of environmental issues, despite its strong orientation towards gender and development, the WLDC has clearly not moved into a gender, environment and development (GED) paradigm. This is not to imply or recommend that WLDC should now expand its limited resources to include environmental education in a substantive way. Rather, as called for by the pedagogical principle of holism, more opportunities can be sought by the WLDC to infuse ecological principles into its program and training.

### ***WLDC and Accountability***

I was very much interested in seeing the WLDC's pattern of financial management. Burkey (1993) claimed that money had always been the cause of internal struggle within organizations for power and status as this determines who get what and how much is spent. However, I think that in spite of the pressures of money the WLDC has been able to stay close to its goals and purposes and has not shifted accountability away from the

participants it strives to empower. From my very close observation and the responses from the officials at the Center, money was not likely to cause conflict in the Center. Tade claimed:

*We cannot have conflict over money here because we try to be accountable not only to ourselves, but to our members, to our funders and to our Trustees. We make adequate information available to everyone.*

In fact this was confirmed by the Women in Development officer of one of WLDC's funders that I interviewed. On the manner the WLDC managed the funds given by the Foundation, Buse, a staff of the Foundation, confirmed:

*WLDC has been judicious with money. The Center has been a prudent customer. It has been able to use very limited resources to achieve a lot to make a very big impact in whatever program they have. What ever we give them they manage. We are a bit stingy with our funding but we are reasonable. We give what we think should be enough, although some other organizations think that we are very stingy. WLDC has been able to maximize whatever we gave them.*

Smith-Sreen (1995) has said that the aid that comes from donor agencies usually has strings and even hidden agendas attached to them. Feko agreed there were times that the Center had been able to detect a hidden agenda with some funding sources. She added that the Center always knew what to do to go round it.

*There is no money that we have collected that we do not know what the agenda was for. So its either we accept the agenda and accept the money or refuse the agenda and refuse the money. Because we need the money, we accept the agenda but we try to go round it to include a bit of ours. It may look like we have accepted the agenda but there are times when the agenda is flexible enough for us to operate within it and make it useful for what we want it to be.*

Accountability at the WLDC is measured through the extent to which members and staff contribute in the decision making process, the extent to which decisions are reported to the members and the extent to which members control the decision making processes within the organization (Smith-Sreen 1995). At the Monday meetings, money was freely discussed because the accounting officer was usually there. He reported all spending and all proposed spending. The WLDC extended its participatory policy to the issue of the use of financial resources in which all staff could have input.

At the WLDC, I observed another level of accountability, which was devoted to the execution of its programs and to its participants. Smith-Sreen (1995) believes that the day to day working climate of an organization sheds light on its true structures and strategies

and processes within the organization. The WLDC claimed to have participatory structures such as holding staff meetings and including outsider members in its meetings and decision-making processes. I can conclude that these participatory structures were a reality. In addition to this, I can say that the Center has not shown evidences of repression and inequities especially in money matters. I did not notice any challenge by members about any undue or inappropriate financial benefits that accrue to the leaders of the Center or its executive, outside of the salaries that were allotted to them. There were no hints of misappropriation of funds. The WLDC goal appeared to be optimal efficiency and empowerment of its members and its participants and not benefits for its leaders. This participatory and transparency policy from a culture of peace perspective has helped minimize conflict within the organization.

Kepo fully described the structure that has been put in place even by the leaders themselves to prevent exploitation and unequal access to money. She clarified:

*There is a committee that ultimately determines how money is raised and disbursed, how much each person earns. There are two signatories to the account of the Center, a treasurer and an in-house accounting officer. All these to ensure a high level of accountability. Money is what rips apart many organizations but there has not been such a crisis here. In fact, here everyone tries to be above board like Caesar's wife. The leadership here is receptive to every member of the organization. Programs are freely and openly discussed. Since this is a relatively small organization, even the financial situation of the organization is openly disclosed and discussed at staff meeting on a weekly basis so that the staff feel like part of the management*

From my perspective, there was no evidence of internal domination over money, which could be a threat to the Center's existence or survival. Duerst-Lahti & Kelly (1995) observed that women do not generally resent being led by other women as has been widely stereotyped. What women resent is women taking advantage of other women especially when it comes to access to resources within an organization because power and status within organizational structures is most frequently determined in terms of control over resources. They also added that the most common reason for crisis within organizations is the unequal access to money, especially on the part of leaders, and the control for it. Resentment then builds up leading sometimes to organizational breakup. This was not the case at the WLDC.

As a participant observer for six months at the Center, I did not hear that money was an issue nor did I witness any argument over expenditure even at the Monday meetings. There was no struggle for money control among members. None of the respondents complained about the salaries or the wage structure of the organization. There

was no perceived or revealed exploitation and undue desire for benefits by anyone at the Center. I therefore assumed that there was equitable distribution and access to the financial resources of the Center, another factor that contributed to a culture peace at the WLDC. By recognizing and respecting the rights of all its constituents, the WLDC was reflecting a role model for building a culture of peace.

### **Women at the WLDC and Development**

WLDC was essentially established as a women development organization. This segment has a focus on the women at the WLDC and their views of development, the basis for their contributing to a culture of peace. The Women Law and Development Center or the WLDC was founded by a woman lawyer, Tade, who shared her personal concerns that gave birth to the center as follows:

*It is disheartening to see that all the work one has done has not produced much result. One knows and one is aware of women's exceptional capabilities but they are not achieving much, and one can see them working from morning to evening and earning much less than men who do not work half as much as they do. That then prompts one to wonder what one can do to help in more specific ways to help them achieve more than they seem to be achieving, in terms of using their maximum potentials and making opportunities available to them, if one can empower more women to appreciate their potentials there will be changes in the status of women generally.*

Kaz, the co-director of the Center, an economist has this to say about the establishment of the Center:

*We started in 1990 as a response to the need for this type of organization in Nigeria. This is an organization that not only gives information, and awareness raising programs but it is also involved in training women in specific skills for empowering them on their own behalf The organization was the vision of Tade and myself. We started out with our pension money.*

A lawyer and an economist, both experts in legal and development issues, started the Center and that was the basis for the name Women Law and Development Center. Limbo, another member of the organization, in reaffirming the vision behind the Center, said:

*This Center was founded by Professor Akande. I learnt it started in 1973 as a free legal aid Women Center, assisting battered women, widows and poor women to fight for their rights in court. In 1990 when women's issues and development became a big focus it converted into a full fledged women law and development center purposively to be able to do more for women.*



Obun, one of the leaders of another organization that networked with the Center acknowledged it as a development center with a focus on empowerment. Obun said:

*There are many women who are actually doing a lot to help women empowerment. I can think of Tade of WLDC. She started off by giving free legal support to abused women. She has done a lot by giving women information about their rights, constitutional rights especially. She prepares pamphlets containing information and she follows it with seminars and personal counselling. If anybody should be given an award for promoting women empowerment it is Tade.*

The women did not perceive the Center as essentially a “grassroots” women’s organization. Most development organizations usually claim to be grassroots oriented trying to meet the needs of the poor and the vulnerable (Moser, 1993). Leaders at the WLDC claimed that all categories of women are vulnerable. Olu claimed that the WLDC is an independent organization with a focus on meeting practical gender needs of all groups of women. It employed many means by which it raised consciousness of gender needs such as domestic violence, legal rights, and political struggles, which were not a peculiar need of grassroots women but of all women. According to Odia,

*We deal with women at the grassroots, we deal with women who are professionals, and we deal with women who are in between. We deal with the educated and the non-educated because we find that in our society, a lot of formal education, does not necessarily give you empowerment. We also recognize the fact that the not so educated ones also have skills and potentials that they can contribute to the benefit of the society so we work with all classes of women.*

The WLDC members claimed their involvement with various other informal and formal Women’s Associations have helped them acquire greater awareness about women and development issues. Virtually all the women I interviewed have been involved or are members of at least another informal or formal women’s organization. The women were variously members of women’s religious groups, both in churches and in the Mosques, social clubs, professional women’s organizations, women service clubs, or wives of men who belonged to clubs like Rotary or Lion Club and by that virtue they were members of the equivalent female group. Although club membership in itself does not guarantee gender awareness or gender sensitivity nor does it make all women a category of analysis as Mohanty (1997) asserted, I believe it created the atmosphere for all to claim that they were all sisters in struggle (Morgan 1984).

Some of them claimed to have had formal experience, formal education, or formal exposure to women’s issues. Also some of the women said they have received their

knowledge through personal study, from seminars, workshops, conferences both local and international and through their research work. None had a degree in Women's Studies but they were scholars of diverse background, law, education, social sciences, dentistry, mass communication, economics, business administration, accounting, and medicine. Some have had further exposure through their jobs heading women's units in other formal organizations or institutions. One of the officers' graduate studies research focused on women in the legal profession. Some have undergone non-formal training on women's issues or gender issues at workshops, conducted both locally or abroad by agencies like the British Council, UNDP, UNIFEM, African-American Institute and others. In short, the women's experiences and exposure to gender issues were diverse, albeit oriented more towards the "middle class."

Typical involvement in organizations was illustrated by Alhaja, a program participant who claimed to be a member of the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Women Association* as well as the *Market Women Association*. Kaz, one of the top executives of the Center, was a former WID officer with the United Nations Development Program, (UNDP), her other organizational affiliations included *St. Anne's Old Students Association*, the *Women Bankers of Nigeria*, *Zonta Club*, an international service organization, and *Association of African Women for Research And Development (AAWORD)* a women research organization. Kaz had just returned from Oxford University in England where she was a visiting Fellow to the Center for Cross-Cultural Research for Women, the first African woman to be so honored. Esha who has acted in both collaborative and consultative capacity and was heading another women development organization involved in research and network had a different background experience which she explained:

*When I was studying in England, I was involved in some women organizations but the issues being discussed had no relevance to the Nigerian situation. But when I went back for my doctoral studies I became involved in the Black Women's Movement... When I returned to Nigeria some colleagues and myself in the university started looking at women's problems in Nigeria, that was how we formed the first women NGO in Nigeria.*

These responses reflect March and Taqqu's (1985) claim that in a lifetime most women in developing countries would belong to at least one women's informal association. Ahrne (1994) also declared that everybody has at least two forms of affiliation, citizenship, and kinship. This is true of the women in the WLDC. They belonged to tribal groups, social organizations and various cultural groups that have helped to shape their values, attitudes, and beliefs about women (Ahrne, 1994). Tade, who had run a free legal aid center for

women before starting the WLDC said that she did not want to be a vanguard intellectual nor a leader of the masses but one who was involved in local and specific struggles.

Women in South nations have often been “homogenized” in Western feminist discourse as a group, viewed as poor, ignorant, powerless, exploited, sexually harassed, and oppressed (Mohanty, 1997). Belief in the capacity of their knowledge and expertise has been undermined (de Boef, 1993) and they have often been characterized as peoples who needed to be offered non-formal education and training to assist them to realize their own potential (Parpart, 1995). The backgrounds of the WLDC staff and members challenge the “homogenization” of South women that analysts like Mohanty have critiqued. Alternative development have evolved from the recognition of the need to move beyond modernization, to adopt an approach to development that pays more attention to the different voices and local knowledge in the South countries (Visvanathan, 1997).

The women in WLDC, may not be big international names like Nobel Peace winner Rigoberta Menchu or well acclaimed development practitioner like Wathai Wangari, but they had varied and expert background which they had brought in to their work. The personnel and officers that worked in the organization were of a very high caliber, so were the women in the other organizations that networked with it. Their qualification and credentials ranged from retired law professors to retired physicians, with different qualifications and professions in between. One of the officers and resource persons in the Center said of her qualification:

*I have a first degree in Philosophy and a Masters degree in International Law and Diplomacy.*

Another one said

*I have a first degree in English and Education, Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language and another Master's degree in Women's studies from University of Blackford England.*

Not all of them had such high credentials, that did not make those with less qualification less valuable to the Center. One of the participants said of herself:

*I went to elementary school and later to secondary school and passed out after six years with High School Certificate.*

From the various responses I got, some of the women worked full time in the Center, some worked part time, while some were volunteers. The women within the Center ranged from young to middle aged, from all ethnic, religious, variety of life styles, economic, educational and social background. The essence of this was that Third World women who

have long been undervalued and ignored actors in the development process are not pushovers but scholars and practitioners endowed with rich and remarkable inheritance (Nalini 1997, Tinker 1997). The notion that Africans moreso African women could not count beyond ten and could not act in their own interest (House-Midamba 1991) has been debunked here in WLDC.

In the interviews, the WLDC officers strongly emphasized the theme of gender inequality in the dominant paradigm of development. As Busy said:

*Women have come to realize that they have specific needs which must be addressed in a special manner, that they themselves must champion their cause otherwise they will keep on being neglected. Gender inequality is a major handicap to the development of women. So these problems need to be addressed. The initial problem was creating awareness. Now women have gone a long way. They are now educated on all the issues. The next line of action is to take the bull by the horn and seek their rights. Women's development is entangled with their equality with men. If this is not addressed, development of women will be hampered. As a peace issue, there cannot be peace without equality.*

Likewise, Kaz agreed that:

*... There is a lot of disparity even among Nigerian women. Some Nigerian women must be ready to give up some of their wealth to help their fellow sisters who are marginalized and not so privileged.*

For Kaz, underdevelopment was not seen as a lack of resources but one of exploitation and poverty caused by expropriation. Her position rejected the existing power relations between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and called for basic change in the system as analysts of structural violence in a culture of peace have long argued. Obun affirmed this position when she said:

*You cannot have overall development when money is being held by very few with the majority having none. Unfortunately a large percentage of these (poor) are women.*

This echoed Anand's (1985) and Vickers' (1993) claim of women being the poorest of the poor. The shift from a women in development (WID) to a gender and development (GAD) paradigm was therefore not surprising. As Koyo explained:

*We had to change our WID approach based on the rationale that development processes would be much better if women were fully incorporated into them. We should no longer focus on women in isolation promoting measures such as access to credit and employment by which women can be better integrated into the development process, to continue to do that will be to ignore the real*

*problem which is women's subordinate status to men. Instead we changed to the GAD approach with a focus on (changing) gender relations.*

Kaz added to this view when she said:

*WID is more about women and welfare issues. We see the issues as bigger than just development. Gender and development is a way of trying to put the two together. Gender speaks about women but it also speaks about the way the society relates to women. As women understand better they are able to conceptualize and articulate their issues. Gender equality helps us to focus on those things that make women what they are and mean what they are. These are societal constructions. It is not about women and development alone, it is about the development of the whole society. We are also talking about how women see themselves as not equal to men in terms of biological differences but in terms of ethnic issues because those issues also have different connotation for men and women.*

This was corroborated by Limbo who said:

*We have named our newsletter Gender Views so we can shift our focus from women 's problems to where they do not have access to education, where they are confined either to the homes or to the farms, their limited participation in public life and so on to the fact that gender issue is a social construct. So we no longer look at women in isolation but at them in relations to men to determine what roles these men have to play in the situation that women are in.*

Thus the WLDC women have established the critical distinction between women in development (WID) and gender and development (GAD) analysis. They were well aware that the terms were representative of different theoretical positions, with regard to the problems experienced by women (Moser, 1993). They however insisted that their fundamental focus had implications for both their policies and planning procedures, as we shall see in another segment of this study. The women at the WLDC seemed to have an unifying principle on the role of structural gendered inequities in a world run mostly by men (Tinker, 1995).

If two decades ago the emphasis was on economics as a path for women to attain greater equity, today the emphasis is on politics (Tinker, 1995). The WLDC manifested this shift in emphasis in its operations locally, nationally, and globally and intended to pursue it for a long time to come. As Limbo articulated:

*The center will continue to teach the gospel of women's liberation, freeing women from the chain. We do not only organize programs; we do research and document our findings. We want to continue to impact women and other NGOs. We want to see women hooking up local government's chairmen's posts; we want to see women governors. We want to see a woman as president.*

In furtherance of this empowerment policy and approach, the women in the WLDC have become not only important consumers of data about women but researchers as well. Their roles were multifaceted and their identities were multi-linked. Their strength was in the diversity of their shared culture and values. There was a greater awareness of political power and the need to assess political institutions through gender sensitive lenses (Tinker, 1995).

The WLDC officers and staff were asked to specifically give an assessment of the position of Nigerian women in national development. In 1990 at a Women's Conference in Abuja, the then President of Nigeria, General Babangida had declared:

*Nigeria has made giant strides with regards to the advancement of women. Women are being highly placed in the public and private sectors. Nigeria has both signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women, a Women's Commission and the Better Life Program for Women have all been established.*

In 1997 the WLDC women's perception of the status of women was quite contrary to the opinion of this military leader. They were aware of the fact that the situation of women in Nigeria had deteriorated in the last three decades in spite of the activities and programs focusing on women since the declaration of Women's Decade. Koyo said that the Human Development Report (HDR) and Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) for Nigerian women was very low. The report looked at women's life expectancy, educational attainment of women, and involvement in political decision making. Koyo added that since the 1970s the life expectancy of people has been declining. The people became more impoverished. In the area of education, despite a "cosmetic sense of progress" in that more women were in school, the quality of education had become so poor that she wondered how empowering that kind of education could be. It had not translated into women having better opportunities. She categorically stated:

*In a military government we cannot say that women have made significant progress. Their position is worse than it was. The only thing is that there is increasing awareness, increasing visibility, the quality of which is subject to questions. Gender is creeping into national discourse, however women issues are still not mainstream issues.*

Tade offered that on comparative analysis there had been some improvement from the time when there were many regulations against women. Women could now get jobs without demonstrating their husbands' approval. Women could now receive passports without a letter of consent from husbands. Women could now get pregnant when recently employed,

without fear of losing their jobs, and even unmarried mothers could stay on their jobs. She added that in Northern Nigeria where traditionally women were kept away from school because of early marriages, there are now many women in the universities. But she clarified that these improvements have not translated into national development. There has not been many women holding major government positions and having top jobs. Bisy acknowledged that gender inequality was the greatest problem for Nigerian women.

Bos explained that one could not generalize when it comes to development of women in Nigeria. Women struggle with different problems in different parts of the country. They are disempowered and disenfranchised in different ways. In the North women still had problems with early marriage that prevented many from access to education. In Iboland where access to education was less of a problem, women had experienced problems with inheritance, either from parents or from husbands. In some parts of the country, women still suffer from genital mutilation practices that, for some citizens, are rationalized as cultural norms.

Kimi, as a woman who had lived most of her life in Britain, lamented the fact that Nigerian women, like many women in Africa, are deprived in terms of access to basic infrastructure and basic amenities like water, electricity, health, education, and roads. But she added that while Nigerian women, like all black women, who live in countries outside Nigeria, do not usually suffer from deprivations of basic needs but had to contend with what she saw as a serious impediment, namely the issue of racism. Kaz claimed that Nigerian women still had many hurdles to cross. She explained:

*When you compare Nigerian women with other African women, there are more educated women in Nigeria, there are more women who are more economically empowered but in leadership position, politically we lag behind our many African sisters.*

Regal, an international expert, added:

*Although Nigerian women are everywhere, they are not the ones who make the impact. Nigerian women mark lowest at the human development indicators and at the women empowerment indicator both set out by UNDP. I have just come back from an international conference on women entrepreneurs from all over the world and it was not Nigerian women who made an impact.*

Limbo used each international women's conference as landmarks for the progress of Nigerian women. She reflected:

*When I was writing my thesis I find that we are really in bondage. We live in a country that does not even appreciate the human rights of its people how*

*much more the rights of women. To really assess how much women have come in that area it is not much, but that is what determines how far we have gone. Anyway we are doing better than we were doing before Beijing, and far better than we were before the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies after third world Conference of Women in Nairobi in 1985.*

Shane believed that the size, population and resources available to Nigerian women should make them leaders in Africa. She said that there was very low level of awareness about Nigerian women all over the world. Nigeria, as a country, had a negative image globally and she thought that was affecting Nigerian women.

The women were thus not under any illusion about the state of Nigerian women. Eyo summarized it thus:

*All documented evidence shows that women's development in Nigeria is at a very low level. There has been more deterioration in the recent past than there has been progress. Development in terms of awareness, education and information in this country is most uneven. There are parts of Nigeria where women do not know the name of the President of the country.*

These views concur with the situation report by UNICEF (1995) on women in Nigeria, which concluded that:

*... Despite the rich natural base, a reasonable infrastructure and relatively well developed manpower that Nigeria possesses, there has not been enough growth and development in the economy to raise the standard of living of the people more so women and children. Lack of political stability, under-utilization of resources, poor maintenance of capital stock, managerial weaknesses as well as certain socio-practices appear to have hindered the uplift of the status of women and children. (p. 51)*

While some WLDC officers acknowledged that women were participating more in public life, the level of performance was still far too low relative to the population of women. Although women are now contesting elections, sometimes with the encouragement of male peers, many are still not successful. According to Limbo,

*... Women are being recognized now more than before as human beings, not as occupants, or as properties. But there are still problems of legislation. Laws still need to be put in place to empower women more. As a lawyer, I know that not much is being done in the area of law. Nigeria has signed a lot of treaties especially the CEDAW but it has not yet reflected in our municipal laws. This and other issues need to be addressed for further changes in the situation of women.*

Alhaja, one of the participants at the Center, tried to identify what she called the major problem of women as follows:



*The men always have the upper hand. There are some men who will not allow their wives to go out to work and yet they do not have money. They spend only what the man brings even if it is not enough. There are some men who because they have lost their jobs will tell the woman to go and work or sell something, and when she does, they take all the money from her. At times they still beat her on top of it.*

Alhaja here was relating the marginalization of women to domestic violence which Fagan and Browne (1993) have called ecology of aggression. In addition to this, Limbo declared that men felt “threatened” by anything women did, even by training programs designed for women. She claimed that most times she has heard men say that women want to “take over but they would not be able to do it.” Hence women should just be “content” with their roles and “stay where God has placed them.” She said that men prefer that women be excluded from all sectors of public activities and kept at home where they “belonged” as one Nigerian male scholar (Yesufu, 1996) implied when he advocated that domestic science be taught to women to make them “better housewives” and that there was nothing “degrading” in it. In reality, it was very “honorable” to be a housewife. It was the counterpart of the male being a husband, he added. Yesufu’s view represented a category of men, and even some women, in Nigeria who believe that a woman’s place is in the home and that is where she should be kept.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) has identified that patriarchy has been the biggest problem the Nigerian women face. It is within marriage that the Nigerian woman suffers the most oppression. Married she becomes a possession, voiceless and often rightless in her husband’s family, except for what accrues to her through her children. She has to submit to dominance by her husband or face blame from the total society. Furthermore, women are overworked, as generally men do no housework or childcare of any sort. Hence the woman struggles at two fronts, the home and the workplace. Traditional support systems, grandmothers, siblings, younger relatives, and co-wives are being withdrawn by such new social developments as compulsory education, urbanization, and capitalist atomization of the family (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1985). Childless marriages are blamed on the woman; it is never admitted that the man can be sterile. A childless woman is often considered a “monstrosity,” as is an unmarried woman or a divorcee who is subject to jokes and innuendoes of scandal and sexual harassment.

For most part, development policies have been predicated on the assumption that certain peoples and societies are “less developed” than others who will have the expertise and knowledge to help the former achieve modernity. Much of bilateral and multilateral aid agencies’ policy is based on the premise that experts, with their special knowledge of the

modern industrialized and technological world, are particularly well placed to solve the problems of the developing world (Parpart, 1995). As earlier noted, this dominant modernization paradigm has been challenged by alternative perspectives that stress people-centered development reflecting principles of equity, grassroots participation and sustainability. In the case of women, the critique of the modernization paradigm highlighted the systemic marginalization of women while in general the men disproportionately gained the benefits of modernization programs and projects. Chapter 2 has provided a detailed discussion of how and why the initial rethinking of the place of women in modernization, namely the Women in Development (WID) paradigm, has evolved into a more critical Women and Development (WAD) and then Gender and Development (GAD) and Gender, Environment and Development (GED) perspectives. In this regard, official State and inter-governmental agencies have reformed their policies and programs to promote more gender-equitable development. However, there is no doubt that non-government organizations (NGOs) and peoples organizations (POs) have played a major role in transforming dominant development theory and practice toward serving the needs of women, especially the poorest.

The interviews generally demonstrated a high level of awareness of the WLDC women. Most of them had also been involved in all the four world conferences for women. The women seemed committed to the issues of empowerment and development as they conceived of them in their organization's framework. In contrast, according to Tade, even though those in authority had knowledge of these high profile women's conferences and because they had officially sponsored women participants to the conferences, they had not been sensitized to any great extent. There had been no significant changes in their views and treatment of women. Tade criticized government leaders for hoisting some programs in order to proclaim their "involvement" in women's issues. She was certain that there was no deep commitment as confirmed by the lack of governmental action.

The women at the WLDC believed that women themselves were central to the development of women. They have identified the issues of subjugation as the main problem of gender and development. In my observation, I am inclined to believe that these women do not feel despair or helplessness, in spite of all the pressures, obstacles, and the difficulties of organizing, the lack of time, and the overworked nature of their lives.

## CHAPTER 5

### UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE OF PEACE AND PEACE EDUCATION IN WLDC

#### **Introduction:**

This chapter seeks to first clarify the understanding of the WLDC personnel and members of the concept of a culture of peace: Secondly, given that the WLDC is a training center, it is relevant to examine the members' views about the role of peace education in the WLDC's work. The data for this chapter was based on in-depth interviews with leaders, staff and active members of the WLDC, as well as on participants' responses during a one-day workshop focusing on the concept of a culture of peace.

Of the 20 women interviewed, only three had remotely heard of the expression culture of peace, at the Beijing women's conference, although none had read the conference document focusing on the contributions of women to a culture of peace. For one of these three women, "culture of peace is about peaceful coexistence among the elites and among the grassroots people of the world." The second woman linked the concept with the Academy of Peace which is a United Nations Forum, and expressed this hope.

*Nigeria will have a culture of peace. Culture is the sum total of a nation's lifestyle. If a nation's lifestyle is one of convulsion and instability, which happens to be the culture of Nigeria right now, efforts have to be made to create an alternative which is a culture of peace.*

Among the women who have not heard the expression, a culture of peace implied a range of concerns and meanings from "micro to macro" levels of life. For example, Akosa depicted a culture of peace as a situation where there is fairness, where people love one another, where conflicts do not arise merely because people are from different tribes or ethnic origins, and where people do not feel marginalized in society. For Feko, it meant that peace should be an integral part of culture. All cultural activities should promote peace, and should be unifying rather than divisive. Kaz believed a culture of peace would develop attitudes so that people do not have to respond to each other violently over every issue. Limbo explained that when one gender of the human race is frustrated, undermined, oppressed, marginalized and subjugated, one could not talk about peace.

According to Fay, another member of the WLDC, a culture of peace means having a very high level of mutual tolerance at the family level and throughout society. To Koyo, a culture of peace is dependent on justice, openness, trust, and acceptable societal values.

She added that this could only come from democracy, transparency, and good governance. Kepo declared there could not be a culture of peace unless men make conscious efforts to avoid wars. She regretted that unfortunately when men engage in war, it is women who suffer most. It is women who end up as refugees and victims of war, experiencing all forms of hostilities.

Obun volunteered that there could be no culture of peace when a nation is experiencing conditions of convulsion and instability which are characteristic of Nigeria. She believed that women have a significant part to play in the restoration of peace in Nigeria, though women are presently not in positions of power to be of any effect. For Bos, a culture of peace means peace at the family, community, and national level. Achieving this would be a long process requiring a new look at some of Nigeria's national policies and the reconstruction of social values. For Busy, a culture of peace means having a reservoir of relevant information available to the Nigerian people. It was also having a pool of people who are able to share these information. She believed that the WLDC could effectively be the fountain of such activities. For Tade, a culture of peace means the availability of less stressful alternatives to problems. She said it was not about conflict management but conflict prevention.

The women's impression of a culture of peace clearly depicted the tapestry represented by Toh & Cawagas (1995) who said that the fabric this present world is made of is discolored, by the pain of violence and repression and declared a culture of peace an alternative fabric, a cultural tapestry of peace, the weaving of which is based on the principles of justice, compassion, cultural sensitivity and environmental care. Even though the women at WLDC had not seen nor read the UNESCO document on Women and Culture of Peace, they had the perception that corresponded with the concept as based on the universal values of peace, respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance and equality. If women are to promote a culture of peace, it is important that they have a holistic understanding of a culture of peace. I asked the women what understandings they had of the specific themes of a culture of peace.

### **General Ideas on Peace and Violence**

I asked the women what constituted peace for them. Their responses covered Hicks (1989) ideas of positive and negative peace. Peace for Alhaja M meant "having no problem in anything that I do. It is contentment in what God has provided. It is living with each other in harmony." God was seen as the giver of peace. For Esha, a woman leader, peace is being understood and being given the freedom to do what she wanted to do, "A threatening

environment would constitute a handicap.” Kaz, an economist and one of the executives at the Center, stated:

*If I live in a stable society with political and economy stability. I will be at peace. I have peace when I can express my opinion freely without fear of being harassed by any group, when there are favorable social and economic conditions, when I do not have a feeling that I can be assassinated, when I am free from armed robbers, when I am not watched by security agents, when I have free movements. When I have all these, I will be at peace.*

Peace was also seen in terms of justice and good governance by Fran:

*We can only have personal and societal peace if there is justice, equity, if the basic needs of our citizens are met, if the right environment is created to enable development and prosperity, if we have love and respect for each other, if we have self esteem, dignity of labor, contentment, if we have good leaders, and if we have good followers, if our country holds for us the kind of promise that would make us want to die for her, if our national flag symbolizes a melting pot of our diverse culture and ethnic groupings.*

Koyo also established an interdependent link between personal peace and societal peace.

*Peace is not only absent in our minds it is absent in our lives. Nigeria is not at war but there is a lot of violence. Look at the injustices of the society, the disparities, and the inequities the breakdown of the system, no light, no water, and no fuel. These are issues of peace. The society is not at peace. Societal peace is usually a product of governance. It is a product of the value system of the society. It is about the individual's morality and values.*

Fran also saw the connection and ventured one is not attainable without the other. She called it a *Catch 22* situation. Tade also linked personal peace with societal peace and regretted that both were not quite achievable in a highly militarized society like Nigeria. Some of the women emphasized the idea of peace in solitude, especially in the company of nature. Mural, a professor in community health, thought having a time of seclusion away from the “maddening crowd” was helpful in cultivating a sense of peace.

*For me I get peace with my own company. I need that to rejuvenate myself spiritually, physically and emotionally. I find peace in the waves crashing upon the shore, the beauty of the hilly scenes with the sun and the moon and the evening sky. I get away from my house just to experience these and that regenerates my energy and me.*

Funkie too shared the same experience of peace and nature but she went further and linked it to justice.

*I am at peace when I walk out of my house and walk in my garden and I hear the birds and feel the breeze and it costs nothing. It gives me joy. I feel sorry*

*for women who have nowhere to escape to within or around their house, to talk to themselves and to talk to their Creator. That is why I appreciate those who find the time to create some greenery in this horrible city of Lagos. When you go to nature you have a lot of peace and you can forget the violence that surrounds you. In nature you will find justice in how nature has distributed a lot of things equitably. Some flowers are pretty in the morning some in the evening. There is peace in justice.*

What came out quite strongly from the women was that peace was essentially construed in terms of social, political and economic security. In a similar way to the conception of peace as multidimensional and multilevel, the WLDC leaders, staff and members also analyzed violence across a spectrum of manifestations. Direct violence was clearly high on the consciousness of the WLDC women. Fran, one of the trustees, seemed to have a global awareness.

*This century has seen a lot of violence, in terms of wars and conflicts - think of the French Revolution, Second World War, the rising of the Mau Mau of Kenya, Apartheid in South Africa, atrocities in Rwanda, the problem in Turkey, Yugoslavia, Liberia, the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, the list is endless.*

One woman cited the headline news on June 24 1997 of Vanguard newspaper, "CNC meeting ends in chaos as Chief threatens members with Toy Gun" as symptomatic of a general "Rambo" style attitudes and actions of direct violence. The women explained that violence had degraded the quality of their lives resulting in the fear of going out at night and their inability to sit peacefully in front of their houses because of frequent armed gangs surprise-attacks which had led to the installation of elaborate security systems. The WLDC women claimed that there was a national anxiety over violence. However violence was not confined to direct forms. Shane, another WLDC staff, pointed to the root causes of systemic and structural violence

*a deteriorating economy, retrenchment, failing educational and moral standard, inadequate health facilities, poor performance of our public utilities, poverty, hunger, bribery and corruption.*

While, Ola, a full time consultant at the Center, linked direct violence to economic oppression:

*The fact that the minority strong and rich oppresses the majority weak and poor creates situations which bring about nonexistence of peace. Oppression and suppression create resentment, which eventually explodes into violence and atrocity.*

Alhaja, a Muslim leader's perception of violence is related to injustices, greed and lack of contentment in the society. Violence is usually associated with ongoing war. But Obun saw violence as a post war issue an upsurge after the Nigeria civil war. She said:

*I will ascribe the current violence to the after effect of the civil war in Nigeria. This has resulted in the economic reversal, of fortune, unequal distribution of wealth, particularly when those who used to have do not have anymore, the elimination of a previously very fast growing middle class, and the massive availability of arms in the hands of some Nigerians.*

This confirmed that peace does not necessarily prevail in the absence of war. Violence could also be a post war heritage. This is what Hicks (1989) called negative peace, a mere absence of direct, physical violence. Tade one of the executive of WLDC said violence is the breakdown of law and order. She claimed that violence in all its ramifications, physical, mental, and psychological was present in Nigeria. Shane, another member of WLDC's staff saw violence as signs of the end of time,

*Political instability, deteriorating economy, retrenchment, failing educational and moral standard, inadequate health facilities, poor performance of our public utilities, poverty, hunger, bribery, highway robbery, corruption, cultism, in our educational institutions, drug abuse, ritual killings, assassination, religious and ethnic clashes, highhandedness, civil disobedience, and more than a fair share of military coups d'état. are all signs of end of time.*

Ola, a full time consultant with the Center, saw violence as oppression:

*in which the minority strong and rich oppress the majority weak and poor, and create situations which bring about non existence of peace. Oppression and suppression create resentment which eventually explodes into violence and atrocities*

The women affirm Toh & Cawagas (1987) claim that structural violence is the tragic gulf between the "haves" and the "have nots" among nations and within societies, where the poor majorities suffer a chronic lack of basic needs because of the unjust and exploitative social system. Nnoli (1988) saw peace as an important human value, a prerequisite for the attainment of other values. Peace and violence are both forms of struggle. Political forces choose one or the other depending on what is necessary and possible in the light of the interests at stake. The political system in Nigeria obviously opted for violence. Structural violence was often based on a combination of exploitation by the minority and fragmentation of the majority putting the latter at a disadvantage (Nnoli 1988).

Limbo, a staff of WLDC, said that violence has become an act of employment, referring to the new phenomenon of hired assassins in Nigeria, where people are paid to do

harm to another person or to even kill them in an act of revenge or to get even. She said it is seen as “going to work“. The attackers sleep in the day time and go to work at night. This is an example of what Anderson (1990) called “social capital deterioration” where human capital is not put to constructive and profitable use. Limbo linked this dastard practice to poverty and economic inequality.

Perception of violence was mentioned in physical context as it affects women in rape, incest, wife beating, child marriage, female genital mutilation. Eyo, described the experience of the Ogoni women where rape was used as torture by the government’s soldiers. Pettman (1966) referred to the systematic and widespread use of rape in so called dirty wars and state terrorism and claimed that torture was gender specific and that it demonstrated gendered and sexual politics of violence. Koyo, a woman leader, said violence is also harmful traditional and cultural practices against women e.g., expecting widows to shave their hair and drink the water used to wash the dead husband, ostracizing, stripping, stoning and even killing or burning women alleged to be “witches”. Koyo gave a specific example of the culture based violence against women:

*In communal conflict women are used to appease the gods, at times they are found murdered for peace to return. At times in these conflicts the foreign wives that is wives married from another culture are seen as the culprit as having brought bad luck to the community. They are then usually sent packing to their land or place of origin.*

Koyo claimed that violence, is gendered. Men do not know that propositioning a woman could be considered sexual harassment or even sexual assault and violations of a women's rights. Men do not see rape as violence, because when a woman or girl is raped in or outside the marital situation, it is believed that she either deserved it or she has brought it upon herself. Marital rape occurs when there is male coercion rather than mutual consent which is the basis of sexual union. Men use their physical and social power to maintain their dominant position. This unequal distribution of power between men and women extends to sexual relationship (Fagan & Browne 1993)

Sophia quoted an African adage which says “*There are only two people in the market, man and woman*” therefore solidarity, understanding and mutual acceptance between men and women is of vital importance in building a culture of peace in Nigeria. Men’s aggression toward the women in the society is overwhelming and overpowering and until these are eliminated there will continue to be discord and silent war between the men and the women. Violence against women by men centers around power and presumed powerlessness (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly 1995). The real issue then is how do women turn over the tables to absorb some power to counter oppression. Ilumoka (1991) said that in a



gendered culture like Nigeria it is easy to exploit women. Male and female cultures and limitations are usually placed on women by the society. She said that any look at culture and literature will confirm that the life of a woman is usually offered as sacrifice in gendered societies.

Funkie, an executive member and a facilitator said violence was not only what men do to women. It was also what women do to each other and to other people therefore women should not overlook this aspect of violence. She said it was alright for women to suggest refuge places where women could run to for shelter when abused by men, it was alright for women to suggest that women should support women when they find themselves in abusive and violent situations. She then asked: *What happens when women inflict acts of violence on each other, who do they run to ? The men?* She said violence by women against women was just as bad if not worse, than that of men against men. It comes in form of mental torturing, physical attack and verbal insults, abuses, curses or grimaces which could come in various ways that only women know about. She summed it up this way:

*Let it be noted that women too can be guilty of inflicting violence. It should not be assumed that it is only men who are guilty of violent actions. Women too are guilty of violence, against their children, they are guilty of violence against other women. They are at times not able to resolve simple conflict without resorting to acts of violence, at household level, within any group or community, they belong to.*

The issue of women's domination and oppression by women is discussed in chapter 6 to determine if this phenomenon exists in WLDC.

Tade one of the directors of WLDC said that violence is also what people do to children as in the many cases of child abuse which is a rape on the child's rights. I asked her to clarify for me at what point is a child abused in an African context. The culture says spare the rod and spoil the child. It also says train your child so that you can have peace. Corporal punishment was still legal in schools. She then explained that this new phenomenon was frightening to say the least. There had been cases of parents burning children with hot iron, bludgeoning them on the heads with heavy metal rods, breaking their arms and knocking their heads against the wall, with resultant heavy bleeding, cutting off their legs if they refused to marry an older man, and of course sexual assault that needed no explanation.

Fagan and Brown (1993) said that unequal distribution of power was also the basis for physical and sexual maltreatment of children. In incest the father thinks he has rights over the daughter's body. The real reason for sexual assault was not always a case of

sexual tension or being overcome by lust, but power, subverting someone's will (Mitchell 1985). Cole (1985) was of the opinion that the battery of children should be treated as a criminal act.

Ojik said violence is also what children learn and practice. There has been a strange wave of killings on the university campuses in Nigeria. She said that if the youth live and breathe violence, it is easy for them to get caught up in violence. Reiss and Roth (1993) said that children who learn violent behavior in families, on television, in violent pornographic literature, among peers, and in the community will have a greater potential to behave as violently as adults. Samson & Lauritsen (1993) said when children have easy access to television programs that have anti-social behavior and easy access to information on violence, the children in turn develop the potential for violence. Brock-Utne (1989) has challenged mothers about exposing children to violence especially their boys. Women are closer to their children she said and they have the responsibility of instilling into them violence-free values for living.

Youth and children need to be desensitized to violence if a culture of peace was to be built as Funkie declared children would like to live in a peaceful world. She cited the example of the daughter of a well known lesbian writer in Britain who in an interview was asked about her reaction to being the daughter of a lesbian. She responded that it was wonderful, because she was happier than before and was experiencing more love from her mother and her partner than when her father was around. Her mother's relationship with her father was violent and abusive, she claimed. This confirmed Samson's & Lauritsen (1993) claim that children thrive better in non violent situations. Human beings owe the children the best it has to give (Child's Rights 1989). Children want adults to transmit values to them which when broadly shared will create a more peaceful world (Barbara 1991)

Eyo, one of the women leaders, said violence is also what the media does. Violent drama, violent fiction, at times violent commercials was being promoted as entertainment. She said many of these revealed and emphasize antisocial behavior which was highly attractive to the youths who Samson & Lauritsen (1993) said are the largest perpetrators of violence in the society. She lamented that Nigeria has no ratings or classifications of these programs, and so she called on women to be firm in addressing this aspect of violence. She said:

*Women should begin to discourage and condemn violent films which have become rampant on our screens There should be a return to the good old days of non violent films, where there were morals , where the good guys win and the bad guys are punished. Mothers should block out these films*

*because an angry child becomes an angry father or mother just as an a violent child becomes a violent father. Violence is passed on. A child who has lived with violence will develop violent tendencies.*

Koyo, one of the women leaders, said violence is also what religious institutions do to people making a reference to Crusades (holy wars by Christianity) and Jihad (holy wars in Islam) despite the fact that most religions were founded on peace concepts. She said Christianity for instance was founded on the doctrine of peace by Jesus Christ who is an embodiment of peace, but whose followers have always ignored this aspect of His teaching. Koyo said that to counter the violence all around her she usually centered herself on concept of peace based on the Christian doctrine. She said:

*Peace is a state of tranquillity . It is confidence in your God. It is confidence in your environment. It is trust. It is faith in God who makes everything worthwhile. Even in war, even in surrounding violence , one can experience peace. It is an internal thing. It is larger than the external. I know that the external affects and sustains the society and the violence that disrupts the society. But the internal one which is psychological is of great importance . There are women who are not battered who are not beaten but who do not have internal peace, they have turmoil.*

Her claim supports the morality of **Christianity** which promotes peace. Christians are urged to seek peace and pursue it (1 Peter 3:11) to pursue peace with all people (Hebrews: 14) and to let the peace of God rule their hearts (Colosians 3:15). Jesus who is called the “Prince of Peace” promoted peace when He said *Happy are those who work for peace God will call them His children* (Matthew 5:9). This concept of peace is true for all the other religions of the world.

**Buddha** said *“There is no happiness greater than peace.”*(Udana-Varqa) **Confucius** says *Seek to be in harmony with all your neighbors...live in peace with all your brethren.* **Sikhism** says *Only in the name of the Lord do we find peace.* **Jainism** says *All men should live in peace with their fellows. This is the Lord’s desire.* **Shinto** says *“Let the earth be free from trouble and men live at peace under the protection of the Divine”* Zoroasterism says *Nature is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self* (Dadistan-i-Dinik) **Hinduism** echoes with *“Shanti, Shanti, Shanti* meaning *“Peace, Peace, Peace”*. The Hebrew word *“Shalom”* which is used for greeting in the **Judaism** means *“Peace be with you”*. **Islam** is presented as a religion of peace, in fact Islam came from the Arabic word *“Silm”* which means peace. Islam urges followers to incline towards peace and to use peace as greetings unto one another. Hence the greeting *“Salam alaikum”* which means *Peace be upon you* and the response *Alaikum es-Salam*

which means “*Peace be on you too*” is a normal greeting in Islam to Muslims, Christians, Hindus and even pagans.

However all these concepts conflict with practices within the religions. All the religions have been sources of conflicts and violence. We are all accustomed to Christian churches preaching brotherhood while segregating its congregation along lines of skin color, professing peace while supporting war. Surely these are contradictions of serious magnitude (Jack 1988). The world has also seen Muslims “fighting” in the cause of Allah despite the fact that the religion proclaims peace even in its normal greetings of “*Salam alaikum*” to all which means *Peace be upon you*. Peace without justice will be short lived, and justice without peace will be a contradiction if the world religions can rise above, outgrow or find a way out of their own self-interest to a genuine love for humanity, it may be that the global village can live in peace. By setting aside war as an instrument of faith and proclaiming peace as the path for all people, religion may yet live by the ideal and lead humanity to peace (Thompson 1988)

Fran took an optimistic view and proffered solutions to what she described as societal chaos.

*What then is the recipe for a change in our society and the attainment of peace in our society?. This is possible if there is justice, equity, equality, if the basic needs of our citizenry are met, if the right environment is created to enable development, and prosperity, if we have respect and love, for each other, if we have self esteem, dignity of labor, contentment, if we have good leaders, and if we have good followers, if our country holds for us the kind of promise, that would make us want to die for her, if our national, flag symbolizes a melting pot of our diverse culture and ethnic groupings, if we are able to establish, and maintain a truly democratic political process, that will ensure the emergence, of democratic government and which, is reinforced by spiritual principles and values. We are examining all these, in the hope that we as women, can do some thing to effect the change, Of course we as women also, have impact on what is happening around us. We can have the moral impact, the social impact, the economic impact and the political impact.*

From the foregoing it was obvious that the women at WLDC were very much aware of the various dimensions of peace and violence. They also recognized the role women could play in the transformation of the society contributing to a culture of peace. Although peace has always been difficult to define, the women at WLDC gave various perception of peace. Violence in all forms was recognizable to these women who were very aware of what constitutes violence. They described violence in direct physical contexts, in indirect structural or systemic and manifested in poverty, injustice, unemployment, exploitation, powerlessness, and denial of human rights. They also mentioned socio-cultural and

psychological violence, which was manifested in sexism, cultural domination, violence against women, violence against children, media violence, violence in the religious arena. Consciousness of peace as an antithesis to violence was quite vivid in WLDC's formation of its goals, vision, practices, and policies as seen in the previous chapter. In the next chapter, we shall see if the concept of peace is practiced at different levels of its relationship.

### **Militarism**

Militarism for the WLDC women was essentially military rule in Nigeria. They saw this primarily as a rape on the people's rights. Koyo, one of the women leaders, found very offensive the two expressions that have found a home in the language of the people: "*military intervention*" and "*military involvement in politics*," which were at times synonymously used although they addressed two different situations. However Koyo said they both refer to the illegal and direct control of government by the military. She said the military usually saw its involvement in politics as an intervention. But Koyo was quite vehement when she noted that:

*"military intervention" in government means a coup d'état against a legally elected civilian government, and "military involvement in politics" approximately reflects a situation where military government under the influence of greed has decided to become political rulers and even extend its regime to a perpetual venture..*

There was intense anger at the military by Koyo and some of the women because of the military's role and position in governance. This military power in government was illustrated by a claim of one of the military rulers, General Buhari in a post independent speech in 1997.

The military with its experience in the military and in the government has been a mixed blessing in Nigeria. The military has rendered notable service to the country and had been an asset to the country. The military having received some of the best training available by virtue of which it controls the instruments of force, a fact that enables it to coerce society to obey its rulings (Vanguard 6 October 1998)

Koyo inferred from this statement that the military was absolutely unaware of the harm, severe damage it has done to the people. Obun added that with continued intervention by the military there has never been and there will never be peace in Nigeria. Sophia reminded everyone that a basic ingredient of peace which is upholding the people's rights had always been violated by the military. She explained

*Every time there was a coup d'état the army would set aside the constitution and rule the people by force. This was blatant violations of people's rights As long as this continued there will never be peace.*

Obun did not see the possibility of the military's exit from power in Nigeria. The military has managed to be in power for over thirty years. She lamented that there was no strong political class to challenge the military. Therefore its rule might continue unchallenged. Regehr (1989:108) gave good reasons why this could be a genuine fear by the women

The military obstructs increased popular participation in decision making because participatory democracy tends toward decentralization which in turn gives priority to basic needs and so the military is unlikely to accept a self reliant economy because that would weaken the possibility of arms import and military build up (pg. 108).

Esha, another woman leader, explained the "military violence" that has invaded the society.

*Military violence has become part of our everyday life. It is terrible and it is shocking. Security guards now use horsewhips to beat and harass people even when they are innocently going about their business. The annoying thing is no one speaks against it, no one comes to the rescue of the other person for fear of becoming a victim. It has become an abuse of power; it has become part normal. Practically everywhere, at check points. On the roads, at the ports, you find someone in uniform trying to exercise physical force. The mobile police are not called "kill and go" for nothing.*

Kaz an economist and one of the executives of WLDC focused on government's ludicrous expenditure on military equipment which was usually higher than the combined education and health expenditure. She added that women with very high illiteracy level and poor health status have been major victims of such distorted spending. This conformed with Regehr's (1989:109) picture of devastating consequences of high military expenditure.

No shot ever need be fired , no bomb dropped and no missile launched for people by millions to feel first hand the destruction and devastation that lie in the wake of world wide race towards greater and greater military prowess. The violation of humanity represented by neglected education, inadequate or non existent health services , malnutrition and repressive regimes kept in place by arms delivered to the poor from the factories of the rich, is a destructive power that seems less devastating than war only because its true magnitude is not easily measured. (pg. 109)

Although Regehr thought that the effects of militarization may not always be measured, they are real as Tade and others enumerated a catalogue of the social ills and havoc generated through military rule in Nigeria. Tade spoke of violence, denial of rights,

corruption, lack of basic amenities and so on. Reardon's (1982) has confirmed that economic, social and political needs of the people are always severely frustrated by the process of militarization. The women's lurid picture of Nigeria under military rule is confirmed by Yesufu (1996):

Nigeria has become a land of bribery, corruption, and embezzlement of public funds. Losses to public, commercial organizations and banks are measured in billions of naira (local currency) . The pen robbers have set off the now patent and painful chain of armed robbers, which have resulted in brazen daylight killings, "area boys" and "Rambo kids" and all other dare devils groups . In addition to these much of the cultural practices of Nigerians have shifted to weighing heavily in favor of consumption and waste. These are manifest in lavish parties for and on the occasion of acquisition of meaningless chieftaincy titles, on marital and even burial ceremonies, child naming etc. The advent of all these could be traced to the practices of flaunting of stolen wealth by soldiers who were in power when Nigeria discovered oil and became a rich nation plus the wasteful consumption pattern of top military officers who looted the Central bank during the war. (pg. 40-41)

Koyo focused on what she termed the *military culture* that has evolved in Nigeria.

*A military operation is fraught with arms and ammunitions. it is directed at an enemy. Either extensively or decisively, there is an intensive and concentrated employment of maximum force with a view to achieving the objective with minimum loss of life, and materials. Fortunately for the proponent of the operation, it is expected to be swift sharp and efficient. This is exactly the environment in which we all live. An environment that regards every other person as an enemy. An environment that puts everyone on the defensive.*

She added that the military style of government has come to be known in Nigeria as a rule of "*immediate effect.*" When orders were given they were meant to be carried out with *immediate effect*. Hiring and firing were made with *immediate effect*. She described this thus:

*When they appoint people into positions it is with immediate effect. When they are sacked it is also with immediate effect. When duly elected governments are overthrown it is with immediate effect. When elections are canceled it is with immediate effect. This language and utterances of the military with immediate effect served to emphasize the dominance of the all male military system in Nigeria*

Olu, the consultant talked of the heightened tension in this military culture. She gave a typical experience of contact or encounter with military agencies:

*When you drive your car and you come across the military at check point, automatically you are regarded as an enemy. The military culture instantly*

*manifested . They shout at you “Who are you.?-Open your booth. Show your particular” . You begin to wonder whether they know you somewhere before, or whether they have some information on you to make them treat you with so much disrespect. And of course you have to be very discreet and extremely patient and polite in the face of unwarranted provocation. Otherwise you stand the risk of being gunned down for some trumped up crimes or misbehavior or even resisting arrest which has become the most favorite excuse being used.*

Femi, a program participant who said that she has always had a lot of apprehension about this new culture, described it thus:

*It is a very offensive culture, It is a very antagonistic culture. It is a culture that makes the other person a victim, some body who should be dealt with, somebody who should be given an instant judgment. There is usually no finesse, no sensible dialogue, no consideration of any sort. from the assailant. The worst thing is that one is totally disempowered to deal with that type of personnel.*

Limbo while describing the people’s reaction to the imposed culture said the people have become totally disenfranchised, disillusioned, complacent, and absolutely powerless in the face of this state violence and have therefore not evolved any means of rejecting the culture as a people. The troubling thing according to Obun is the fact that this culture of the minority has been absorbed by the larger society. It has become an attitude, a way of life which has taken over the whole of the society.

Said (1971) saw the military as a subculture, a protagonist of change interacting with the society producing a wave of emulation. In case of the military, Horowitz (1971) said rather than the civilianization of the military, the society becomes militarized making the society fall short of its own ideals. Militarization does not promote values consistent with peace and justice, without concrete visions of a demilitarized world, we cannot plan specific actions for achieving goal of a world peace and justice. Militarization process invests more and more social, economic and political responsibilities in military institutions and places a higher priority on military values over all others. It is a dangerous process because it results from decisions made by only a few members of the human family (Reardon 1982)

According to Yemi, one of the women leaders, not only has military culture invaded the people’s language, attitude, relationships, and conduct it has also become the pattern of governance. Sophia said that the military has evolved as a ruling class, whose interests predominates the larger society. Koyo another leader established the link between this system and patriarchy.



*The style of governance of the military is based on certain ideological concept, the one of patriarchy. The man comes out of a predominant system of patriarchy ordered by men. In addition, this man is steeped in cultural values which has affirmed his succession as a head of the family. Which means he is already furnished before he goes into the military. In addition he receives a training that furthers his supremacy and his masculinity. His personality becomes more defined. He then goes into a culture of masculine bonding which they call esprit de corps. That becomes a way of doing things. The tradition, the norm and the values of the military that we are talking about is a predominantly male led organization which does not build its value on anything other than masculinity and the values of patriarchy.*

Koyo citing Omoruyi, the Director of Center for Democratic Studies who coined word *militrician*, to deride the military in politics and concluded that the military who have found their way into governance would rule the populace with iron hand. Military rule is an ideology which puts the man at the top to protect sexual hierarchy (Gordon 1996). Military in politics has a high degree of centralization and heirachy, emphasis is on command and subordination, on discipline rather than creativity. Military's role in denying popular participation in government increases, respect for fundamental human rights diminishes and individuals are required to forgo normal rights in favor of order (Regehr 1989).

Watson & Danapoulos (1996) said the interest of the military in governance is the economy. Military usually use the excuse of development to come on the scene but it is an established fact that they are never able to resolve the problems that lead to their intervention. The military usually leave a legacy of inefficiency, of a "super police force" and a joint civilian-military transnational ruling system (Magyar 1996). No wonder Koyo defined the military's rule in Nigeria as the reign of terror and violence.

Mosun lamented that militarism had produced corruption in the society, a culture of materialism, where money was more important than values like self worth, achievement, contribution, and so on. This craze for money had come about because people were having the deep urge to provide for themselves the basic amenities that should have been provided by the government. Political role of the military provide opportunity for substantial involvement in the making and allocating wealth and of social and political values. Getting the military to consider everyone as a member of the society is a difficult challenge especially when the economic social and political stakes are high (Watson & Danapoulos 1996). These women's observation do not seem to agree with Ali Mazrui (1986) claim that military governments in Africa impose greater discipline over the economic resources of the state. I wondered if he then mean that military regimes display economic integrity? The responses of these women did not indicate that at least not in the Nigerian context.

Tade a director at WLDC linked **religious violence** with the military. Not only has religious base violence increased under the military, heightened violence has generated a spate of religious fervor, which has been either misguided or fraudulent and which has led to various religious clashes and divisions in Nigeria. Tade however believed that the religious clashes in Nigeria, were usually fanned by the military government who employed a divide and rule method to sow seeds of discord among the people, but unfortunately every one seemed powerless in its wake. She said:

*Violence based on religion is killing everyone and the whole society is waiting for divine intervention Everybody is praying and getting hooked on religion to attain peace. Everyone is looking for peace in religion but we are not working for it.*

Fran, one of the Trustees thought that violence was brought about because human beings refuse to obey the laws of creation. She talked of the reckless attitudes and behavior by the people, violating God's law without any inhibition.

*God created the world in six days and He saw that it was good because everything worked according to exact order which was based on the immutable laws of creation. Human beings were expected to respect and obey these laws in order to ensure universal peace and harmony. This existence is supposed to be nurtured by love, justice fairness, equity. Then human beings broke the laws and continue to do so unwittingly. But because the laws of creation is immutable, we human beings who break these laws have to accept the consequences of our action. Some call it retributive justice, some call it karma. Whatever we sow, so shall we reap. Whether you move out with the material or in the spiritual sense. This break down of order is essentially what is responsible for violence ..*

Yesufu (1996) recounted what he termed *evil tendencies* of and under the military:

The last two decades have seen a feverish rise in the creation of new churches and building of mosques all over the nation. What should be a religious and ethical revival has transformed into a booming religious industry for the financial milking of the suffering masses who put themselves innocently in the hands of religious leaders in the hope of receiving God's salvation from the debilitating poverty which is their lot. Some of these leaders unashamedly levy donations which go to enrich themselves. The result is the deification of money, growing injustice, dishonesty, corruption general lawlessness and total disregard for God's law . The nation has indeed become a very sick giant, being devoured hollow by the cancerous diseases of uneconomic cultures, individual and social insecurity, carefree and corrupt elitism, unfulfilled educational and technological hopes. All these manifestations have crippled the will of the nation. (pg. 41)

Koyo is appalled by women's political fate under military rule. She recounted with nostalgia the leadership role that women had in the precolonial era. But since the advent of the military era about thirty years ago in Nigeria, the influence of women in governance had become minimal. Women have hardly been represented. The complete powerlessness of women was captured by Koyo who said:

*We are looking at an environment, that has completely been taken over by a phenomenon which is above the society and above us as women. How does this relate to us women? We are the weaker sex we are often told. We are told we are not even there. How can women thrive in a culture that thrives on violence and use of maximum force. We women having been caught in this culture have a problem of survival. How can we have a voice in this type of culture? How can we women express our desire? How can we participate in a culture that is predominantly based on militarism? This culture has totally pushed us women into the furthest margin*

Koyo called my attention and that of other women to an article *Women's Political Fate Under Military Rule* (Vanguard 18 August 1997). The writer of the article Nnanna expressed the view that women have made more progress and have become more visible under the military than under a non military government. Koyo was appalled at this claim by the writer who of course was a man. She said in such an aggravated tone:

*This system is anti-women. How can women advance, or win in this type of environment that is so militarized. How can anyone claim or agree that the military system has benefited or actually enhanced the position of women?*

She criticized the so called women's visibility as a fad. The visibility has arisen from the fact that the wives of the military elites have formed various vanguard associations from the home front like *Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association, Police Officers Wives Association, Naval Officers Wives Association, Air force Officers Wives Association*. The military elites in order to "flatter" their women and divert attention from the real political issues had encouraged their wives to start some gender-centric programs like *Better Life for Rural Women, Family Support Program/Family Economic Advancement Program*. She rejected this type of visibility as "cheap" and of no consequence to the increase of power base for women. She condemned the whole charade asking

*What visibility? Visibility for officers wives? Of course that is visibility for a certain class of women. In any case what kind of visibility are we talking about? What is the content of that visibility? What is the point of this visibility? What is the quality of this visibility? How many women are involved in this visibility in terms of the number of women in the country? What is the level of enhancement of this visibility?*

## **“Wifeism”**

Sophia also derided this visibility, saying that it has only produced the syndrome known as *wifeism*. Mosun saw “wifeism” as a menace and threat to the values of the larger society. Because of the glamour that has been built around being the wife of an officer, many young women’s ambition was to become the wife of some army officer to achieve the visibility and of course the affluence that goes with it.

There was a reference to an editorial *No longer their First Ladies* by Abati (1997) in the Guardian newspaper on 26 September 1997 in which he condemned the position of “First Ladies”. The article argued that the notion and the existence of First ladyship has become a farce. First ladies were available, in church, in institutions, in offices, in corporations, in banks, every where and they attracted to themselves privileges which they deemed consistent with such position. The writer described it all as nauseating in these terms:

Government was also acquiescent First Ladies were maintained with public funds. They went about in a convoy of cars and they enjoyed the paraphernalia of office. In many states they became so visible and influential that it was difficult to know who was in charge. Thus the First Lady stood in the way of government business whereas in no way does the privilege of being married to a public officer grant them independent access to public property. Their use of public funds was nothing short of being scandalous their parades amount to an abuse of privilege. (Abati 1997 )

However Tade, one of the directors of WLDC did not agree with Mosun on the issue of “wifeism”

*What is wrong in using first ladyship or wifeism as a tool for women empowerment? Some women in some other places have used “daughterism” and “wifeism” to become heads of state . We have Indira Ghandi, Benghazi Bhutto, Corazon Aquino, Eva Peron. Because they were adjunct to men, they got the name, they got the power. If we are thinking about changing the process itself we should not throw out any tool, because right now this constitutes a powerful tool. We have to realize that it is possible to take over power even by being a wife or a first lady. It is possible to become a real first lady that is a female head of the country. I think what needs to be done is to sensitize these military wives in these positions to be aware of what constitutes real power so that they can recognize it and learn how to use it for the betterment of women rather than in the vain way they are concentrating on themselves.*

Sophia disagreed with Tade. She thought that “wifeism” was not helping to promote democracy, which is the aspiration of every Nigerian. It is only promoting a segment of the entire women population in Nigeria. She believed that it was quite possible as Tade has suggested to use the syndrome as a tool of empowerment for women. However the

problem was that the women involved in "wifeism" were not the type of women who can utilize such a position and turn it to an advantage. Koyo agreed and described the first ladies thus:

*These women simply want to fit into the mold of "wife". They act as if they agree with the predominant view of women being the weaker sex, acting totally dependent on their husbands , enjoying their largesse and irresponsible dispensing of public funds, fanning their husbands' whims and caprices even in the public gaze. This predominant culture plus the cultural aspects coupled with the language of militarism and the whole gamut will not promote the political perspectives we are talking about. This is the damage that militarism is increasingly doing to women. Wifeism has come out of militarism how can it be good for the promotion of sustainable democracy where women can begin to participate creditably on merit.*

Sophia agreed and asked:

*What qualifies the wife of the military governor of a state to lead every woman in the state. Some of them are mediocre. They do not know their right from their left. But because they are the wife of a military governor they have become a class in themselves. The problem is that these women see themselves as the political equivalent of their husbands.*

Dope added that the most annoying thing was that these women have not addressed the problems of women, neither has it occurred to them to use their position to contribute to women's issues. They have not tapped the resources of other women conversant with such issues. The women never sought input from anybody and usually acted out of ignorance and contempt and dramatized mediocrity. She said that unfortunately this breed of military wives were not of the same genre as Eva Peron, Indira, Bhutto, and so she could not see them using their position to any advantage for women.

Koyo raised what she called the big questions for all the women at the workshop

*How will women emerge in all these? How can women come out of this military mind set? How can women work towards that goal to move women forward, using the military parlance. The men have a made a mess of running this country, so how can women rescue the nation from their hands?*

Toro lamented the limitations and the powerlessness of women because they were not part of the military and so it was absolutely impossible to effect changes from within. However she was reminded that there were women in the military but they were only in only as nurses, doctors, and care givers, not in the rank and file, where the power is. Koyo warned about encouraging women to join the military. Not only will it take forever to attain any power, the danger is that women will begin to buy into the military culture and this

would be a compromise. She reminded that women want a return to civil rule, to democratic rule, where they can have fair chances to effect changes, not to usurp violence, greed and corruption which are characteristic of military regime in Nigeria.

Brock-Utne (1985) had warned that if women are to work as peace force to change the war system into a peace system or into a paradigm of peace (Reardon 1992) they should not integrate into male institutions such as the military. Women should help men think like women instead of copying the way of the oppressor. Pettman (1996) while supporting Reardon's claim that feminism as a value system is an antithesis of militarism and also Brock-Utne's assertion that women's peace work is based on nonviolence, seeking to preserve life, she asked how is a woman who is both anti-militarist and feminist respond to women's claim to equal opportunity and the right to fight? The response I believe is to build a more secure and safe world where women would not have to suffer male domination and militarism will not be the order of the day.

Eyo exhorted the women not take too dim a view of the situation. The military has created a conducive atmosphere for women to become militant and started asking for their rights and that is why women like herself, have emerged as heads of pro-democracy and human rights groups. Militarism has produced the "warrior spirit" in women to fight against all oppressive structures (Sylvester 1992).

In sum, the women's statement indicate that militarism in Nigeria has not produced peace. Instead there has been heightened violence peacelessness general malaise and tension in the society. Military culture has been layered into the people's consciousness and the people's culture has transformed into a military culture. The women's outcry against military rule was quite resounding. The instruments of force established by the military, in its own words to "*to coerce the people to obey its laws*" had been nothing but a reign of terror and obviously so tyrannical. Militarism has obviously produced a culture of violence where everybody, including women, have been completely marginalized, emasculated, their rights violated and are officially abused. The picture of militarism, as described by the World Council of Churches (1980) whereby military values, ideology and patterns of behavior achieve a dominating influence over political, social, economic and foreign affairs of the state where society's objectives are influenced by military institutions, methods and values, where there is diminished national security clarifies the situation in Nigeria. However the women were able to establish the connection between demilitarization and peace. For the environment to be restored to what it was before the incursion of the military regime, women will have to play crucial roles. It was not only about cultivating the right

attitude in the people, it was about dismantling violence and building a culture of peace where all inhabitants of the country are treated as human beings.

### **Economic Security and Equity**

Within the framework of a culture of peace, another major theme discussed is economic security and equity. During the interviews and workshop discussions, the WLDC leaders, staff and members expressed their meanings of this theme as it relates to women. Obun emphasized there will be no economic security for women as well as for men for that matter, in Nigeria until certain conditions were met. :

*The crucial word that comes for economic security in Nigeria is stability. When we have stability we will have all these things we are talking about. We cannot have economic security when we have economic depression. We cannot have development when we have underdevelopment. We cannot have social justice when uncertainty is being created by economic malaise. We cannot have equitable distribution of wealth and resources where we have money being held by very few with the majority having none and largely because of economic instability and greed.*

Obun primarily linked economic security to stability, good governance, social justice and equitable distribution of wealth. The WLDC women agreed strongly that global economic forces and structures such as the IMF Structural Adjustment Program have aggravated economic insecurity and inequities in Nigerian society. **Women's poverty** was a theme that came out strongly in this sector. Moji painted this grim picture of the poverty of Nigerian women:

*Apart from the very small percentage of women who are comfortable, the majority is very poor. They cannot afford nutritious food, nor are they able to afford basic medical care. Many live in shanty towns cannot afford to send their children to school nor can they afford decent clothing.*

Moji immediately added that these poor women have poor husbands. She concluded that a poor woman who has a poor husband is doubly poor. There is no doubt the debt crisis and structural adjustment policies have placed the heaviest burden on poor women. Shane linked women's poverty to the World Bank/IMF Structural Adjustment Program which she described as an ill wind that has blown the majority no good. Obun confirmed this:

*Poverty has become widespread. The so-called privileged class, which was middle class, and which was quite wealthy because it was heavily subsidized is now poor. A few have gone up to the upper echelon becoming richer. The majority has gone into poverty. Just a few have remained in the middle class but are struggling to keep their hold.*

Vickers (1991) clarified, that the term “poorest of the poor” almost always refers to women. Poor men have even poorer wives, who earn less, own less and control less. Olu said women's unpaid work add to their poverty. When women do these work they are deemed as economically inactive, and so the women remain poor because they are not paid for all that work which Mackie (1993) described as child’s bearing, nurturing and education of children, homemaking, caring for the sick and the elderly, farming for subsistence, fetching and carrying wood and water. Mosun believed that even when women are in paid employment, they are underpaid and this adds to their level of poverty. The rationale for lower pay for women is that women's pay is supplementary to men’s. Women do not need to support the household because men do. What is not realized is that many households have no men, others have men who are unemployed, and many households are supported by women, when men do not earn enough (Westwood and Bhachu 1988). There is a very high poverty among female headed households which is on the increase due to deaths of spouses, divorce and male migration (Buvinic & Gupta 1997) mostly because the women bear the economic responsibility, of the children.

Olu raised the issue of Nigerian women who have to work away from home. Obun argued that even when women migrate to “greener grounds,” the burden is not lifted off them. When women work outside the country, they have to send money back home to support those who have sunk lower down the poverty line. She explained that while women earn more money when they leave the country, the truth is they can get out of the poverty situation but not out of the responsibility. Women migrate to increase their options and opportunities for self improvement, but the opportunity is available to only a very insignificant fraction of the women population. Millions are still left to battle with poverty (Obbo 1980).

Obun shifted focus to what she called a neglected category of women, those in the agrarian sector:

*The other side of the picture is that women in the agrarian sector are the most overworked, least recognized, least appreciated and least compensated. These women form the backbone of agriculture. I don't know where the men are. It is the same thing in the riverine areas. It is the women who paddle the canoes while the men hold the umbrellas.*

She said that the women are really overworked, stressed and still pressured to carry too much. They do so much and have so little to show for it. Boserup in 1970 conducted a study and highlighted the marginalization of the rural women. In the nineties the profile of these women have not changed. Small scale agriculture is still based on intensive labor and



simple technology but it is the men who have been taught to use the machinery, such as tractors and are given the means to acquire them. As a result, women are still being excluded from modernized agriculture. and so they remain poor (Rathgeber 1995)

In the struggle for democratization of society, the political economy of female poverty is central to women's struggle. Poverty among women is linked directly to the question of women's economic empowerment (Nzomo 1995) Sen and Grown (1987) said women want a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Although some South feminists have rejected the idea of lumping all Third World women together as one category of "poor and vulnerable", it is important to note that since the poor are the majority and since women constitute the majority of the poor targeting and focus on the poor will impact possibly on all women and society at large. The logic when you empower a woman you have empower the whole community is also true that when one women is set free from poverty a whole community benefits.

Educated unemployment among women was deemed to contribute to economic insecurity for women. According to Shane, women have not been able to get jobs in spite of their educational qualification due to the diploma disease and qualification escalation. Ope added that if women were to have economic security they must have the assurance that when they seek employment, jobs will be available.

Shane however, clarified that women have devised a survival strategy in the face of job scarcity. Women are now using the informal sector as a survival strategy. Rather than wait for jobs that will never come, many women have migrated into the informal sector joining the ranks of those in the distributive trade, small scale manufacturing and providing services. Kepo added that it was not only unemployed women who have migrated into the informal sector. She claimed that many women with professional training have abandoned their profession because of very low income, opting to work in the informal sector which is less prestigious in terms of status but which serves to provide basic needs an option which Jumani (1991) has called "dealing with poverty."

Kaz observed that even in the informal sector, women still have to cope with economic insecurity. From her personal experience, she said women have less access to sufficient material or monetary resources to establish independent enterprises. Women earn less, so they save less and that financial institutions have long maintained discriminatory practices, denying loans and credit to women simply on the basis of gender (Jacobsen's 1994). In some parts of Africa women are not allowed to own property so they have

nothing to put up as collateral for business. Yet without loans and credit most people cannot start or run a business. This still keeps the women down economically (Momsen 1991).

Obun, who is a banker, confirmed this problem, and added that WLDC's policy of empowerment must incorporate training programs to ensure that women imbibe the right economic attitude and values. There was a workshop on poverty alleviation, which I witnessed. One of the participants said they would appreciate if the Center could train them in some income generating skills. WLDC response was that it was not equipped to do that for lack of funds. Talking about poverty and conditions of poverty and actually putting in place strategies to combat it are two different things. WLDC strategies for women's empowerment must now wear an economic hat (Jacobsen 1994). The formal sector is no more very accessible to most people, while the informal sector is gradually becoming the backbone of most world economies (ILO Report 1992). WLDC could help women get into and survive in the informal sector for economic security.

Patsy discussed some men's negative attitudes when their women earn more than they do. They harass their wives or at times seek to destroy her because their ego and pride cannot take or outright prevent her from working outside the homes which often causes economic insecurity and psychological stress for many women. Many women give in to the men, at the expense of their own happiness, development, freedom and empowerment because they want peace in the home. She said many women need help in that area. How does one pursue peace when one's needs are being ignored and one's rights are being violated? Personal peace for women will enable them contribute to societal peace. Conflict resolutions skills might help in such situations.

Funkie described another face of economic insecurity. As there was no viable pension scheme for both men and women in the country, Funkie believed that most people are left to their own resources in old age. Regal, an international consultant and member of WLDC lamented the sacrifices women make in their productive/reproductive years only to be abandoned in their old age without anything to fall back on. She related an anecdote about a friend who conducted a research and gave it a very insinuating title "My Womb Contains the Stock Market" to portray the situation. She reminded everyone that the stock market depends on labor. The message of her friend's research was that women are doubly productive in their productive years. This is in contrast to men's theory that women's labor productivity declines in their productive years. Not only do women spend their reproductive years producing; they also produce reproductive human beings for the labor market. What also happens is that during the reproductive years, the women are at the peak of their physical strength is also the period when women lay the foundation for their economically

insecure future. In a communal culture like Nigeria, it is at this period that the woman spends most of her money not on herself but on everybody else around her, on her own immediate family, her extended family, the man's family, all of whom think that she is obliged to spend her money on them, maintaining and feeding them until she does not have an investment package for her old age. Unfortunately after her reproductive years when she is spent, nobody cares for her, not even those who have fed off her in her reproductive/productive years. Regina reiterated that this was a gender issue that women should begin to look into:

*There is no provision for women in all status, as single mothers, as widows, as divorced women, as seniors, as heads of households. Even as married women they are as Americans put it always one pay cheque away from poverty, one pay cheque away from homelessness.*

Mayo declared that women's ultimate political power would be realized when they have economic power while Regal thought that education was the medium of empowerment. She argued that with educational achievement, Nigerian women would have a voice as they did in the colonial days. But as far as Obun was concerned neither money nor education had given the Nigerian women of today the power and status they deserved. The women remain very marginalized people. She decried the vicious cycle that women cannot have access to resources if they are not in position of power, and they cannot have power when they do not have access to the resources. Kaz, an economist and a director at the Center, said economic security for women has become a serious problem. It has always been claimed that economic empowerment is not when you give fish to a person but it is when you teach the person to fish. But the problem these days have shifted. She explained:

*Today, even when you teach the person to fish and you give the person fishing equipment, the person has no where to fish. There is no more basic and essential infrastructure support. What then does one do? Provide the pond and provide the fish?*

The women at the WLDC were able to specifically identify with some of the factors that Baud and Smyth (1997) claimed as contributing to the economic insecurity of women. These included unemployment, conflicts, violence, disease, social disintegration, environmental destruction, breakdown of the family, inept government institutions, and global poverty. From the interviews and discussions, it was clear that the WLDC women's portrayal of economic insecurity and inequities for Nigerian women echoed the growing evidence of this dimension of a culture of violence entrapping women worldwide. This lack of economic security and equity spans all sectors. Likewise Derree Safa et al (1997) have

noted that rather than showing improvement, the socio-economic status of the majority of women in South nations has deteriorated considerably throughout the decade. With few exceptions, women's relative access to economic resources, income and employment has worsened, their burden of work has increased and their relative and even absolute health, nutritional, and educational status has declined. The economic crisis has not only excluded women from formal jobs; it has also prevented them from employment as practicing their professions even in self-employment. Women's overall effort at economic security has not given them any viable position occupationally and the appropriate reward (Duggan 1997). Vickers (1994) and George (1994) have also confirmed that wherever the Structural Adjustment Program has been introduced all over the world, it has resulted in the pauperization of the majority and the further enrichment of a minority.

Alhaja M, another participant, linked violence against women with the prevailing economic situation brought about by the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program. She believed that domestic violence had escalated because men had come under great stress, and so usually vented their frustrations on their wives and female partners. Similarly, Kaz linked violence to economic insecurity of women:

*In my own study on gender economic insecurity, which I have just completed at the University of Oxford, I find that physical violence impoverishes the women some more. When the men lose their jobs they now depend on the women who are surviving on the minimal income. The women bear the additional burden. The troubling thing is that on top of all these, the men still vent their frustrations on the women through direct physical violence, which has dramatically increased. Women find themselves in the company of men who ravage them and render them impotent, unable to function and so unable to achieve economic security.*

According to Kaz, research had shown that women who are in a position of dependency are usually the most abused of all women. The WLDC women clearly feel passionately about the inequities in the domestic field. As various researchers have pointed out, women are at an economic disadvantage because they have to make the eternal sacrifice and the superhuman effort to make the home survive (Baud & Smyth, 1997). Vickers (1993) noted that poverty does not come to women altogether from lack of education and training, or from a generational culture of poverty, but from the excessive demands imposed on them. Jenson, Hagen and Reddy (1988) believed that the demands on working women are tremendous and at times impossible and unfair. Rather than change the principles of the society, the working woman is expected to stretch herself beyond limit.

Westwood and Bhachu (1988) noted that men tend not support or resist women's attempt to gain economic equality because they think this would threaten their superior status

in the job market as well as their patriarchal status. According to Obbo (1980) some men claim that women become too “big headed” when they have economic strength. Women should hence “ just accept” the superior position accorded to men by the Bible and the Qu’ran.

From my observation and discussions with the women, the WLDC does not seem to be doing enough in regard to economic empowerment of women. There was a workshop on poverty alleviation, which I witnessed during my study at the Center. One of the participants said they would appreciate if the Center could train them in some income generating skills. The WLDC responded it was not equipped to do that for lack of funds. Talking about poverty and conditions of poverty and actually putting in place strategies to combat it are two different things.

I also believe the WLDC needs to have a focus on women who cannot get jobs in the formal sector. Nigeria has a job oriented mentality. The growing reality is that there is less and less jobs being created and technology is replacing humans. The formal sector is no more accessible to most people, both men and women but more so for women. The informal sector is gradually becoming the backbone of most world economies (ILO Report, 1992). The WLDC should therefore help women get into and survive in the informal sector if they are to truly achieve economic security. There is need for the WLDC to demystify the notion that women are underachieving unless they are working in the formal sector. The informal sector may not be a bed of roses, but it has less restrictions than the formal sector with its frustrations and glass ceiling for women (Jumani, 1991). The WLDC should therefore begin to encourage women to take a second look at the informal sector no matter their level of education. However, one major problem inherent in the informal sector is having access to capital (Arronson, 1991). The WLDC could see what support it can give to women in this sector in their efforts at economic survival.

Nnoli (1988) said if development is linked with peace it is also linked with security, which is protection from both direct and structural violence. He added that security that ignores the forces of change, and development which violates the aspiration of the great masses cannot survive in the long run. Security, development and peace in a society is guaranteed when (i) the political power of the masses in short is ensured (ii) when there is a serve-the-people ethic (iii) when there is self reliance and autonomy in development (iv) when there is social justice based on freedom from exploitation, (v) when there is economic welfare for all in a society of abundance with special attention to raising the level of life of marginalized groups such as women, children, and the disadvantaged (Nnoli 1988).

Peace, development and security are thus a web of interwoven relationships and processes. They all address themselves to people's existence, happiness, and liberation. With the implementation of the interrelated values of social justice, participation and harmonious relationship between people and nature, as well as between people and their own society and other societies, the individual is elevated to a new and higher level of existence and a measure of economic security is assured (Nnoli, 1988).

A culture of peace demands that the violence of economic and social deprivation be confronted. There can be no peace until certain conditions are met. Redressing this inequality in the society is addressing some of the causes of structural violence. Women's capacity for leadership must be utilized to the full and to the benefit of all in order to progress towards a culture of peace. Their limited participation in governance has led to slowing down of processes. I believe that some of the women as suggested by UNESCO (1996) recognized the fact that they can be the source of innovative approaches to peace building as their role in giving and sustaining life has provided them with insights and skills essential to peaceful human relations and social development

In sum, based on their responses in the interviews and workshop discussions, it can be concluded that the WLDC women see major challenges in transforming Nigerian gender relations and structures to improve economic security and equity for women. The building of a culture of peace in Nigeria cannot avoid seeking creative strategies to face and overcome these challenges.

### **Human Rights**

During the interviews and workshop discussions, the WLDC women related to the theme of human rights primarily in the context of women. However, the women do acknowledge that the human rights of all Nigerians, whether men or women have been seriously violated. Eyo found it incomprehensible that Nigeria as a member of the United Nations and having been an active participant and signatory to all the five International Bills of Rights should be violators of people's rights. Eyo stated however that Nigeria does not have a legitimate government, which was the dream and right of the Nigerian people. She said:

*Human Rights for us in Nigeria constitutes different things for the generality of the people it presumes restoration of governance and good governance. For us women it arouses the hope of equality, development and peace. For children the dream is a just and sociable society in which they can grow. Is this too much to ask? I cannot understand why the government is violating people's rights.*

Obun, one of the collaborators of the WLDC, severely criticized the police force, that is supposed to maintain human rights, as the notorious arm of government that has been perpetuating human rights violations. This is confirmed in the US Report on Human Rights in Nigeria (1997):

**“Police extortion, violence, torture, and lethal force is reportedly common. Mobile anticrime police routinely shot people suspected of armed robbery. Police are empowered to make arrests without warrants if they believe there is reasonable suspicion of an offense” (p. 7 )**

This clearly contravenes Article 9 of the Declaration of Human Rights which states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile.

The role of the Nigerian Human Rights Commission was deemed to be very problematic. Kaz thought it paradoxical that a government that did not respect human rights should institute a Human Rights Commission. However, Eyo explained that the Commission was not necessarily evidence of commitment to human rights by the Nigerian government but just a “smoke screen” to divert the international community’s attention from the various human rights violations committed in Nigeria.

*Government rules by decrees and the Constitution is set aside. There is a clamp down on opposition figures and critics. Media houses critical of government are closed down, press immunity withdrawn. Journalists are jailed for failing to release sources of information to government. Academic freedom and responsibilities are being eroded with closures of universities and arbitrary removal of vice-chancellors and installation of military administration in the universities. Freedom of expression, publication and association without interference and restraints cannot be practiced. And yet the government sets up a Human Rights Commission. To do precisely what, we need to be told.*

Eyo is the Executive Director of one of the very few human rights organizations headed by women in Nigeria. She was therefore well aware of human rights issues. Mayo, the political scientist, linked violations of rights to poor governance:

*We cannot have fundamental human rights if we do not have a good government. In democracy we will have a semblance of human rights because the system has to be kept. Democracy may not be the best form of government as some people have suggested but it is a better option from the evil we are in right now. The government cannot continue to rule by fiat or by decrees. Neither can it continue to change the court procedures. Tribunals are abuse of human rights. It does mean that the legislature cannot be found guilty. That is totalitarian. Anyway this is not strange in Nigeria. During the colonial regime we were ruled by tribunal as well.*

Funkie warned against the general craving for a democratically elected government. She said that having a democratic government will not automatically guarantee human rights. She said that governments need to be sensitive and sympathetic. Obun said although democracy does not automatically guarantee human rights, it was still the best of all the forms of governance. President Clinton of United States of America reiterated this clearly linking human rights with democracy in 1996 at the University of Connecticut at a Center dedicated to Senator Dodd who was a prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial He said:

Democracy is the best guarantor of human rights -not a perfect one to be sure; ---it is still the system that demands respect for the individual and it requires responsibility from the individual to thrive. Democracy cannot eliminate all violations of human rights or outlaw human frailty. But more than any system of government, democracy protects those rights, defends victims of their abuse, punishes perpetrators and prevents a downward spiral of revenge. So promoting democracy and defending human rights is good for the world

Eyo said Nigeria has not been a good example of human rights promoter and of good governance. She immediately related it to the Ogoni trial where a military tribunal was used to sentence opposition activist to death in a civil case, appeal was not allowed and the accused were executed immediately after the judgment. This constituted a violation of some key articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 10) which says:

*Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charges against him.*

The women's statements confirm the US Report on Human Rights in Nigeria (1997) that: "Extrajudicial killings remained common. Minority rights and environmental activists were executed after their conviction by tribunal did not conform to the internationally accepted norms for a fair trial." (p. 19). Civil, political, economic and social systems violate the rights of the individual if they do not provide the individuals with the conditions to exercise their rights (Vincent 1986). Human rights should be upheld by institutions, structures, relationships and systems that allow everyone to live in dignity as a human being without transgressing the individual's as well as collective rights of all people in a society and across nations (Diokno 1983).

Eyo a lawyer reflected that Nigeria has failed to live up to its national and international legal obligation to uphold the human rights of women. Although the constitution of Nigeria states that all people are equal and should enjoy their human rights,



the state has been the greatest violator of those rights. Every aspect of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Elimination of Women's Rights* (CEDAW) has always been violated. Tade added that each successive Nigerian government has always been violators of women's rights through "torture, cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment of women."

Tade, the Constitutional law expert explained that there are positive laws like labor laws prohibiting the discrimination of women in the area of employment, particularly, with reference to equal opportunity and equal pay for equal work but these were usually not effected in Nigeria. Other areas of violations are that the police department does not allow women to stand as sureties for bail, the immigration department requires a married woman to submit, together with an application for a passport, a letter of consent from her husband, even though there are no laws to these effect. Above all women do not have a reprieve at the legal courts because of the prevailing sexist attitude of men at the bar and at the bench.

Sophia, an historian and member of WLDC, clarified that it is not just the military governments of Nigeria that had discriminated against women. She believed it started from the colonial government who discriminated against women in terms of access to education and government jobs. She explained:

*The white man with his Victorian attitude that does not have regard for the woman came to plant and set off this attitude of discrimination against women in our traditional society. Women used to have a lot of power in our traditional society. Gradually the powers of women became eroded until we are where we are today almost without any dignity.*

Tade shared how she was always asked why women's rights should merit special treatment when there are other groups whose rights issues should also be dealt with, like the children, people with disabilities, indigenous people, and so on. She said her response has always been that women are the "bigger half" of the earth's population and at least 50% of these are women, so attending to the needs of women mean attending to the needs of these people.

Obun identified violations within the marriage institution, as causing division rather than integration among men and women. She specifically mentioned **polygamy**, which is escalating in the name of culture. Obun believed that polygamy, with all its ills, is being forced on most women. She explained that there are three legally accepted forms of marriages in Nigeria: Islamic, traditional, and civil. Of these three, polygamy is allowed in two, Islamic and traditional. Men and women have the choice, that which allows polygamy or the one that does not. But it has consistently been seen, Obun declared, that men would

opt for the civil at first, then end up in another system. The truth is many women have gone into marriages with a particular form of expectation but have ended where they did not bargain for. The men would marry in the civil ordinance but would eventually transform the marriage into a polygamous one, on the excuse that tradition and culture gave them the right to marry another woman. This has caused much discontentment, unhappiness, problems and even disintegration at household level. This, to Obun, is a serious violations of women's rights.

Men have various reasons for going into polygamous marriage. The most common is purely for economic reason, as the arrangement is usually advantageous for the men. The men have the wives to contribute and work freely without pay on their husband's farms. This saves the man payment of hired hands to work on the farm. Also a man's prestige is enhanced through the number of marriage contracts he makes. There are no recorded advantages for the women (Boserup 1997). However Ogundipe-Leslie (1995), in some interviews conducted with some women traders, was told especially by the older ones that they would not mind their husbands taking on junior wives to be in charge of running the home and cooking for the man while they, the senior wives have the freedom to go out to manage their business and even travel to engage in transborder trading. It was obvious that not all women were opposed to polygamy, as Obun would have us believe. There are some women who would exploit the situation to their own advantage.

Patsy thought it was high time that culture was challenged because "unpeaceful" practices which amount to violations of women's rights. She said culture in Nigerian society dictates that a woman who does not marry or have a child has no status in the society. Culture also dictates that the man is stronger and more knowledgeable than the woman, and that a woman cannot have a separate purse from the man. She urged the women to look into these cultural problems and work for their elimination. She believes that a culture of peace in the society will continue to be a mirage if women cannot truly be liberated from the shackles of cultural oppression that originate from the men. Obun agreed that challenging the culture was possible and viable and in fact interesting and exciting. If people do not challenge prevailing practices there can be no change. Koyo ventured that challenging culture may be difficult. Koyo therefore suggested that women should evolve an ideology of their own, one that is supportive of women, and a culture that sees society from the perspective of women. She was aware that there would be resistance, but women must come up with an ideology that favors them, to replace patriarchy and all other hierarchical structures. But this ideology must still be acceptable to the men, she added.

Women's knowledge and power are liberating forces for change and since women are culture carriers they can effect the desired cultural changes (Howe 1985). Culture is not static. It is virile, changes effected by women could lead to decline of powerlessness (Haskett & Samuels 1994) and break down cultural barriers between men and women (Basow 1990) since violations of women's of women's rights by men center on power and presumed powerlessness (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995).

The role of religious beliefs in violations of women's human rights was also a major focus of discussion among the WLDC women. Kepo, for example, described the "crazy" idea peddled by some men that women liked to be beaten and would not be happy unless they were beaten. She added that some men have unashamedly acknowledged they enjoyed beating their wives and that wife beating was a "corrective measure." This is allegedly supported, in Islam, by the Hadith (the Muslim informal laws of acceptable practices) which states that "when a wife proves to be stubborn, she should be beaten lightly on the legs to bring her to caution."

Koyo explained that the two main religions, Islam and Christianity, which are widely practiced in Nigeria, have laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity This actually is confirmed by Ishay (1997) and Paul & Miller (1984) who said that despite many controversies regarding the origins of human rights, religious humanism has influenced secular and modern understanding of rights. Origins of universal ethics are greatly indebted to the Bible whose teachings are shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. **Genesis 1:27** affirms "So God created man in His own image in the image of God He created him, **male and female** He created them." **Romans 10:12** says "For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him." **Galatians 3:28** establishes the equality of the sexes "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus, for all are equal before God." (Johnson 1996). Ishay (1997) also quotes texts from the Qu'ran to support human rights in Islam **Sura 12** says "The society thus organized must live under laws, that would guide their everyday life, based on eternal principles of righteousness and fair dealing---honesty to one another ---yet shaped to suit times and circumstances and the varying needs of average man and woman----O ye who believe, the law of equality, is prescribed to you."

However Koyo added that the practitioners of both religions are involved in violations of peoples rights. Desmond Tutu (1996) said religion which should produce peace, reconciliation, tolerance and respect for human rights has often promoted the

opposite conditions. Esha decried that women have no place to hide, not only do Nigerian women suffer from state repression, not being protect by the law, they are also under the burden of repressive religious laws. She cited the Sharia laws claiming that Muslim women's rights have been violated by fundamentalist Muslims who divined their own ideas and purported them to be Islamic. She clarified that these acts were not Islamic but Muslim making this distinction:

*“Islamic “are those laws that have come directly from Allah and so we cannot do anything about them but “Muslim “laws are those made by people who are Muslims, followers of Islam but not by Islam itself. Sharia laws fall into that category.*

Esha further claimed that Sharia law was fundamentally premised on the notion of male guardianship over women and was characterized by many features of inequality between men and women. These Muslim laws are sexist in concept, and are at times passed as Islamic laws resulting in misinterpretation of the Qu'ran. She added that Constitution provides broader legal rights for women than those accorded through Islamic law. Nonetheless the Sharia and customary laws continued to be employed in customary courts especially in Northern Nigeria, which is predominantly Muslim, and women do not know about this. Kaz said that there was a problem in the Christian fold too. She specifically mentioned the resistance to women's ordination in both the Catholic and Anglican Churches, which she claimed was a violation of women's rights as embodied in Article 18 of the Declaration:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to practice alone or in community --- to manifest his/her religion in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.*

Of this Eyo added:

*Women who want to serve God by serving the sacrament are told that they can only serve food at church bazaars. Women have suffered severely under religions especially from the hands of the state and religious leaders who are usually more secular in attitude than spiritual. Women have to be sensitized to religious laws that do not favor them. We hope that as we continue with this sensitization, women will begin to ponder seriously about the different ways that they have been suppressed through religious laws.*

Women have always been deeply involved with religious beliefs and practices. They have always been the biggest consumers of religion but on the whole they have been badly served by the religions themselves (Young 1994), whereas the basic assumption is that the individuals referring to both male and female in religious groups will have the same

feelings, experiences and reactions. (James 1901). All religions preach equality. No religion has endorsed the superiority of one gender over the other or so it seems, but in so far as the female gender is concerned, this concept has been well and truly ignored or corrupted. Women have had to confront exclusion from all spheres of life, economic, political, educational, social and even religious. The female is therefore subjected to discrimination in affairs of the soul, spirit, mind and body (Young 1993, Puttick, 1997, King, 1995).

The State has the responsibility to change religious and customary laws to acceptable forms (An-Na'Im 1994). Religious rights have however been lost in the discussions of human rights, this has cut many from their right to religion whereas a religious individual or association has rights to exist in order to discharge religious duties (Witte 1996). The WLDC women also acknowledged the complexities and resistances posed by cultural traditions which maintain and reinforce violations of women's human rights. The biases reflected in religions beliefs and practices are, of course not unique to Nigeria. As Coomaraswamy (1982) has stated, issues of women's rights continue to accentuate the tension between tradition and modernity. When the alternative to tradition is modernization, there is a built-in cultural prejudice, which is often the justification of the denial of equal rights for women. It seems that women are still confronted by severe violations of their rights not only in Nigeria but also throughout the world. For instance, bride burning is still practiced in India, despite the state law and public outcry against it (Rathgeber, 1992). In Morocco, the male is supreme, no female can succeed to the throne even when there are no male descendants (Claire, 1996). Female genital mutilation continues unabated in some countries (Rathgeber, 1990).

Another major challenge for the WLDC women is clearly to relate with the powerful influence of religious traditions. As Muslim scholars like Halim (1994) have argued, Sharia laws accord only partial and limited rights to women and there is no equality between men and women. Sharia family laws violate the human rights of Muslim women, even in the most secularized Islamic societies. Religious and customary laws are usually implemented independently of the structures and mechanism of the State and so are difficult to change. Shari'a was constructed by early male Muslim jurists who acted in accordance with their historical context and were not the divine and eternal laws. Some of these laws are not appropriate given today's context (An-Na'Im 1994). Attempts must be made to change these laws. It will not be easy, he said, but it has to start somewhere. Religions in essence promise eternal reward or endless punishment based on performance not on gender. Yet prejudices towards females in religions, like in most spheres of life, have survived and

thrived on the basis that men and women are different. The only viable and acceptable way of changing religious and customary laws is by transforming popular beliefs and attitudes and thereby changing common practice. This can be done through a comprehensive and intensive program of formal and informal education supported by social services and other administrative measures. Education is necessary not only to change people's attitudes about the necessity or desirability of continuing a particular religious or customary law in question but also to provide a viable and legitimate alternative view of the matter.

Tade said that the rights of women are entrenched in the rights of all humans, but unfortunately women's rights always have to be addressed differently as if they are some alien. She said it was to correct this anomaly that the slogan "*Women's Rights are Human Rights*" came to being. Byres (1994) has tried to distinguish and make clarification between "women's rights" and "women's human rights" and affirmed that women suffer from violations of their human dignity and human rights, although these violations may be influenced by gender they are at times not indistinguishable from the violations suffered by some other marginal groups. So the violations of women rights have indeed been violations of their human rights. Donnelly (1989) has warned about confusing human rights and human dignity, which many people mistakenly treat as equivalent concepts. He claimed that there are many conceptions of human dignity that do not imply human rights that there are societies and institutions that aim to realize human dignity entirely independent of the idea or practice of human rights.

Another key issue that came out of the discussions by the WLDC women, was the link between development and human rights. Eyo suggested without realizing it, the women themselves have been perpetuating the disadvantaged position of women. She decried the attitude in some women's development NGOs who think the work of human rights is too radical and will not get involved in it. It is plain ignorance for women in development not to see human rights as central to development. Human rights are about human needs, that extend from proper nutrition, clothing, shelter, healthcare and education to participating in decisions that frame people lives and these are certainly development issues (Selby 1987; Rathgeber 1992). If this attitude continued the results would continue to be disastrous claimed Eyo. She envisioned a new situation when "No more will women say I am not into human rights, we do development work." She explained:

*Human rights are about the fullest realization of all potentials of all human beings. It is about protecting the very individual groups of individual with a view to assisting them to realize their fullest potentials as human beings and that is what development is all about, therefore there is no separating human*

*rights and development. They are like Siamese twins. You cannot talk about one without the other. Human rights help to realize goals and motivation.*

One more aspect in society where women's rights are continuously violated is the media. Although one of the workshop topics was the idea of "sharing and free flow of information," as emphasized in the UNESCO Culture of Peace framework, the women primarily related media to gender issues and inequality and violations of women's rights. Obun, for example, noted that although men and women have always been stereotyped by the media, the results have been more damaging for women since women have always been portrayed and encouraged to be dependent and passive. Likewise, Shane pointed to the peripheral coverage of women's achievement and concerns in news, public affairs programming, in documentaries and sports. Furthermore,

*Women are portrayed as sex objects while men are shown in a wide variety of occupational roles. Television reinforce the notion of men as naturally dominant and women as naturally subordinate.*

Mosun another media woman and a member of WLDC then accused the magazines, which are largely produced and consumed by women, to be the worst in their portrayal of women.

*They extensively cover gossips about women. Most of the stories are about women and their relationships or lack of a relationship with some man. If she is single she must be sleeping with some big shot to get to the level where she is. If she is married she must have a wimp of a husband who cannot control her and so she has slept around to get to a position of authority if there is no evidence these are created. The coverage is usually not about the women's achievement even when they have managed to get to position of authority. In magazines, working women are seriously underrepresented.*

Seyi was annoyed by the flippant and stereotypical topics such as *How to catch a man. How to keep a man. How to get a husband.* Shane claimed whereas men could get free publicity, women even have to pay for it. Many women have therefore been intimidated into silence and so would not engage in public discourse of issues, even those that affected them.

Dope then directly addressed the WLDC executives and said that seminars, workshops, conferences, were not sufficient for promoting free flow of unbiased information about women. She said that the WLDC should encourage more media interaction and more publicity of their activities and run programs to tell other women NGOs the need for publicizing their activities. She bemoaned women's complacency and saw it as

a major impediment to development. Finally, Mosun a media consultant complained about the dominance of male owners and managers in the media industry and in the government Media Commissions. Despite the obviously powerful role of the media in undermining the human rights of women the WLDC activist such as Dope and Mosun called on their colleagues to continue to transform the media into a tool for a culture of peace, although this will not be easy or quick.

The WLDC women would likely heed Ilumoka's (1994) warning that African women should not buy into the demand of the international women's rights movement whose human rights projects can be dominated by the political concerns of privileged women. She says human rights movements have gone beyond quests for formal equality. For the African context, the demand for economic, social and cultural rights have the same prominence as the demand for political rights. She says that the discourse on rights can privilege certain empowered groups whilst it neutralizes or delegitimizes other forms of struggles for well being and human dignity.

The women in the WLDC agree that in this quest for rights, the elite women in Nigeria should not use human rights discourse and democracy and good governance talks to strengthen their already privileged position in the society. Human rights discourse is still largely in the domain of the enlightened ones (Cook, 1994). A Center like the WLDC should ensure that discourse on rights focuses on unjust systems of allocation of resources, on the freedom of every person, on claims for social justice at local, national as well as international level. To achieve these goals, women need to empower each other, and collaborate in struggles against violations and enforce claims to their dignity and well being.

Overall, the WLDC women's perspectives on human rights flow understandably from their awareness and experiences of violations against Nigerian women in the areas of physical violence, social inequities and cultural subordination. There is a clear recognition among most participants of the underpinning principle of power. The real issue then is how women can turn the table to counter oppression from the vantagepoint of power?.

Romany (1994) affirmed the state's usual complicity in the deprivation of life, liberty and security of women. She condemned state abuses, both directly and indirectly as manifested in the failure to institute political and legal protections of the basic rights, integrity and dignity of women. In spite of the fact that human rights discourse is a powerful tool within international law to condemn State acts that infringe on the basic notions of civility and citizenship, human rights discourse has not been responsive to most basic rights of women. Civil, political, economic and social systems violate the rights of the individual if they do not provide the individuals with the conditions to exercise their rights. Human rights



need to be seen and practiced as a holistic concept which every individual and all peoples should enjoy (Vincent 1986). Human rights should be upheld by institutions, structures, relationships and systems to allow everyone to live in dignity as a human being without transgressing the individual's as well as collective rights of all people in a society and across nations (Diokno 1983). WLDC women obviously thought this was not happening in Nigeria, especially in the case of women's human rights.

### **Political Security and Democracy.**

From the interviews and workshop discussions, the political situation in Nigeria seemed to be a great concern for the women at WLDC. This is not surprising because the world is political and women cannot opt out of it (Esbery & Johnston 1994). Nonetheless it was a departure from the historical observation that women and politics should not mix (Rowbotham's 1992). It was clear that the WLDC women considered political security and democracy as an essential basis for a culture of peace. For example, Mayo, one of the facilitators at the WLDC, linked every woe and conflict in Nigeria to political insecurity. She believed that political security meant democracy, a dream that has eluded the people of Nigeria for a long time. The dream to have power in their hands is what has driven many Nigerians to continue to seek democracy (Petersen 1962).

But Yemi, a political scientist, and member of WLDC argued that democracy goes beyond having the opportunity and ability to vote for politicians of choice. From her definition, Nigeria has never experienced democracy even under the brief spells of political rule. She warned that democracy may not solve all Nigeria's problem. It is not utopian, but for now it is a desirable form of government. She clarified:

*We all say in common parlance that democracy is a rule of the people, by the people for the people. a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them or their agents under a free electoral system. It is also a state or society characterized by formal equality of rights and privileges of the common people, the political or social equality of a community This is Utopian. There have been shortcomings limitations and problems that have been identified with the concept of democracy. I therefore cannot say that it is the best form of government ever but for now, it is good and there is no alternative especially in the Nigerian context. The beauty of it is that the peoples' will always prevail in true democracy. Democracy ensures the empowering of the majority that is why it is a more acceptable form of government.*

Obun, gave what I regarded as an avid description of the situation in Nigeria when she said that the country was in a state of convulsion. She added that if Nigeria wanted to achieve political security there should be a focus on how to achieve good governance which is

based on equity, equality, justice, fairplay. Mayo specified the conditionalities for political security and the restoration of democracy.

*We can only have political security if the society is properly ordered and we do what is right, according to our conscience, when the disparity between the haves and have not is not so wide. We cannot even talk of personal security because those who do not have will continue to go around at night to take from those who have. and there will continue to be break down of law and order. If there is equitable distribution, of resources and people have access to the minimum things in life, we will not be afraid of ourselves . Most people do not have access to the basic things of life and that is why we do not have peace.*

For Mayo, a truly democratic society is one where basic amenities like water, light, houses to live in are provided. She deplored that Nigeria was still struggling with the lowest level of needs according to Maslow, while some other societies are at the highest level of needs which is self-actualization. In fact, Hedley (1992) affirms this when he said that, by any reasonable measure, the bulk of the world population who live in non-industrialized countries have not satisfied their basic needs of food water and shelter.

Olu drew attention to the hypocrisy of the statement by the then Head of State in Nigeria, Sanni Abacha to celebrate the Independence of Nigeria on the First of October

**“We as a people have achieved the fundamental objective of establishing peace and stability in our country. We have restored in our people once again a true sense of national direction and unity of purpose which should make us look to the future with hope and confidence.”** (Daily Times, 1997)

For Olu, this picture painted by the Head of State did not fit the Nigeria of 1997 which she suggested had become a prison yard, where some were chained in their cells while others were denied their elementary rights and fundamental freedoms. Nwankwo (1997), one of the human rights activists in Nigeria, claimed in a newspaper article, that peace and stability was far from the realities in Nigeria:

**“The entire population lies prostrate before a successful conqueror and the vocal elements of the opposition and their constituencies are so harassed and suppressed that they are left to grind their teeth in anger and resentment. The Head of State’s Pax Nigeriana, is the dreaded peace of the graveyard from which many are fleeing with their families. What kind of peace can emerge in a land where virtually all the ingredients of peace, such as truth, justice, good governance, security, are in short supply.”** (Vanguard, 1997).

Dayo, a political scientist in WLDC, offered her own interpretation of the Head of State’s statement:

*I wondered which Nigeria the Head of State was talking about. The statement sounded like a dream or a big anniversary joke, not the truth about Nigeria whose peace remains as fragile as ever. This was a lie by the self-serving leadership of the country. The truth is despite our desperate peace escapades in Liberia and Sierra Leone our quest for real peace at home remain an illusion which cannot be achieved in the present climate of apathy, defeat, stagnation, lies, and false peace.*

Alhaja, a program participant, recalled another example of government's hypocrisy and propaganda. She remembered the day "they walked for peace" in 1995, referring to the annual celebration of the **Day of Peace** on September 16. She said:

*They went to carry some boys who were living under the bridge . They put them somewhere and said that they will train them in barbing, shoe making, tailoring. They said they will not teach them mechanic and driving because they will become armed robbers and start stealing peoples cars. The government showed it on television . We thought it was good because we are afraid of these boys .When the Day of Peace has passed the boys were released and they went back to harassing people. Government has said nothing about the project since then.*

The picture of peace and political stability which the government was promoting was contradicted by Allan of Edmonton Journal in an article of February 20 1998

The truth is that the major ethnic groups and minorities in Nigerian are sequestered in mutual suspicion and are engaged in traitorous fashion in the games of self preservation. (Edmonton Journal 20 Feb. 1998)

Sophia, another facilitator at WLDC explained that for true democracy enthroned, there has to be some fundamental changes. Corruption which is endemic in the polity of Nigeria has to be addressed. "Morality, integrity, and public accountability" should be given serious consideration. Democracy at that moment looked more like a selection process where the favored ones, with some powerful people behind them, can get elected into positions even when they are not qualified or do not have enough support, she added. She also talked about electoral malpractice which she said like all other forms of corruption have eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. Collier (1996) had confirmed that Nigeria has a reputation for private as well as public corruption and its legal and audit systems are not perceived as adequate.

When I was in Nigeria, the WLDC had identified corruption as a "monster eating deep into the society". It therefore held a national conference on the theme *Good Governance And Economic Growth: Seeking The Causes Of And Cures For Corruption*. Onajide (1997) the keynote speaker at the conference defined corruption as actions incompatible with truth justice and breach of trust and linked it with low ethical standards

and the fact that people do not know their rights. She also called it "executive lawlessness" a deviation from certain standards of behavior where leaders were not the only guilty ones but also the followers. She also called it an abuse of trust and privilege and until Nigerians are ready to obtain benefits the legitimate ways there will always be corruption.

I found it significant that Onajide would see corruption as a human rights issue. Corruption affects distribution of power and authority, formal government policy, and the character and constitution of political elite in the country (Scott 1982). Unfortunately the three types of phenomenon contained in the term corruption, "bribery, extortion and nepotism", as identified by Alatas (1978) were present in Nigeria as indicated by the women. Alatas (1994) had described Singapore as a model country without the problem of corruption meaning that the authority is not dominated and manipulated by corrupt elements that taxes are properly collected, that the courts are not at the service of the corrupt, that the police perform their duty without bribes and so do other services for the public. This appear like the type of conditions that will promote political security.

Obun had described Nigeria as a country in a state of convulsion. She ventured that if Nigeria wanted to achieve political security for a culture of peace, there should be a focus on how to achieve good governance which she said is based on equity, equality, justice, fairplay Among the WLDC women, a range of strategies were suggested to enhance democracy in Nigeria. Sophia, for example, suggested political education to effect changes in attitudes. Dayo, on the other hand, called for civil disobedience, an uprising of the people against oppressive rulers for political security. She cited the Philippines' where the people power overthrew Marcos and wondered if Nigerians would ever be able to pull through such an act. It was interesting that Dayo should bring up the issue of civil disobedience which is actually one of Gandhi's method of non violent revolution. Somerville (1985) called it peace revolution. The people have a right of revolution, non cooperation, boycotts, sit downs, non violent breaking of laws which could be a political decision when a government has become despotic or tyrannical (Somerville 1985).

Limbo cautioned on the possibility of an unscheduled explosion because the prerequisites for such eruptions were present in Nigeria. Obun said the country was like a ticking time bomb, a nation *waiting to explode*. The marginalization of a section of the society, violations of people's rights, the deterioration and at times total collapse of infrastructure, decline in services, education, health, environment are all potential time bomb bases for explosion. This type of revolution is a decisive rupture of the political order in which oppressed people resort to violence to seize power from their oppressors to establish new forms of political rule that promises a just social order (Hunter 1995)

Obun cannot see what she called a political culture of peace being enthroned in Nigeria for awhile. She also did not see the entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria for a long time to come. She concluded that Nigeria is young in governance and so will continue to make mistakes that are inevitable with growth:

*I do not see a political culture of peace settling down by tomorrow. I do not see it during this research. I do not see it in my lifetime and I hope to live another 20 years. I do not wish my country ill but I am just being realistic. We are just grasping at the wind.*

Nigeria's political history has been quite chequered and has been a very hostile terrain for the people, especially women. It was therefore understandable the despondency and near pessimism of these women. But as one involved in peace issues, my attitude was that all was not lost until all was lost. A culture of peace gives hope. I hoped that this was not lost on the women.

Koyo affirmed Obun's fears about eruption of violence in the society even when democracy is restored. She believed the most important factor in this search for political security was "*how does Nigeria civilianize its society?*" She said there could not be political security without the civilianization of the society. There has been too much militarization of the society, that it was beginning to look like Nigeria's permanent heritage. Mayo said she was not excited about the oncoming transition to civil rule because of the possibility of the government continuing with the military tradition, both in style and purpose.

This raises the issue of how plausible is it to re-infuse, re-inject values of social order and justice into a society that has gone awry with military values. In short can a peace system replace the war system? Said (1971) saw the military as a subculture, a protagonist of change. Could civilians with the rights values be protagonists of change? Can the society restore its own ideals and re-civilianise a society that has been highly militarized? These questions can be responded to in another research after Nigeria has returned to civil rule.

Mayo raised a question "*How does the country produce a democratic person to lead the country.?*" An undemocratic person could not be at the head of a democratic set up, and a truly democratic person is one who is ready to assume responsibility she added. Good governance or democratic governance or democratic citizenship do not just happen by chance. They are all cultivated hence can be taught. Presently Nigerians have a considerable dissatisfaction with political leaders and political institutions because they are not responsive to their needs and interests. There was therefore apprehension that there would not be democratic citizens to rule the country. A democratic citizen is not just one who is classified as good citizen, patriotic, loyal and obedient to the state rather it is one who is

also a critic of the state, one who is able and willing to participate in its improvement (Engle & Ochoa 1988). It is the right of individuals to participate in decisions within the society as a whole. It is the right of the citizens to be informed and have knowledge. (Engle & Ochoa 1988). To establish a democratic society certain values must be taught, the most basic is respect for the individual. This value includes the protection by the state of the life and general well being of the individual (Ippolito, Walker & Kolson (1988) said

Mayo said that Nigeria has experimented with various systems, the American system, the British system, the military system and none has produced political security for the people. Jarmon (1988) confirmed this when he said that in the quest for political legitimacy Nigeria has been influenced by four types of political rule, colonial, independent civilian and military rule. This has obviously created problems for Nigeria.

However Mayo expressed some optimism in the search for a democratic citizen. She said it would probably be a **woman**, someone who has run an organization democratically. She said women organizations are by and large known to be run democratically by women. She said so far no man has run the country in a true democratic fashion, but there were proven women who have been democratic in running their organizations. She said that this has even been confirmed by the funding agencies who had openly declared confidence in NGOs rather than in governments who they said have been riddled with bureaucracy and corruption.

Kepo a program participant at WLDC said the men have failed the nation. Luckily women have been excluded in governance, so they did not have to share in the failures. She said that it was time for women to take over the reins of office and establish a reign of righteousness and good governance. Sophia brought up *femocracy* a term that was actually coined by women politicians in Australia. and expressed the confidence that the rule by women seem the only option for Nigeria at that point in time. Actually belief in women redeemer is not new. Rowbotham (1992) said in the women's movement, there is a resonate conviction influenced by the Christian religion, that women as a group could rescue a morally corrupt male-dominated society.

### **Empowerment of Women And Full Participation**

Empowerment of women was a concept that emerged very strongly in this part of the study. Empowerment was a focus of the goals, vision, policy and practice of the WLDC. In this segment the women at the WLDC speak constructively about the theme clarifying their understanding of it as contributing to a culture of peace. Full participation for women in all areas of human endeavor it is related to the empowerment process. The WLDC women stressed the potential and essential role of women in building greater democracy.

The full participation of women in all areas as UNESCO says, is crucial for moving from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. In turn, increased participation is related to the empowerment process. Tade one of the directors at the WLDC offered her own definition of empowerment. She said:

*Empowerment is having a say and being listened to. It is being able to define issues from women's perspective. It is being able to influence choices and decisions affecting society, not just areas of society accepted as women's place. It is being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with contributions to make. Empowerment for us women means to be able to make contributions at all levels of society and not just in the home. It is also having women's contributions recognized and valued.*

Funkie said, for her empowerment was the ability and freedom to do the things she would like to do, things which she considered good for her. It was power to relieve herself from the oppression of low wages, low income and general hindrance to be all that she wanted to be. Dope said that although women's social status is always portrayed as inferior or secondary to that of men, women have the ability to exert influence and control over their own lives and those of others but they are not always able to put it to use so that it becomes power because of the limitations and restrictions that are usually placed on them. This is not empowerment she said. The women's definition of empowerment correspond with Warren & Gienik's (1995) as the ability of an individual to influence or exert control over resources, actions or social relationships which are valued by the community or group in which the individual participates. It is having mastery or control over one's own life.

Tade, one of the directors at the Center queried the concept *empowerment of women and full participation* and wondered which comes first empowerment or full participation. She said it was a case of the chicken and the egg. She said they were interconnected and interdependent. Participation is becoming the central issue of our time, an essential element of human development. It means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives (UNDP Human Development Report (1993). From the women's discussions four basic forms of participation for empowerment, emerged not in distinct categories because they are all interrelated but as areas of empowerment and participation. These are household participation, economic participation, social and cultural participation and political participation. These were discussed as they specifically affect women.

Women's social status is always portrayed as inferior or secondary to that of men, women have the ability to exert influence and control over their own lives and those of others. But they are not always able to translate this ability so that it becomes power,

because of the limitations and restrictions that are usually placed on them. Obun one of the leaders with WLDC declared that women's empowerment should start from the home. She said

*Empowerment of women should start from their homes. If women are not empowered right in their own homes, how can they seek empowerment in their place of work or in other arenas. When a woman is empowered in the house she can be empowered outside. It is not only married women who need to be empowered by their husbands. All men, whether as husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles, brothers-in-law, fathers in law, in whatever role, should not hinder the empowerment of all women,*

She added that men do not realize that to be further empowered, their women also in whatever roles they are should also be empowered. Karl (1995) agreed that women are not always empowered in the home even though the household is often the main and sometimes the only place where women participate. Their major responsibilities for the household's well being do not always mean decision making power within the family in many cases. For example women do not have equal control over management and allocation of family income especially if the income has been earned by the men in the family. Yet greater burden of sharing responsibilities is left with the women and this leaves them more disempowered.

Funkie then brought up the issue of men's non-involvement in household chores, because Nigerian men considered household chores as women's domain and simply would not help. Most women's stamina was expended on housework to the exclusion of economically viable jobs outside the home. Since women carry the major burden of child care and domestic work in the home they often face severe time constraints on their participation outside the home (Karl 1995) This increases their level of poverty and limits their participation in other spheres of human endeavor. Obun She said that the term "housewife" should be scrapped and discouraged. The implication was that the woman is married to the house and that is why she is expected to do all the work in the house. Husbands do not perceive housework as their job and therefore want appreciation for the very little help that they offer their wives. When men participate they see it as *helping the woman*. (Sanchez and Kane 1996). Heimer (1996) therefore talked about negotiating resources and responsibilities in the home. Redressing gender imbalance in the home will entail not only increased women control in the home but also in more equal partnership of men and women in sharing household responsibilities, and more opportunities for empowerment.

Mosun however added that men's perception of household chores will not change until that of women change. She said that many women are so ready to slave for the men all in the name of tradition. Many women do not mind the unequal task assignment because



they have been socialized into the belief that it is their work. The unfortunate thing is that women too have accepted these roles for too long. Some women themselves perceive housework as their domain. They have commitment to their homes and they perceive housework as showing care and ministering to the needs of their loved ones. As long as this attitude continues, men will not see the need to participate in housework. (Beneria 1997). Obun said that men will not change until women begin to see housework as both men and women's work and promote egalitarian attitudes and help men perceive that unequal division of household is unfair to the female partner.

Yemi, a political scientist, and a facilitator with WLDC talked of women's political participation. Yemi said that Nigerian women have allowed politics to be played as if they did not matter. She talked of women's different levels of political participation and said that there are more women at the lowest level which is the *passive onlooker level*. People at this level usually women are just satisfied with obeying the law. Many in this category do not even vote. They are just law abiding. They do not participate in what is happening around them. They just conform to and perform their civic duties, which for them may or may not include voting on election day. They are not even aware of the implications of their non involvement. She added that this type of non performance will not give women the needed empowerment. She said that the desired level is the *agitational level*, where people not only stir up others to action in causes they believed in but are actually involved in the process. She added that agitational activities require a lot of courage but it was always worth it. I believe Baxter & Lansing (1991) described the women at this level as those actively involved, in examining, analyzing the issues and actually becoming part of the political process.

Yemi concluded that this represented the picture of Nigerian women's political participation. With this picture of near non-participation by Nigerian women, she said it would be difficult for women to gain empowerment through political participation. She added that "agitational" activities require much courage but it was always worth it. Furthermore, since the women have been edged out of electoral politics, they have migrated to volunteer organizations, community groups, women's and other non-government's organizations (NGOs) on the local national and international level. She said this was good but actual involvement in politics was better for empowerment. Similarly, Kepo a program participant, argued that unless women stepped boldly into the political arena to end this dismal level of participation, their marginalization by the men will go on relentlessly and unabated. She reminded the women that power was not going to come on a platter of gold. Feko noted that most women were discouraged from participation in politics because of the

marginalization of women by the men who usually dominate party structures. She said this was disheartening because the female voters at all these elections have usually outmatched the male in a ratio of 60:40. In essence, the women have been putting the men in power, to their detriment.

Yemi observed however that women have been involved in volunteer organizations, community groups, women's and other non-government's organizations (NGOs) on the local national and international level. She said this was good but actual involvement in politics was better for empowerment. Nonetheless Karl (1995) and Leijnar (1997) do not berate this type of political participation because they are no less important than participation in government, because NGOs are a check on the power of government.

Feko said most women were discouraged from participation in politics because of men who usually dominate party structures. Women unfortunately always outnumber men as voters and so in essence, have been putting the men in power. (Sharp 1990). Unfortunately male power is hierarchical, authoritarian, controlling, debilitating and detrimental to women (Howe 1985).

Koyo brought up women's limited socio-cultural participation. She referred to the beliefs in some societies that women are to be seen and not heard. This image has also been promoted by the media who portray women as second rate citizens and men as supreme. When women try to be visible they are called attention and publicity seekers but men are dynamic when they intensively promote themselves and their wares. In societies where conservative attitudes towards women exist, women are usually inhibited from participation, by men who are husbands, brothers, fathers, uncles and so their social roles are drastically limited (Karl 1995)

Kaz, an economist, said economic empowerment is central to all areas and forms of empowerment and participation. Economic empowerment of women translate to participation and empowerment in all dimensions of life (Karl 1995). Obun said that not all Nigerian women experience poverty. She said there are many women contributing to the economy in both the formal and informal sector of the country. Yet these women do not have any political power.

*If you look on any particular street especially in this Lagos. you will find a woman professional, a woman engineer, a woman architect,, a woman medical doctor, a business women, self employed professional women or those in paid jobs yet we do not feel the impact of the presence of these women in the overall life of the country.*

Funkie wanted to see the educational and professional attainment of women, their economic activities, despite their education or non-education translate and be manifest in the

quality of governance of the country and the people's lives. She recalled the days when her mother was the first and only woman Councilor in Nigeria in the 1950s to 1960s. None has emerged since then. She said that although some women did not have the level of education that women have now they certainly had influence and authority.

She would like women to come into politics adopting the unique techniques of women of old. They blended their womanness, the nurturing and caring part of them and blended them effectively with the politician in them and that was how they won everybody's heart and votes. She said that politics has become a game of winner takes all and until that is changed, women will always be side tracked. She wanted women to begin to use their special nurturing nature to change the face of politics and use all their gifts to sway the electorate. She said: *Money or no money. Women should win elections,*

Reardon (1992) said to convert from a war system to a peace paradigm, all that is needed is the nurturing ingredient which is essentially attributed to the female. Birgit-Utne (1985) said, if women keep working with peace policies, do not join the military, develop women's logic, continue to care for others, feel compassion, share power, become more assertive, believe in themselves as women, develop the strength endurance, passion to continue the struggle for a better, more human and truly peaceful future, women have a chance to change the world.

Alhaja, a program participant suggested women forming political parties of their own, as another form of political empowerment. Karl (1995) said it is a forum for women to organize and train themselves to be active in politics. Forming parties usually serve as a learning process for new breed political women. When Tade suggested that there are pitfalls, Feko suggested women's sections in political parties. Tade responded that is worse because if women are not careful they might find themselves ghettoed, being exploited by the men who run the mainstream parties. In different parts of the world political parties use women wings to raise money but usually do not allow the women to exert any authority (Karl 1995). On the other hand women's sections could be used to women's advantage as Canadian Women who had used women's sections to organize for greater involvement within the national and provincial parties and were thus able to change substantially the nature of women's involvement in political process (Vickers, Rankin, & Appelle 1993).

Culture of peace dictates that women are empowered when they are deemed to be equal partners with the men on all fronts and on all issues. Adebayo of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at a Conference in Addis Ababa in 1996 on *Integrating of Women in Development in Africa* supported this view when he said:

Until we have realized the goal of fully integrating women in the development process, our efforts to bring about a fundamental transformation of our economies, of our societies and of our policies will continue to be frustrated. How can we ever hope to achieve an economic breakthrough and maximize our production possibilities when half of our population are on account of their gender not enabled by the society to contribute optimally in accordance with their abilities. How can we unleash our creative energies when half of our population remains constrained?

Koyo said that from her experience in dealing with women empowerment the frustrating thing is that women are not ready to confront the problems headlong and are quick to run to hide like the proverbial frightened dog with its tail hidden between its legs. She had some harsh words for the women:

*We women want to be in a position of power but many of us are not ready. We talk about lack of money that impedes participation, we talk about violence that frightens us and intimidates us, we talk about thuggery that eliminates us from the scene, we talk about manipulation that repulses us, we talk about the lack of sincerity and accountability in the previous players, we talk about the moral integrity needed to run the race. We have all the right theoretical perspectives but we are all armchair politicians, complaining, criticizing, recommending how the game should be played but never coming forward to do it ourselves and show how it should be done. How then will we move forward?*

Ogundipe-Leslie (1995) has said that women **must** struggle to get a place in national development, through political representation (participation) for therein lies true empowerment. This I believe is the reality that women must aim for.

The word *empowerment* assumed a comprehensive holistic meaning judging from the various usages by the women in the WLDC. Empowerment is having the power to be, ability to meet basic needs, it is linkage between economic security, assertion of rights, socio-cultural and political participation (Jacobsen 1994). Women's pursuits of empowerment, full participation, women's rights are not pursued as competition with men, because having equal access to resources will not detract from the men's. The total sum of justice, is that men of justice will be satisfied that the resources and rights they enjoy are equally available to their wives, daughters, sisters, aunts, and mothers (Sotela 1995).

As I engaged the WLDC women during my study, it became clear to me that the theme of political security, democracy and participation constituted urgent and powerful problems to resolve. The context of a highly militarized political culture above all, sets real limits on moving towards full and democratic participation of ordinary citizens. Furthermore, the socio-cultural forces of patriarchy and gender inequity imposes additional constraints on the political participation and empowerment of women. As analysts like Karl

(1995) and Heimer (1996) have noted, since women carry the major burden of childcare and domestic work, they often face severe time constraints on their participation outside the home. Another subtheme which emerged from this part of the study is the openness of the WLDC women to a range of strategies for empowerment and participation. While “party politics” and electoral processes were certainly regarded as important, I was impressed by the women’s refusal to limit democratic participation to such activities.

However, the very existence of the WLDC and its continuing and courageous efforts to conscientize Nigerian women is a hopeful sign of grassroots political participation. The women at WLDC do not underestimate the power of the state, at the same time they do not want to be intimidated into silence and submission. I sensed their feeling that they hold in their hands some power to change the status quo. In this regard, the women were positive about Gandhian strategies of active nonviolence, for example, non-cooperation, boycotts, sit downs, nonviolent breaking of laws followed by voluntary acceptance of the penalty (Somerville, 1985).

Finally, *empowerment* for the women at WLDC means that Nigerian women need to be more in control of their lives so that they can have a voice in decisions that affect them in the home and in the community. It is time to reverse the massive erosion of power that came first with the colonial regime and then with the military regime in Nigeria. I share the optimism of the women that the time had come for a new era, a new dawn for women in Nigeria. They know that military government is not about participatory democracy, but governance is about people and so should be about inclusion (Cook and Morgan, 1991). The challenge in moving from a highly militarized to a civil democratic political culture cannot of course be underestimated, given the very poor human rights record of successive Nigerian regimes.

### **Environmental Care and Sustainable Development**

Although the environmental degradation in Nigeria was of great concern to the women at the workshop, the discussion on environmental care and sustainable development did not take a holistic view. The women were able to recount all the environmental problems in Nigeria but the Center did not have any program to sensitize the women on environmental issues.

Tonu, a member of the WLDC, who was working with a conservation organization and was specifically in charge of a project on environmental education, noted that Nigeria has suffered from all types of environmental degradation. She wondered if this was a divine visitation on Nigeria. Northern Nigeria had drought and desertification problems, while

gully erosion ravaged the middle belt and most southern states, especially the east. She also mentioned some of the environmental problems pervasive in Nigeria like pollution, garbage disposal, sewage problem, flood, deforestation, agrochemical, bush-burning, oil pollution, gas flaring, mining wastelands, industrial pollution, toxic waste, hazardous chemicals, municipal waste, and general urban infrastructure decay. She recalled with nostalgia when Nigeria did not have all these environmental problems.

Obun believed that primarily the environment has been greatly affected by population explosion. But Tonu argued that although there has been population explosion in Nigeria, the environmental problem was not simply a result of growth in numbers but of unequal distribution of resources. She believed that Nigeria has been plagued by corruption and greed, which has not allowed the government to provide the needed infrastructure for the increasing number of people. Government policies, over the years, have created a family of the *nouveau riche* at one end and at the other extreme end, a class of highly impoverished people. There is a contrast of the rich elites, with their extreme insensitive level of over consumption, and the poor, who in their poverty exploit the environment for survival. Obun criticized Government's position as indifferent and insensitive. All these statements agree with Kaufman and Franz (1993) who explained that over consumption by the "fortunate" is a severe environmental problem not only for the poor but also for everyone in the long run. Engo-Tjeda (1992) agreed that excessive wealth and poverty are both detrimental to the environment, which meant the wealthy and the poor alike degrade the environment.

For Grease, another trustee, air pollution and its attending health problem was a primary concern. She claimed that the air was very heavily polluted by smoke from firewood and kerosene, pervasive use of mosquito sprays and mosquito coils, and gas emissions from plant generators, industrial emissions, and smoke from cars. Gas flaring, a notorious aspect of Nigeria's oil industry, was also a source of emissions. Another pollutant is the burning of tires, which has become the normal way of disposing tires in Nigeria. Grease also introduced a new dimension to the problem, a specific one that the nation was grappling with at that time. She revealed that the government imported some fuel with a very foul odor, which was later discovered to be toxic and had been responsible for the death of mechanics that had come in direct contact with the fuel.

This confirmed Bartz (1989) warning that the Third World was becoming a dumping ground for toxic wastes. Adele, one of facilitators, observed that in addition to the self-generated pollution problem, Nigeria did not have an effective waste management system. There were no incinerator units in the country, and no recycling culture. Nigeria has the "throw-away" culture where waste was disposed into the nearest open space on land or

surface water without environmental consideration. Garbage dumpsites were used for garbage disposal, which were improperly managed. The garbage was usually left to rot, or the refuse burnt occasionally to create more space. Kaufman and Franz (1993) affirmed that waste generation is an inevitable consequence of human activity, therefore the effective disposal of waste should also be part of normal human activity. But unfortunately there has not been any conscious management of waste which involves the collection, transport, storage, treatment, and disposal of waste and after care of the disposal site in Nigeria.

Shane noted that waste scavenging is a tragic phenomenon that has evolved from the poverty created by the Structural Adjustment Program. The picking of useful waste materials from refuse depots or dumps had become the only source of income and means of survival for some sections of the population. Godfrej (1995) explained that waste scavenging is the evidence of hunger, which is not due to scarcity but created by the wealth of a few. Shane was concerned that women and children were part of these waste scavengers.

Mosun, a program participant, brought up the issue of floods, which were a common and recurrent phenomenon in Nigeria:

*As soon as it rains we are all in trouble. The last flood I witnessed was the most dreadful thing I have ever seen in my life. We all watched as people and property perish in fast running current. There is nothing comparable to the destruction except the Biblical destruction of the first world by water. After the floods there was water shortage and electricity failure.*

There was a general lament that the government has done nothing to stem this specific flood problem. Mosun also complained that the people just had to wait annually for the floods to cause as much structural and erosional damage, as it could. This damage was portrayed in the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) (1996) Annual Report:

*“The floods cause environmental hazards, disruption of socio-economic activities, transportation decline, displacement of people, lack of communications systems, loss of life and property, destruction of agricultural land and contamination of food, water and the environment in general.” (p. 8)*

An UNICEF (1995) Report on the environment recognized that Nigeria is susceptible to severe tropical rain, which causes a lot of floods. The Report added that these floods occurred every year resulting in much loss, hardships and suffering. But the Report specified that while the country has no flood control measures, human activities and urban planlessness were also responsible. This view was supported by a Report by Federal Environmental Protection Agencies (FEPA) (1994):

As urbanization intensifies and there is an influx into the cities by rural migrants in search of better life, natural surfaces are replaced by buildings, paved roads, concrete surfaces that do not allow the water to readily sink into the ground. The encroachment of buildings on the paths of streams and rivers flowing through towns and cities and the deposition of waste materials facilitate the floods. Canals which are supposed to be channel for the evacuation of water are blocked by solid waste and sediments which should have been cleared before the rainy season. All these have resulted in very severe floods, which have been reported in different parts of the country. (p. 6)

Sophia rationalized that the lack of certain basic infrastructure has made people act in ways that have further degraded the environment. She talked of lack of public toilettes and even when there were, the lack of water to maintain them has led to the unhealthy disposal of human wastes. Sophia also stressed the socio-cultural attitude of the people that prevent them from paying attention to their environment. In the urban areas, people do not have the compound system. They stay in terrace houses, flats or apartments where they live with strangers as their neighbors. In the villages, people do not live like strangers, and so it is everybody's business to keep everybody's compound clean.

Mural, one of the facilitators at the WLDC, then shifted the focus to women who were the major victims of environmental degradation. According to her, it is the women who look for water and she considered this an economic waste, with the women spending so much time and effort looking for water in both rural and urban areas. It is the women who waste a lot of economic time looking after their children and other members of the family when they become ill due to poor environment. This, in turn, makes them so home bound that they cannot be involved in other activities whether they are economic, social, or political.

On the agricultural front, Obun declared that there was a need to curtail the excessive use of pesticides and chemicals, as the women are the ones most exposed. This was confirmed in Ali Mazrui's poem (1992, 82):

When you see a farmer on bended knee  
tilling the land  
the chances are it is a she.  
When you see a tractor pass you by  
and the driver waves you Hi  
the chances are it is a he

For Obun, it was important to protect the health of the women, as they are the producers of most of the food.



Eyo mentioned the Ogoni case and the transnationals in oil industry in Nigeria. The pervasive incursion of the transnationals into South countries and their negative impact did not seem to be so crucial to the women. For instance, they mentioned the importation of toxic fuel, but did not link it with the activities of the so-called advanced countries. The WLDC has to be more aware of the interconnectedness of global issues. The case of the Ogoni people was a classic example of what havoc transnationals could wreck on a people.

The Ogoni people, like most indigenous people, lived on their lands practicing subsistence agriculture, hunting and gathering. They not only treated their land with respect and care but also linked it with their survival and prosperity. This was true until oil was discovered by the transnationals, and then the people's lives became a nightmare. TNCs exploitation has caused them poverty, displacement, impoverishment, and depletion of their land resources. As Eyo noted, the Ogoni people are victims of "neo-colonialism, imperialism, and globalization." Unfortunately the Ogoni people are a "powerless" minority, politically weak, and physically isolated. Their resistance led to the hanging of their leaders including Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Grease, a dental surgeon turned horticulturist brought up the issue of beautification of the environment. She realized that Nigerians are generally not for flowers and landscaping, that the search for basic needs of life has not given them much room for this luxury. But Grease thought it was time to start thinking about it. She severely admonished the Nigerians, that they do not have any reason not to be aesthetically and environmentally beauty conscious, poverty or no poverty. It does not cost much to develop this culture, she added:

*The point is, even if we do not have idea about beautification, we have men and women who go out to other countries. But they all seem to travel with their eyes closed. They see all the attractive places and points all over the world, they come back here and they cannot and do not make attempts to at least replicate what they have seen somewhere else to make the environment look attractive.*

Mural too shared this view:

*In other countries one sees beautiful spaces and architecture, with all these large gardens, beautiful flowers, boulevards with their hanging trees, on beautiful straight roads. One cannot but envy these aspects of the environment which, in developed countries, are so clearly seen and admired. In developing countries, there are less of such concerns for such beautiful aspects of our environment, which is rather unfortunate. One would hope that as society develops there would be more time for the beautiful aspects of life to be appreciated.*

Mural added that a beautiful environment is not only pleasing to the eye, it is also important in helping to bring peace and orderliness in the society. Tade agreed that women should not allow themselves to be bogged down by duty, work and stress that they do not have a thought for their environment.

Tonu then announced that all these issues were part of environmental education that was being packaged for schools. A well defined curriculum was being drawn up and being promoted and sponsored in schools by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) in collaboration with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), an international NGO. She elaborated that Environmental Education was also being taught informally through the Conservation Clubs established in most private schools all over the country. Environmental education, Tonu announced, has gone beyond conservation, or the study of the flora and the fauna. The aim of environmental education was to catch the young early and instill in them the culture of good environmental consciousness so that when they grow up, conserving the environment will be part of their lives. This was in addition to the fact that children need to grow in a safe environment. Garbarino (1995) observed that children live in a toxic environment and if care is not taken there will be no adults to inhabit the future world.

From the reflections of the women, it is clear that the WLDC has not delved substantively into environmental education or advocacy. I did not witness any awareness-raising program by the WLDC on environment issues. Nonetheless, while there were no environment-centered programs, the WLDC women displayed a very high level of knowledge about environment issues. I wondered if that meant that the Center has not established the connection between the environment, development, and peace in a holistic way. When I asked members of the WLDC what should constitute peace education at non-formal level, not one person mentioned environmental education, yet the problems of the environment were not lost to them. Only two of the women related peace to nature but these same women did not relate the lack of that natural endowment to violence.

Sustainable development, as a concept, was not mentioned nor discussed by the women, but it was implied in various ways when they linked environment issues with economic, social and political issues. This came close to Reed's (1996) definition of sustainable development where the three basic components namely economic, social and the environment, constitute the foundations of sustainable development. The economic component requires that the people and government pursue economic growth paths that generate an increase in true income, not short-term policies that lead to long-term impoverishment. The social dimension is built on the premise that all citizens have access to minimum standards of security, human rights, and social benefits, such as food, health,

education, shelter, and opportunities for self-development. Social equity means ensuring that all people have access to education and the opportunity to make productive justly remunerated contributions to society. The environment dimension requires the use of environmental goods in such a way as not to diminish the productivity of nature or the overall contribution of environmental goods and services to human well being (Reeds, 1995).

When I brought it up with the leaders of the WLDC, Tade, an executive of the Center, said that the Center has just become motivated to look into environmental issues. She had a strong feeling that as people began to improve their environment, their hearts and minds will begin to soften and melt all the harshness and violence, and this would be replaced by a culture of peace. Mische (1989) declared that the most important step in creating an ecologically secure world is for people to change their minds and attitudes.

As Fein (1990) has pointed out the transformation in social values is necessary to resolve environmental problems. Habits, practices, culture and values are at times difficult to change; therefore the role of education in values transformation process cannot be overemphasized. Environmental education in this instance helps to develop a sense of responsibility and knowledge of how to make these personal adjustments (Green, et. al., 1990). The WLDC therefore needs to focus more on sensitizing its women participants to environmental issues, and hopefully this would begin to reverberate into the larger society.

For a culture of peace, the WLDC needs to consciously promote and raise awareness, about the concept of sustainability. Carrere (1995) believes that without sustainability there can be no development, without development there can be no sustainability, and obviously without sustainability there can be no peace. In these days of globalization there need to be a global focus by the women on environmental issues. The global interconnectedness needs to be seen - that what happens in Nigeria affects what happens elsewhere and what happens elsewhere affects what happens in Nigeria. Nigeria is not an island. Most of the responses were Nigeria-focused whereas some of the problems have arisen because of distorted and exploitative North-South relations. For instance, the dumping of toxic waste in Nigeria was mentioned casually by one of the participants. This was an issue related to globalization forces and environmental destruction about which the WLDC women would need to be more alert before Nigeria becomes a full scale dumping ground of toxic wastes from the so-called advanced countries. As Sachs (1992) said, toxic waste does not show up at the ports or travel with passports.

The WLDC should raise a lot more awareness about these issues. There should also be pressure placed on government to reduce the negative activities of the TNCs, especially

when their activities cause severe degradation of the land and impoverishment of the people. As Korten (1996) has also emphasized, if social development is about developing people, then social justice is listening to the voice of all. He added that globalization is growing in intensity like a hydra-headed monster, it should be stopped before it stops the world. The WLDC should join the attempt to stop this monster.

For Sachs (1992), a necessary condition for the sustainability of the environment is the elimination of poverty. Although the WLDC has some program on poverty alleviation, there still need to be a deeper approach to the eradication of poverty, which has over 60 per cent of the people in its grip. Esteva (1992) invokes that in the spirit of sustainability, *ecocracy*, which is the conceptual marriage of environment and development, should be adopted and promoted. There must be a change in lifestyles and policies to ensure environmental survival, and the women's role is crucial in raising awareness about all these problems. As Mische (1989) argued, there must be changes in attitude, changes in lifestyles to ensure environmental protection and human preservation.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that given the difficulties and challenges that the WLDC already face in focusing on issues of gender, development and human rights, it would be unrealistic and unfair to expect the WLDC to also expand its work to cover environmental issues. From a peace education perspectives however, such a call is made following the principle of holism. Hence, rather than expecting the WLDC to join the ranks of the environmental movement, the challenge is for the WLDC is to infuse ecological principles into its ongoing key themes of gender, development, human rights and violence. For example, in the development dimension it implies a systematic shift from WAD to GED. According to Dankelman and Davidson (1988), women play a crucial role in the management of natural resources because of their traditional tasks in food production, provision of water, energy and fodder. Because of their tasks and because of their being the poorest of the poor, women are the hardest hit by environmental degradation. It was therefore an obvious omission that in spite of this awareness, the WLDC did not have programs that integrated ecological principles.

In a holistic framework for a culture of peace, the theme of environmental care is so interrelated with all the other dimensions of violence that the WLDC can only be strengthened in its vision to empower Nigerian women.

### **Peace Education at the WLDC**

The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS) recommended that peace education be taught formally and nonformally. Paragraph 255 of the document says that

government, non-governmental organizations, and the mass media should encourage women to promote education for peace in the family, neighborhood and society. Paragraph 275 says that opportunities should be provided for women to organize and choose studies, training programs and seminars and to undertake research relating to peace. I asked the women participants if they were aware of these injunctions by NFLS. They were generally aware of the NFLS because most of them, especially the leaders, were at the Nairobi conference. But the WLDC has not been offering any formal or structured peace education program at the Center.

Kaz explained that the Center's visions, goals, and activities are meant to promote peace in the Nigerian society, even though there had not been any overt indication of that. Akosa confirmed that the Center has been promoting peace through the nonformal educational programs being offered at the Center, although many of them did not bear the label peace education. She focused on certain programs that had been offered by the Center like the ones on violence against women and the leadership and conflict management programs. If leaders are effective and they are in good rapport with the people they lead, there will be peace.

Kepo assured that the Center has also been involved in researches on different topics including peace. Limbo added that the Center was in the process of analyzing the national laws on women, against the backdrop of international laws and agreements that Nigeria has signed. Olu confirmed that the WLDC has done some research on health practices of women and on the effect of gender violence on women's reproductive health. This she also considered was an issue of peace.

Tade explained that as training Center, the WLDC has engaged women in programs that were empowering for them and directed towards the ultimate promotion of societal peace. The advocacy programs, for instance, have helped the women to become more aware in their responses and in their interactions. She specifically cited the extensive programs on *Violence against Women*, which she said were designed towards promoting peace. She added that when men stop battering women there will be peace.

*We have not done much research leading to peace per se but we have run programs and have conducted research on violence against women, women's rights in Nigeria, and conflict management, We have had research into the economic situations of women in cross border trading along West Africa. So if all those things translate into peace we have done it.*

Funkie argued that since the Center had been involved in promoting democracy, creating an awareness about democracy and good governance, and generally preparing women for full participation in electoral process, this in itself was promoting peace and in fact was teaching

peace. She added that the Center's extensive work on human and women's rights was addressing issues of peace. Olu said that having specific programs on grassroots women and trying to bridge the gap between urban and rural women was promoting peace in the society.

Tade also announced that the Center was in the process of establishing Peace Clubs in secondary schools. The Center believes that if children were taught the right values at an early age they could be socialized in a peaceful environment. The WLDC hoped to take conflict management techniques to schools through the Peace Clubs that were to be established on college campuses and high schools. Reis and Roth (1994) noted that children of today are born into a world of violence. This means that they have to be debriefed from a culture of violence and be sensitized into a culture of peace.

Most of the women thought that the WLDC has been making indirect but significant contributions to peace. For McGinnis (1984), peace is not a concept to be taught but a reality to be lived. Peace education must therefore promote awareness and concern, and then move people to action.

The women clarified that what they knew about peace issues had been learnt informally. No one had a formal, nonformal nor informal exposure to a peace education program. Ahmed and Coombs (1974) described informal education as an incidental, unorganized, unsystematic at times even unintentional, casual process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, and insights from daily experiences and exposure which comes through various agencies such as books, radio, television, newspapers, peer-groups, family, friends, clubs and societies. It is a process of acculturation and socialization. Nonformal education is any organized systematic educational activity outside the established formal system. It provides selected types of learning to particular groups in the population, adults as well as youths. It is for the purpose of communicating ideas, developing skills, changing attitudes or modifying behavior related to the realization of development goals and the achievement of higher standards of living and welfare of the people.

During the workshop, I encouraged the women to deliberately reflect on teaching peace education. I then asked if the center had to teach peace education, what would be the essential components of such a program. The responses were varied. Akosa said that an essential component of peace education would be to teach women how to provide for themselves and their families. In essence she was talking about economic security, because people could resort to violence and conflict if they were in perpetual want, that is if their

basic needs were not met. In other words, as a culture of peace framework stresses, structural violence is one root cause of conflict including direct violence.

Feyi thought that the education of women in all aspects should be stressed. She believed that the woman's education was the core of success for the family, for the community and for the nation at large. Educate a woman and you have educated a nation, so goes the saying, she reminded. The quality of a woman's education would determine the quality of her family, which snowballs into the larger society. Not only is the quality of life dictated, the right values are taught and transmitted.

Limbo agreed that gender studies was imperative so that women could be sensitized to the origins of their marginalized positions and that their needs would be met through the provision of programs for them. Kaz said gender equality, was needed for peace to exist between men and women. For peace to be maintained in society, Feko added that peace education should cover conflict management and conflict resolution. Funkie saw peace education as values education where the right and acceptable values would be taught for good interpersonal relationships and the general well being of the society. She talked of honesty, hard work, diligence, courtesy, caring, sharing and concern for one another. Olu offered that the essence of good governance should be taught to those interested in politics and rulership, which for her should be the core of peace education. For Rim peace education should raise awareness about cultural practices that have been inimical to the progress of women. Feyi did not mention content but talked about the condition for teaching peace education. Unless certain conditions were met, teaching peace education would be futile she said:

*Before one can teach people peace education, one has to make sure that they have the basic necessities of life. Teaching peace on an empty stomach will not work. When people's needs are met, there will be less frustration, reduced violence and aggression at personal level and at societal level. I therefore think that the supply of basic needs is a vital for the learning of peace.*

Busy also shared this same view and that peace education could not be taught until certain conditions have been met. One condition she was referring to was the absence of direct physical violence against women. She said that teaching peace education when there is violence would not achieve peace.

*We cannot talk about peace until we have eradicated violence against women. When women are not at peace there cannot be peace anywhere. Peace at any level is contingent upon peace in the family, since family units make up the society. Before peace education can be taught, there must be the eradication of physical violence against women, wife battery,*

*oppression of widows, women's access to inheritance being denied. Without all these areas being looked into and something done about them we cannot even talk about peace.*

I reminded Busy that she overlooked the one major aspect of peace education which is, that it is transformative. Peace education addresses the root causes of conflicts and empowers people to take personal and social action for a culture of peace. Peace education promotes a process of conscientization necessary for the building of peace.

Esha saw peace education as a solution to militarism and abuse of power. She wanted peace education taught to the military because she felt it was important for a culture of accountability. When people are called to account, most of the problems would be resolved. Eyo wanted peace education to promote awareness about the equality of all human beings and the fundamental freedoms of all human beings. She said that there was a low level of awareness, respect and recognition for the fundamental freedom and equality of all persons and that was why there is so much intolerance in interpersonal relationships and the inability to manage conflict. She explained:

*Conflict is insisting on having one's own way and not allowing another person to exercise his freedom. Peace education should therefore have human rights as a major component. People need to understand that the world is for each and every one of us and we all have a right to be a part of it.*

Koyo thought it was very important that people have a sense of belonging, starting with a sense of belonging to their own country. Peace education should therefore have citizenship education as a core. She said this would be a good sensitization for people who would be in government, to help them understand how not to alienate people from their source. She gave a picture of this sense of her disconnection as a Nigerian:

*I do not feel that I have a stake in this country because I have not been made to feel that I belong. The sense of belonging that I used to have has disappeared since the military take-over in this country. I always ask myself and wonder if I am a citizen of this country. I always ask what does the country do for me. I do not have water, I do not have electricity. Yet these are the basic responsibilities of any government. I pay my tax yet I still have to find alternative ways of providing those amenities for myself, like sinking a borehole or buying a generator. I go on the street I am molested by police even when I have not committed any crime. I am stopped. I am searched. I am at the airport and I am humiliated by the custom officials who assume that every one is a drug carrier. I am a professional but the drug carrier slip through without being molested with the connivance of the custom officials. What is it to be a Nigerian? I do not know anymore. We need demilitarization so we can go back to democracy and participation by all citizens.*



She decried this feeling of despondency and added that human rights education should be part of peace education to promote social, economic and political rights. She added:

*People will be taught that they have rights, and that they have the rights to claim those rights. It all boils down to economic, social and political empowerment. We will teach the proper understanding of citizen's participation and democracy.*

Likewise, Eyo proposed rights to be included in peace education at the WLDC. Violations of people's rights as acts of violence, which is confirmed by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, provides a succinct expression of the purpose of educating for peace

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding tolerance and friendship among nations racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (Article 26 para. 2)

Calleja (1995) also says the question of rights is a central part of peace education and the study of equality is essential to any peace process.

Koyo's view confirms Pettman's (1996) claim that Warfare State is highly problematic for women because militarism makes it difficult for women to be full citizens of their state. The state has been seen as the worst threat to a woman's security. I agree it is quite important that citizenship education which would make women feel part of their state be included in peace education. Hitherto women have been subject to different experiences from men even as members of the same state.

Alhaja saw peace education as a strategy to promote good governance. She said that peace education should teach leadership, consultation, openness, accountability, feedback and information sharing in government. She added that it should also include transparent behavior, tolerance, and participatory and consensual decision making process. She said misunderstanding of one another would bring about conflict and various forms of violence.

*Violence is one person feeling powerful, enjoying power-play and subjugation of the other person. We have to educate on the use of power and on the evil of excesses of power. It is better to prevent conflict than to resolve it, because conflict is never really resolved. It is better to prevent than to manage.*

Koyo did not think that peace education should be limited to Nigeria alone. She said it should be taught to the rest of Africa and this could be achieved through the WLDC

networking with some pan African women organizations. Bos, a media woman, wanted political education and democracy as components of peace education. She added what some others had mentioned - economic empowerment of women. Rimi, on the other hand, believed that peace education should lay emphasis on vocational program because economic independence will bring empowerment. She also added that peace education should promote the spirit of *volunteerism* in Nigeria as too many Nigerians are money conscious. People should begin to offer their services without asking for remuneration all the time.

Shane indicated another prerequisite for peace. She said that if there were basic education for all, people would be free from all the shackles of oppression. There would be less violence in the family and on the streets. She said that education in itself would be peace education and it would be transformative of the society. She explained:

*When people are educated they will not take paltry sum to go and kill some one who has not even offended them, or someone they do not even know. When they are educated they will not take to armed robbery in short they will have a higher self esteem. They will not take your property from you violently and shoot you into the bargain. Education will go a long way in reorganizing our society.*

In this regard, peace educators would respond to Shane that the paradigms and processes underpinning such education would be crucial in forming the kind of educated person. After all, many highly educated human being have been or are engaged in conducting wars or fueling militarization or providing more deadly weapons of violence. Highly educated technocrats have no problems in implementing structural adjustment programs or overseeing transnational corporations whose policies and practices cause structural violence. In intercultural or inter-religious conflicts, some leading to ethnic cleansing or genocide, well-educated people have been implicated.

Although the WLDC did not have a peace education program, it seemed that the women at the center share many common ideas and commitment towards education for culture of peace. They raised issues of democracy and political security, democratization, tolerance, information sharing, economic security, structural violence, human rights, and women, gender and development. It is only one major theme, namely environmental care that the WLDC was less aware and active. But as noted earlier, there is no implication here that the WLDC must therefore become an environmental NGO. It can continue to be a women's development NGO but one which also integrate ecological principles into its program. The women thought that for the Nigerian society to have peace, and for a better society to evolve, they inextricably linked culture of peace with empowerment of women and all the issues mentioned above.

According to Reardon (1992), peace education is a dynamic process. For Scott (1985), it is a human action very different from all types of other education. Sokolova (1995) argues that education for peace involves life style changes and therefore needs to be taught more than informally or casually. She added that educating for peace should have knowledge objectives that relate to the following concepts: conflict, peace, justice, power, social change and continuity, gender, ethnic group, role models, ecology, interdependence, futures. Education for peace should empower students in the areas of critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and social literacy. Education for peace should also equip learners to analyze, clarify, judge, and acquire values in the areas of vision, self-respect, respect for others, global concerns, ecological concerns, open-mindedness, and social responsibility (Winder, 1990).

Kaz and Tade focused on women's empowerment as a necessary component of peace education, complementing the WLDC's vision, values and goals. Moser (1995) says when women are empowered they are more strengthened. This empowerment can only be achieved in a conducive environment that is peaceful, not threatening, where rights are not denied, where basic needs are met, and where people are not caught up in fear for their lives. When all these conditions are met the personal peace of the women will be enhanced. Furthermore, this can translate into societal peace.

The WLDC claimed to have worked with women who are the marginalized segment of the society. The Center always saw women's empowerment as an issue of peace thus it has been involved in raising the quality of life of women. Women, to a large extent, are lovers of peace as Gandhi claimed. Women have borne oppression for so long, even almost to the point of complacency. But now they desire change but not in a confrontational manner. They believe that a change in their position and situation will result in a change in the society, which will result in an overall peace for all. All these would be achievable when there is a conscious and deliberate program aimed at societal transformation, and the empowerment of women.

The WLDC women all generally agree with Duczek (1988) and Brock-Utne (1989) who have stressed that the focus on gender is vital in the field of peace education. Given the impact of patriarchy and sexism in generating and reinforcing violence in all direct and indirect forms against women, education for a culture of peace must surely include gender equity and non-sexist theory and practice.

Two other women in the WLDC mentioned democracy and good governance as a component of peace education. According to UNESCO (1974), peace education cannot ever be passive or neutral. It must be prepared to take up difficult political questions. The

content of peace education typically should therefore include information about the human community, the causes of war, the consequences of war, and the work of peace movements, disarmament possibilities and nonviolent culture. In short, UNESCO's recommendation indicated that a process of conscientization should take place, diffusion of knowledge should lead to profound understanding, which will help people internalize critically the information they receive and develop their willingness to act in the spirit of the objectives of peace education (Kekkonen, 1994). Calleja (1995) supports the study of democracy as part of peace education and says that there are three basic principles therein contained namely dignity, equality, and mutual respect.

One of the women mentioned conflict management and conflict resolution as another component of peace education. UNESCO (1974) stated that educating for peace should aim to help students understand some of the complex processes leading to violence and conflict at the individual, group and global levels and be aware of some of the ways in which these conflicts may be resolved. It should also aim to cultivate attitudes that lead to a preference for constructive and non-violent resolutions of conflict. It should help students develop personal and social skills necessary to live in harmony with others and to behave in positive and caring ways that respect basic human rights. It should also develop humane learning communities where all are encouraged to work together cooperatively to understand and find solutions to significant problems. There will be peace if peoples' interpersonal relationships are conducive, conflicts are peacefully resolved, peoples' rights are not violated and they are not cheated of what is rightfully theirs. In this regard, the pervasive conflicts between different ethnic and or religious groups in Nigerian society need a determined program on conflict resolution to help build tolerance, respect and cultural solidarity. Likewise, Funkie suggested what she called "interculturization" which I call "intercultural education," whereby all students have the opportunity to learn a language and culture that is not his/her own. She added, there should also be the nonformal learning of such languages in adult literacy programs and other nonformal programs. According to her, this would promote some bonding and tolerance and friendliness among different peoples.

I think Funkie was not aware that this has been adopted as a national policy and was being enforced in schools. The study of a local language in schools used to be optional but now it has been made compulsory as a government official policy. The Revised National Policy on Education (1992) states:

In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the Government

considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother-tongue. In this connection the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Ibo, Hausa, and Yoruba. (p. 9)

While this has been put in place at the school level, there was no indication of an effort to encourage adults to pick a second local language. I believe such a policy will help to promote solidarity and understanding among adults who, as Sampson and Lauritsen (1993) said, are usually the role models of discriminatory conduct.

One woman mentioned militarism and abuse of power as another component of peace education. Williamson-Fien (1988) claimed that the issue of power is central to any debate on peace and peacelessness, and that education is an important medium through which the nature of power can be understood and if necessary, challenged. She said it is hardly possible to investigate the questions of injustice, poverty, and conflict without reference to the patterns of power that support particular social relations and structures. This was quite relevant and appropriate considering that Nigeria was under military rule.

One of the women, Rims, suggested that volunteering should be a part of peace education programs. This suggestion agrees with Schindler-Rainman and Lippitt (1975) who said that in every community there is need for volunteer action by the people, not just government action for the people. They argued that many problems can be tackled through the organization of volunteer effort. Nothing can melt human and social problems faster than the willingness of one individual to involve himself/herself voluntarily in helping another individual overcome his/her problems. Most volunteer activity not only represents a significant contribution of energy but also offers many experiences necessary to a democratic process. Volunteering is an opportunity for the creative use of human resources and that humility arises from genuine caring and respect in volunteering rather than from having concerns for the future of one's soul.

From a peace education perspective, volunteering would really promote the values of tolerance, understanding and solidarity. In an African context, helping one another seems to be the main idea behind informal associations, especially among women. With modernization, this cultural tradition is getting lost. People are becoming individualist and the focus of community is disappearing especially in the urban areas where survival is hard and people seem to focus more on self rather than on each other. I consider this point raised by Rim very pertinent. Traditionally, Africans have been doing this but not under the name "volunteerism". It is called "*helping each other.*" It will do no harm if this value is promoted formally for the sake of the younger ones who are growing up in a very mixed culture dictated by globalization and the transnationals. Rim elaborated:

*People must be sensitized to this idea of volunteering in addition to acquiring some specific functional skills, which will be more useful to the individual and society at large.*

I challenged Shane's proposal of "education for all" as the panacea for the prevailing societal violence in Nigeria as indicated by some of the interviewees. While I agreed with her that education is transformative, I could not reconcile her thoughts to a recent news item about a highly educated man involved in armed robbery. She however traced that genre of problems in the country to the unsettled political situation, the militarization of the society, and the very high rate of unemployment in the country. She said that when students could not get jobs, they resorted to violence out of frustration.

It was of great interest to me that Koyo talked about peace education in an African context. Hansen (1987) says all the problems of Africa are issues of peace not just problems of human rights, development, militarization, bad governance, intercultural intolerance, or lack of free flow of information. Peace will not just be the removal of conflict, but it will be necessary to fashion economic systems which can generate sustained growth, guarantee for the mass of the population a certain minimum of material or basic needs. This would not in itself remove all conflict but would eliminate some of the causes of tension which lead to violence and conflict. In times of economic depression there has been an increase in interpersonal and inter-group social conflicts.

A global view of peace will focus on the continent in distress, with the awareness that what happens in one part of the world affects another part of the world. This is one grim reality the world confronts now. Peace cannot be ignored in any sector of this global village, or spaceship earth (Asinov 1990) without severe and grave consequences for the rest of the world. Peace is needed in this continent for development. The connection between peace and development is most valid in the African context right now. Hansen (1987) claimed peace and security are matters of life and death and that different world regions have to find ways and means to guarantee their own peace and security. Such measures he added would have to be devised with the acknowledgment of the regional realities not only military but also political, economic, and socio-cultural. Of course there is an African peace perspective since peace issues in different regions have different faces and so the problems should be addressed taking into account local realities (Hansen, 1987).

The WLDC networks with some pan-Africa organizations like Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Association of African Women for Research and Development( AAWORD), and Forum for African Women in Education (FAWE). It therefore has the potential to reach out and not limit its activities to local context. Peace is

not a local desideratum but a universal one. I would expect that the WLDC would expand its activities and scope and link with other NGOs to Africa's "first ladies" effort for peace in Africa. Peace education or a culture of peace for Africa should be conceptualized and perceived not only in the negative sense of minimizing or resolving conflicts but also in the positive sense of creating material conditions which provide for the mass of people a certain minimum condition of security, economic welfare, political efficacy and psychic well being (Hansen, 1987).

One of the WLDC women believed that values education should be part of peace education. Goldbecker (1986) argued that teaching values is tantamount to teaching survival skills, for if people do not learn to live cooperatively, governed by moral beliefs, then they will ultimately destroy themselves. Silver (1986) confirms that values education is partially a response to the ethical issues that seem to dominate recent world social and political events. He adds that values are determinants of social behavior, a person's internalized standards and criteria for guiding actions developing and maintaining moral judgments for making choices and resolving conflicts between values. De Mille (1987) clarified that if peace education is to gain broader acceptance, it must have a more fundamental goal of changing students' values.

According to Toh and Cawagas (1990), values education is understanding critically how values translate into the ways human beings ought to act as individuals and as members of society. Values are not just located in thoughts attitudes and actions of individuals but they are also "embedded in societal structures and relationships, whether political, economic, social or cultural." They believe that "through the peace paradigm learners can see clearly how the desired values of love truth, spirituality, nationalism and the like are linked to specific human thoughts, feelings, beliefs and most importantly, action" (p. ix).

Toh and Cawagas (1990) claim that a "holistic perspective in peace oriented values education means that learners become sensitive to the dynamic and multiple linkages and connections between and among the many problems of peacelessness in society" (p. ix). They also believe that peaceful theory and practice orientation to values education will be effective and meaningful in building a more compassionate, just, spiritually peaceful and self-reliant people and nation.

Designing a peace education program for the Center has challenged the women into some reflection. The women at the WLDC displayed a deep sense of awareness and a holistic view of peace issues. Although the Center claimed to have been working more in area of development, it was evident that the Center has actually been doing work to

promote a culture of peace. I believe that was why the women were able to come up with a near holistic view of peace education. I say near holistic because not one of the women brought up environmental care. Most of their suggestions aligned with five out of the six clusters proposed by Toh and Cawagas (1990) for values or peace education. These are structural violence, militarization, human rights, personal peace and cultural solidarity .The sixth one is environmental care, which was not mentioned.

UNESCO (1974) recommends that:

Education should include critical analysis of the historical and contemporary factors of an economic and political nature underlying the contradictions and tensions between countries, together with study of ways of overcoming these contradictions which are the real impediments to understanding true international cooperation and the development of world peace. Education should emphasize the true interests of the people and their incompatibility with the interests of monopolistic groups holding economic and political power which practice exploitation and foment war.

I appreciated the fact that most of these women saw peace education as a solution to problems of conflicts and violence. Such is the nature of peace education. It is a catalyst. It is transformative. Peace education will seek to actively understand, prevent, where possible, and resolve in nonviolent ways the problems of a culture of violence. Peace education whether informally, nonformally or formally will promote a culture of peace because all learning is change and all education aims at producing change. Peace education like all arms of education aims at producing more competent, more understanding people, it has implied within its goals the possibility that its activities will cause change in the society by those who undergo it (Knowles 1980). There must therefore be purposive, deliberate, systematic learning and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge that will mold behavior, conceptions of life and content of knowledge, allow learners to acquire the knowledge, abilities, and values necessary for the understanding of the particular issues involved in a particular concept necessary for the desired change (Darkenwald & Merriam 1982). Peace education, therefore being the education needed for a culture of peace becomes an integral part of living.



## CHAPTER 6

### CULTURE OF PEACE IN THE WLDC'S RELATIONSHIPS

#### **Introduction**

The founders of the WLDC claimed the Center was established as a women's training center to meet certain goals and visions. These goals were to be achieved through collective action and through various interactions with other women and members of the community. This chapter responds to the third cluster of research questions which seeks to determine if the WLDC promote a culture of peace in its various levels of relationships, internal and external, as it attempts to achieve its goals.

Parpart (1995) said that while an indispensable part of the discourse of the feminist movement is that women's oppression is embedded in male domination and male oppression there is an increasing acknowledgment of the fact that there is another facet to the oppression of women, the oppression of women by women. Also acknowledged is the issue of *elitism* among women organizations. I was quite interested in these issues and wanted to know how WLDC construed these and also if there was any hint of their existence in WLDC, as the existence of either would not contribute to a culture of peace. This chapter therefore looks at the issue of elitism and oppression of women by women in the WLDC.

Moser (1993) said the achievements of now may not carry organizations too far. They must have further goals, further plans and further dreams. I needed to know if the officials and members of WLDC were aware of the challenges ahead, in the task of peace building. An African adage says to know where you are going you must know where you are coming from. WLDC needed to identify its strengths, its weaknesses, its problems and its successes to be able to prepare for the challenges ahead. This chapter therefore, also looks at the strength, weaknesses, problems and successes of the WLDC and its perception of the future in building a Culture of Peace in Nigeria.

#### **Internal Relationships of WLDC**

Internal relationship in any organization is essentially reflected in the interactions between the leaders and members, among and between members, leaders and participants, reflecting both vertical and horizontal relationships. The top leadership at the WLDC is embodied in two persons, the co-founders of the Center. The two are seen as joint leaders or as co-directors of the Center. The relationship between the two was described by Olu, a consultant in the Center. She explained:

*In the WLDC, leadership is shared. There is no concept of the one great person who possesses more influence than others, although there is an Executive director and also a Program director whom we see as second-in-command. The Executive director is the one whose vision started the Center. She shared it with the Program director. And so the Center was established. They are a good complement to each other. They are both international figures, very experienced and both very educated. They both have a Ph.D., one in law and the other in economics.*

Although Olu saw the two women as joint leaders, there were some who saw the Executive director as the bona-fide leader and the program director as the next leader but these women both saw themselves as co-leaders. Tade confirmed:

*Kaz and I started this place together. We have the same vision and goals for the Center. We work well together and I let all know that we are co-leaders here. None is superior to the other. We are both responsible for joint decisions. We consult on a minute to minute basis. Apart from the fact that we work together, we are friends and that still makes it easier for us to work together*

Kaz the Program director and second in command saw it this way:

*Although we are both leaders here, I always say that the ED is the first contact person. It was her vision which she shared with me and so I always respect that. She has shared her position and leadership with me and I appreciate that. We work well together we both write proposals depending on the area of specialization. We jointly take decisions concerning the program to run. We are both signatories to the Center's account. We could both initiate programs. But we both still refer them to the administrative committee. In short we are both conscious of the limitations of our power.*

Shane, a member of the executive committee at the WLDC, said the two directors are effective leaders and good managers. She ascribed the success and smooth running of the Center to the leadership.

*We do not have problem at the WLDC with the executive and non-executive members. The reason is the executive director and the next in command are, in their own way, unique people. They are not domineering. Not only are they effective leaders, they are good managers as well, with superb management skills. They respect each other and they respect us. They appreciate that we all have different roles that we can play and that we all have different abilities. They know that one person cannot perform the other person's task. So they respect everybody on the basis of that. When it comes to decision-making they appreciate that we all have contributions to make. They do not impose their ideas on us. They suggest, we suggest, we all look at the issues and then we decide on what we consider best for the*

*Center. There is always shifting of grounds to accommodate each other's opinion.*

Rim, a non-executive member and also a facilitator at the Center, added that not only was power shared at the Center, it was also relational. She commented that the two women have always been able to influence and affect the staff and other members of the Center to be cooperative, creative and motivated. She said of the Executive Director:

*The Center is able to effectively coordinate and execute its programs because of the personality of the ED and her style as a leader. She is a highly respected woman nationwide. She is a very intelligent woman and she has the leadership ability to carry people along. I have enjoyed working with her.*

Alhaja M, one of the programs participants at the Center, concurred, saying,

*I love the head of the Center because she is a knowledgeable woman and she does not hesitate to share her knowledge and experience with others. Some women in some other NGOs always feel superior. If they have a project they make it such a close and tight affair benefiting only those they know and who are close to them. But there is no favoritism at the WLDC. I think they have a fair way of selecting participants. The professor wants everybody to grow. She does not confine the program to just a selected few. That is why I really like her.*

Alhaja O, another participant from the grassroots market women, was appreciative of the fact that the Center was quite accessible to all. She saw the operation of the Center as equitable as it did not leave out any segment of society, including the grassroots women who were always given opportunity to grow. She offered:

*I think Madam at the Center is doing something good for us, the women at the grassroots, especially market women. She is carrying us along. She is doing a lot for our benefit. She organizes all these programs for us so we can learn new things. Also we can always go to the Center anytime to see any of the directors when we want to. We do not have to book appointment with the officer or the clerk to see anybody. They are always ready to hear us and share their knowledge with us.*

Feko, a facilitator at the Center, talked about the humaneness of the leaders and the relaxed atmosphere at the Center which made work easy. She specifically focused on the ED when she said:

*The ED finds time to socialize, a few minutes of relaxed conversation over a cup of coffee makes us see her as a human being. She always has a smile for everyone. She is competent. She exhibits knowledge in the area of her work. She cares. She takes personal interests in the aspirations of members. She shares knowledge and skills. She is always at ease with everyone. I*

*have a cordial relationship with her and it is not always official. It is personal. I can even tell her my personal problems and needs. She always tries to come up with a solution and gives personal advice.*

Society has done a good job of teaching women to compete with one another in subtle ways. Hidden and unhealthy competition among women have been known to spawn jealousy and prevent women from being team players and supporting one another (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995). It causes them to perceive that behavior is excellent when employed by a male administrator but objectionable when employed by a female administrator. While he is seen as an aggressive administrator, she is described as a pushy woman. Modern day women have been portrayed as vicious, deceitful, and conniving, striking against their sisters through sabotage, subterfuge and rumor (Gabler, 1987). Duerst-Lahti & Kelly (1995) also hinted at the general notion that women have problems working with women. I found that this was not the situation at the WLDC. Virtually every one in authority was a woman except with a few male support staff. There was no sense of resentment against the women leaders, more so by the women themselves. There was more a sense of sisterhood, which Morgan (1985) has said was necessary for the survival of the women's cause. It was also noteworthy that the two co-leaders at the WLDC with different professional background could come together and run the Center. All my interviewees were quite satisfied with the leadership in terms of their actions, practices, the use of power, patterns of interacting, and role relationships (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995).

Leadership at the WLDC confirmed Aburdeen and Naisbett's (1992) theory that women lead by empowering others, valuing connection instead of competition, and building strength by building up others. Myers and Hajnal (1995) claimed that women succeed as leaders because they have been socialized to be cooperative and caring. Helgesen (1990) asserts that feminine values of responsibility, inclusion and connection have emerged as valuable leadership qualities in the 1990s. The WLDC co-director's style of leadership conformed with Belensky et al (1990) proposition that adult women approach leadership with the knowledge that the care and understanding of others is central to their life's work. It appeared, from the members point of view, that the women leaders at the WLDC have carried all these values into their work at the Center - empowering others, listening and responding, caring and nurturing, cooperative, adaptable and considerate.

At the WLDC, I observed that there was respect and recognition for the leaders, and at the same time a sense of participation and collaboration prevailed. Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) said that real power in organizations is exercised to the extent to which people respect, feel good about, and are committed to their leader. Most of the interviewees felt

good about the leadership at the WLDC. They claimed that the leaders facilitated cooperative goal attainment among members while providing opportunities for their personal growth and development.

From a culture of peace perspective, the WLDC hallmark of participation was extended into its style of leadership. Participation allowed for unity in the group and it empowered members to meet individual as well as organizational goals (Myers & Hajnal, 1995). It also makes for peaceful relationship within the organization. The WLDC seemed to meet the criteria of peaceful relations, which was empowering and appropriate.

Hershey and Blanchard (1987), in describing leadership effectiveness, explained that leadership could be task oriented or human relationship oriented. They suggest that there should be a good balance. I saw the evidence of this balance at the WLDC where the leaders' style influenced the others to strive willingly for the objectives and goals of the Center. The leaders knew that they could only accomplish goals through people, and so, while concerned with task achievement, they maintained and observed conducive human relationships. Tade elucidated:

*We respect people here, women above all, since we know that we cannot achieve anything without each other.*

Funkie volunteered that the two directors at the WLDC who were authority figures were not authoritarian. Traditionally, authoritarian leaders tell followers what to do and how to do it. All policies are determined by the leader. Democratic leaders share leadership responsibility with followers by involving them in planning and execution of tasks and they are open for group discussions (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995). Limbo seemed quite relieved when she confirmed there were no autocratic leaders at the WLDC. She clarified:

*There are no problems of leadership at the WLDC. The relationship is superb within the organization, among its members, even to the consultants and facilitators and to other women organizations.*

Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) did not support the idea of women leaders being portrayed as tough and uncompromising. They believe that women are natural nurturers and that as this nurturing nature helps women as mothers and wives, it should help them as executives as well. Women cope at home in the same way they would cope on the job. Feko, a member of staff, believed that the nurturing nature of the women leaders at the WLDC had helped in fostering a healthy and conducive atmosphere at the Center. She explained:

*The natural nurturing nature of the leaders here is an asset to the Center. They have been able to combine effectively their God given abilities to steer the ship of the organizations. They are firm without being obnoxious. They are facilitators to all of us.*

Limbo, the program officer at the Center, believed that the leaders were both highly committed to the Center as they worked there full time. She contrasted this with some other leaders of organizations who work part time and so are not able to give quality time for the organization. She elaborated:

*One of the advantages that the WLDC has is that both directors of the Center are retired persons from their various professions who have acquired a lot of experience, but above all who have the time to commit to the Center. They are fully concentrated on the work of the Center. Thus the Center has a very high output in terms of programs and materials. Unlike some other women organizations whose chief executives work somewhere else or look after their organizations on part time basis. Apart from our facilitators whom we hire on ad hoc basis, everyone here, even the consultant who is also a retired medical officer from government establishment, works here full time. We have full time personnel to manage well the affairs of the Center. It is in very good hands that is why it is doing so well.*

Olu confirmed that she works full time at the Center to justify the wage and benefits she receives. Wilson (1993) argued that goal attainment is easier and possible with on site leaders and not with absent authority figures. According to the staff members, the WLDC leaders were not only committed but were also **not absentee leaders**. They were not exploitative like working little hours and demanding high pay. There was equity within the organization, a precondition for peace.

Kaz explained, the strain and stress of living takes its toll especially on women. At times there are anxieties, there is loss of meaning to life. Many women feel the pain of rejection. Many feel alienated. Many women cannot cope with the amount of discrimination, denial of their rights and structural violence in their lives. Kaz described the Center as a clinic where there were healing, emotionally, mentally and psychologically, where women were put together to be all they can be. She added that the Center was not made up of perfect people, but people who were real and genuine and willing to do their part. She further explained:

*These days the demands are too much on women. Women are tensed and stressed. In spite of this they have to put in a lot of effort in the home in the office, and in the society to be able to rise to the level where they can make useful contribution in every area of life, socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Our aim in this Center is to help all categories of women to go through these processes, to succeed, to make things work and acquire*

*the values that will make them want to forge ahead. This is what we do at the Women Law and Development Center.*

We live in a world that operates a paradigm of war, a paradigm of violence, which affects our sensibilities and our emotions (Reardon 1992). No woman who is battered emotionally, psychologically, physically or mentally can live in a state of inner equilibrium. She can not experience personal peace, which is needed to make her contribute, participate and be all she needs to be in her society (Brock-Utne 1985). It was noteworthy that the WLDC recognized there had to be healing before empowerment could be effected. While raising awareness about systemic and structural violence, the Center has been promoting personal peace in the lives of those women who came in contact with the Center. I believe the Center accomplished this through the free legal aid program, direct counseling by the leadership and members of the Center, and intervention in issues that directly concerned the women as mentioned earlier. Some of the programs directly impacted on personal peace in the lives of women, and were also designed to effect healing in the mind, soul and body of the women.

#### ***WLDC and Decision Making***

Shane, a staff member, clarified that decision making at the WLDC was participatory and not controlled by individuals. She affirmed:

*The mode of operation is participatory and democratic because we are free to air our views, our opinions are not brushed aside because the leaders realize that they don't know everything in spite of the fact that the two of them are well read. They know that others too can have wisdom.*

Olu affirmed that although the day to day decisions were made by the executive director and the program director, there was an executive body responsible for strategic or crucial decision making. Meetings were called when critical decisions have to be approved. There was also the Monday staff meeting where members of the organization were free to offer suggestions to improve the Center's operation. The WLDC respected the rights of every individual, connected with Center, to be heard.

Participation was the key word in the operations of the Center and also in decision making. Members of the WLDC were accountable to one another and to the Trustees. From my own observation the WLDC decision making was all-inclusive and participatory, which provided a base for a culture of peace in the Center.

### ***WLDC and Internal Communication***

From my own observation, the leadership at the Center maintained an effective effort to communicate within and outside the organization. A line of communication has been established among staff, through notelets, internal telephone, and what a member described as open door policy. This was actually true in the physically sense. The Executive director's and the Program director's office doors were never locked nor even closed except after working hours. Staff members could come in any time without appointment or notice to discuss issues with the officers. The leaders were quite visible and always available among the staff, among the participants of the Centers programs, and even the immediate community. Communication in the WLDC was free, open and democratic, a situation which promoted an atmosphere of peace.

### ***WLDC and Conflict***

I wanted to find out how the Center had coped with conflict in the past and how it has resolved conflict internally. I asked one of the directors if there had been any conflict. She firmly claimed that there had never been any conflict at the Center. Tade said:

*No, we are experts in conflict management, so we cannot have conflict in the organization.*

Limbo, a staff member, confirmed this when she said:

*There has not been any major conflict. We have not had any major crisis because we have a good understanding and we complement each other*

I wondered what she meant by major conflict and major crisis. I wondered if that meant that there had been minor ones. Olu, a top officer of the Center, did not see it in such absolute terms. She made a distinction between crisis and conflict, which I found interesting. Crisis happens in situations and conflict happens among people. She clarified:

*We have had crisis situations but not conflict among members because we employ conflict prevention methods. Members have expectations. We are aware that there can be problems. When these happen they are openly discussed. But so far we have not had a major problem that could not be resolved.*

When I asked for further explanation, I was told of a crisis situation in Owerri during one of the programs conducted outside the Center's location. This crisis was caused by insufficient, incorrect and inadequate line of communication to prospective participants of



the program. Olu added that the decision to act at times could be collective and then when something goes wrong, some people always want to exonerate themselves. This was the problem with the Owerri incident. Olu further described how the crisis, which later became a conflict, was resolved. She said that crisis or conflict can not always be resolved at once. Resolution of a crisis or conflict has to be taken in steps. She explained that the Center carefully and meticulously looked into the incident, but was not quick to apportion blame. It was resolved through mediation.

I believe that Olu was most honest about conflict within the group. However, the claim that the Center could not and have never had a crisis or conflict because it offered some courses on conflict management and conflict resolution needed qualification, in my view. Training in conflict resolution will raise awareness of and sensitivity to the issues but as Kolb (1992) argued conflict is part of the routine of everyday life in organizations and also in people's lives. Prevention and management of conflict is an art that needs to be continually learned.

While at the Center, I witnessed a conflict situation. It was about a missing file. Everyone who had handled that file was not the last one to handle it and so was not the one to have misplaced it. The ED needed the file and everyone was pointing an accusing finger at another as being the last one to handle the file, and denials were flying around. This went on for some minutes and it was beginning to raise a stir among the staff. Then the program assistant reminded everyone to stop apportioning blame and apply what they had learnt in training when there is a crisis. Apparently every member of staff at the Center had participated in the conflict management program. Just at that point everybody stopped pointing fingers at one another and there was some deliberate reflection and searching and soon the file was located. The training the staff had received was quite transforming because the concepts were recalled and applied to avert an explosive situation. Because everyone seemed to be adequately sensitized about conflict issues, there was a quick resolution. This did not allow the conflict to escalate, which could have brought very negative consequences.

Steers (1991) recognized the importance of effective communication within organization as a strategy for the prevention of conflict. He believed much of the conflict experienced in organizations is instigated by inaccurate, incorrect or insufficient communication. He suggested that communication must be downward, upward, and horizontal to prevent crisis or conflict in any organization.

Taylor and Miller (1994) said conflict can be described as people's striving for their own preferred outcome which, if attained, prevents others from achieving their preferred outcome. Reece and Brandt (1993) added that the process often results in hostility and a

breakdown in human relations. Differences, disagreements, and competition generate conflict when people involved consciously or unconsciously try to deny each other the right to satisfy ones needs. Conflict resolution process involves attitude adjustment for all parties, a plan for discussing the problem or issue, generating a solution and implementing it, and an effective leader (Reece & Brandt 1993). Graves (1990) believed that leadership skills were major predictors of organizational success and effectiveness.

Leaders at the WLDC seemed to have empowered the staff through training. But primarily it is proper organizational structures, effective decision making processes, and appropriate dialogue and communications patterns in any organization that will help in the prevention of conflict and proper management of it when it arises. This is also what will make for a culture of peace. I believe that the WLDC was quite in control in the conflict situation I observed.

Graves (1990) said that 20 percent of time in organizations is spent in dealing with some form of conflict. However, I did not see this happen at the WLDC. This could be because structures for peaceful relations have been put in place and also the staff had gone through training in conflict management. Hershey and Blanchard (1987) believed that leaders who are authoritarian are prone to fan conflict within the organization, while leaders who are democratic promote peace and peaceful relations, to a large extent. I believe that conflict in the WLDC was minimized because of the pattern of leadership, which was participatory, collaborative and democratic.

### **External Relationships of WLDC**

The WLDC recognized the fact that it could not thrive on its own. It believed it must interact with its external environment. This included the community from which the Center drew the participants for its programs, its consultants, its facilitators and the organizations it networks and collaborates with. Jade described the WLDC's outreach programs and its involvement with its target communities as follows:

*Our outreach programs are at different levels. We run programs at the center and target the communities around us. We select our consultants and facilitators from members of our immediate communities. Secondly we take our programs to the communities and run them on location, like when we had a seminar in the market for the market women, like when we had a program for young women at the Young Women Christian Association Center (YWCA). The third stage is when we completely leave our environment and go to the States or the rural areas like when we translated the Beijing Platform of Action into all the main Nigerian local languages and had seminars for rural women in all the 36 states in Nigeria telling the rural women what Beijing is all about. The fourth stage is our networking,*

*interacting and collaborating with other women organizations who share the same vision with us, working on issues that are of common interests to us all.*

I will discuss the fourth stage of this external collaboration as the other three had been discussed earlier. Through the perceptions of some other women development organizations, I was able to have a deeper insight into the operations of the WLDC. In my interviews with these organizations, I was able to determine the level of their relationship with the Center, their points of collaboration and networking, and if these contributed to a culture of peace. I will state my findings in this section.

The WLDC networked with other women organizations that share the same visions. Together they formed what Kaz, one of the directors, called a women's version of the "Old Boys" tie. She explained:

*Networking is a beneficial thing, we share ideas, we relate to each other, and we give each other information,*

Tade gave a still more expanded view of networking:

*... It is developing and using each other's contacts for information, for advice and moral support as we pursue our goals of women development. It is also the linking of the women or organizations that we know to others that we also know. It is an ever-expanding network of communications.*

Welch (1991) explained that networking introduces one to stimulating and knowledgeable allies one did not know. She also said that the benefit can only be realized when it is used to the fullest potential. The WLDC claimed to be working on assembling a national directory of all women organizations in Nigeria and their basic areas of operations. This, the Center believed, will be a useful document for every organization who wants to network with other organizations. Tade explained the project:

*Primarily the WLDC has a dream of women organizations working deeply together. There is need for everyone to know what everyone is doing. That way we will all be working together for the common good.*

The desire to share information with others was the WLDC's objective in this project. This is still part of the WLDC's commitment to free sharing of information which contributes to a culture of peace.

### ***WLDC's Network Organizations***

I was able to interview seven women leaders of other women development organizations that collaborated and networked with the WLDC. I chose these seven out of a longer list, which was given to me by the Center. The selection was primarily based on their different areas of operations. I tried to be diversified in the selection. The organizations were BAOBAB, (not an acronym but named after the baobab tree which has a significance for the organization), Legal Research And Resource Development Center (LRRDC), Gender And Development for Action (GADA), Women Advancement Forum (WAF), Women Empowerment Movement (WEM), Women Consortium of Nigeria (WCN) and ABANTU for Development, a pan African organization with headquarters in Nairobi and a branch in Nigeria and England.

Every organization has its power structure. Within each organization some people have social, economic and political power more than others. Often the most powerful dominate the spheres and usually dominate the organization (Burkey, 1993). Burkey added that power is also often jealously protected by those who have it. I wanted to know if there was the problem of power and domination in the networking relationship between the WLDC and the other organizations. The women had various responses to this. Tade of WLDC said:

*We are very supportive of what other NGOs are doing about the progress of women. We have no reason to be suspicious or jealous of any other organization. Here we have spearheaded networking with other organizations because we realize the benefits that could be derived. We identify organizations that have the same orientation with us. We are not boasting but on the whole we have carved a niche for ourselves among the NGOs in Nigeria. We are active as a national organization and also of international repute.*

All the women extolled their relationship and interaction with the WLDC. They agreed that decision making within the network was participatory. Kepo, of WEM, offered:

*Every voice is heard. There is no problem of power and domination within the network because members are of like minds and WLDC does not seek to dominate nor does it have a hidden agenda. We could all see the sincerity and genuineness in the leadership of the Center and that is why some of us are in this informal network.*

I asked the leaders their views about the WLDC as a development Center, their relationship with the Center, how their own visions and goals corresponded with that of the WLDC, and how effective has their networking been. From listening to the women, virtually all the

seven organizations had visions that corresponded with that of the WLDC. They all had interests in resolving the perceived problems of women and empowering them in all ways, economically, socially, politically and culturally. It was obvious that there was primarily a conducive and peaceful relationship, in and among the organizations.

My first interview was with the Women Consortium of Nigeria (WCN). Busy, the Executive Director saw networking as the building of a community of women, who complement each other in their work for more effectiveness. Like the WLDC, the Women Consortium believed in networking and cooperation as no single organization could handle all the issues relating to women, considering the various manifestations and facets of even a single issue. The WCN's primary objective was to monitor the enforcement of the rights of women. While the WLDC was trying to educate women about their rights, the WCN worked in the area of enforcement. On the WCN relationship with the WLDC, Busy explained:

*The Women Consortium of Nigeria which I am privileged to head at the moment, has been cooperating and collaborating with the WLDC. Our primary objective is to monitor the enforcement of the rights of women. While WLDC is trying to educate women about their rights, my organization works in the area of enforcement. That is why I am also able to be a consultant to the Center and a resource person to some of its training workshop and seminars within and outside Lagos As I work with the Center I generally carry my organization along because we share the same goals and objectives in addressing the issues of women, especially in the area of human rights for women.*

Sotela (1994) clarified that while adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by the United Nations Assembly may be celebrated, the quality of women's rights will not improve unless the Convention is universally respected and enforced. The Convention could become an effective instrument in the quest for women's equality protection and individual dignity. It is therefore commendable that the WCN is working in the enforcement of women's human rights. The WCN priority work on enforcement of women's human rights is a necessary complement of the WLDC's work.

Kepo of Women Empowerment Movement (WEM) believed that networking meant women working together to dismantle the system that oppresses them. Kepo's organization believed in political security and democracy and shared this with the other organizations. The women believed that networking and collaboration among women organizations is a powerful force to ensure adequate representation in the political process. WEM was essentially established to empower women politically. Without political empowerment,

women could not be empowered in other areas, economically, socially and culturally. This conformed with WLDC's vision of empowerment and total participation for all women.

Kepo however, lamented that in spite of all the benefits ascribed to networking, women organizations did not take maximum advantage of networking. Kepo explained that her organization was drawn and attracted to WLDC for networking because of its leadership. She elaborated:

*Networking between and among women organizations has a lot of benefit but we are not using it to the fullest because of petty jealousies, rivalry and envy among women. All these have to do with the fact that any NGO that is getting a lot of funding attracts negative feelings from others. Therefore there is not enough networking among the women NGOs. But I must say that WLDC is reputed to be one of the organizations with good networking system. Networking with WLDC has not posed any problem to us and we are proud to be one of the organizations that collaborate with the Center.*

Kepo shared the vision with WLDC and the other organizations of having more women involved in decision-making bodies through politics. WEM had cooperated with WLDC in the area of political empowerment for women. WEM and WLDC had an ongoing program aimed at raising political awareness among the largest group of voters in Nigeria. These are the grassroots women who constitute the largest electorate in Nigeria. WEM was also involved in identifying and compiling a profile of women political activists, in an attempt to build a core of credible women who can be encouraged and supported to stand for elections and go into the Legislative House, the House of Assembly, and other Executive bodies. WEM did not want to perpetuate a situation where there would be only two women among 400 legislators. WEM did not want the voices of women drowned as in the past. Kepo hoped that if there were about 20 to 25 per cent women in the Legislative Houses, women's agenda could be put into laws. She added:

*For instance, the inheritance laws can be changed. In the same vein, we want more women in the judiciary, at the Supreme Court and at the Court of Appeals. We want women sent to the United Nations as our representative. These are dreams that fire our operations. These are the dreams we share with others who network with us, and who we network with.*

WLDC was part of the group initiated by WEM to produce a booklet titled: *A Political Agenda for Nigerian Women*. It also sponsored with other organizations a Political Awareness Summit for Women. Both WLDC and WEM believed that political security and democracy will empower women to participate actively in all aspects of political and social life. This forms one of the bases of a culture of peace where every woman is prepared to

participate in solving the problems of her community, her country and the world at large (UNESCO 1995).

Obun of the Women's Advancement Forum (WAF) claimed that her organization shared the same political vision with WEM and WLDC and that was the basis for their collaboration. Obun explained that one of the areas of activities by WAF was raising political awareness. In addition to other activities, the WAF had a big *Talk Shop on Political Agenda for Women* which formed the basis for the *Political Summit for Women* and the production of the booklet on the *Political Agenda for Women*. Obun believed that the interest of most members of the Forum lay in the political arena. For Obun, politics was not just having people in government. It involved greater awareness about certain issues and getting involved to do something about it. She articulated:

*Politics is not just having people in government. It is an awareness in a nation's existence. It is the restoration of medical services to the country. It is the restoration of the economy. It is the restoration of the standard of education. It is the restoration of peace in the lives of the people.*

Obun further observed that she and her organization were encouraged by the involvement of the leaders at WLDC in women's issues. She thought it was easy to talk about women issues, the hard part was to be actually doing something about the issue. She expressed her admiration for the leadership of the WLDC and its relentless and pioneering work in promoting women's empowerment. Obun also revealed that WAF had been involved in the political awareness programs with WLDC but not in its legal education program. She praised the level of information that was emanating from the WLDC which contributed to women's empowerment. Having knowledge and information is more important than just putting women in position of power. For instance, legal information was very important because many people do not know their rights and many more are ignorant where law is concerned.

Slipman (1986) has argued that women need political awareness as part of political education, if they want to make a breakthrough in positions of power in public life. If women are to participate in power sharing they must be very aware of political issues. Vickers, Rankin, and Appelles (1993) have also explained that politics for women means far more than participation in public governance. Political education for women needs a new framework that will encourage politics to be understood and played as if women mattered. Leijenar (1996) elaborated that political education means encouraging women in leadership to be more practical, more democratic and less confrontational. WAF, in collaboration with

WLDC, was empowering women and promoting a culture of peace which will be sustained with power sharing and full participation by women.

Koyo of Gender and Development for Action (GADA) spoke in development terms to illustrate the goals and reasons for operating a gender and development paradigm and networking with WLDC. She elaborated:

*We have been operating around the concepts of women in development, women and development, gender and development because we realize that women's specific needs must be addressed in a special manner and women themselves must champion their cause. Since the Decade for Women, a lot has been done to create awareness, sensitization and education about women issues. Women have gone to the next stage which is taking action. We are at the stage where we are all gathering strength using each other's resources, complementing each other's effort. Without women's development and the granting of their rights there is no true peace.*

GADA has a documentation unit for dissemination of information. GADA claims to have a holistic approach and has used various means of communication. Koyo cited some programs that they are jointly working on

*We have the 100-group program. This is a directory of women in organizations who have been identified as opinion leaders on women's issues. This group meets once a while to discuss issues of mutual and burning interest to women. It is not an umbrella body.*

Like WLDC, its target community was wide and varied. Koyo explained that GADA had worked with women in different categories. She elaborated:

*We target a wide spectrum of the society. We have worked with young women, women as political leaders, opinion leaders, and spokesperson for women. We have looked at women with special needs, women of older age, women in the Church and women in all other religions. We have worked with a wide spectrum of women because we believe that women's issues transcend age, religious beliefs, and educational background. However, I have been most impressed with grassroots women. Once they understand the issues, they develop such a receptive attitude and exhibit such confidence that translates immediately into life.*

This assessment coincided with the WLDC's position. GADA has as much an outreach as the WLDC. I found it interesting that GADA has taken women's issues to the Church where there is massive discrimination against women in terms of ordination and leadership position. Koyo gave an interesting analogy regarding its work with WLDC using a Biblical metaphor. She explained:

*We have had effective collaboration and networking with the WLDC. It has been a formal collaboration in terms of jointly floating a program. I have*



*also attended some of the WLDC programs. We are all catalysts sowing the seed of change. Like the Biblical seed, some will fall on the rock, some among the weeds and some on good grounds. Any which way it goes it will have some impact. We cannot exactly evaluate the results but we are pleased to know that we are spreading the word, and there are visible results of such collaboration.*

GADA saw itself as a catalyst and claimed that its collaboration with WLDC was not only based on their personal knowledge of the Directors but on the well acclaimed work of the Center which had great similarities GADA. GADA's focus on information for women's empowerment which it shared with the WLDC fulfilled one of the bases for a culture of peace.

Kim of ABANTU for Development, a Pan African organization with presence in Europe and Africa, stated that the organization had dual areas of operation for easier access to information in the West. ABANTU claimed collaboration and sharing of information with WLDC, especially information about happenings in Nigeria to feed its operations in England, where there was a large community of Nigerian women. ABANTU had training Centers in all its branches. The Center in England had the communities of African immigrants as recipients of its training programs. Kim, the training coordinator, reiterated the support her organization has enjoyed from WLDC:

*We have a very strong collaboration with WLDC because of our personal relationship with the directors. We can ascribe some of our successes to their help. We exchange ideas on different issues. We communicate with one another on how issues are put into practice. We derive knowledge from one another and we exchange new information among ourselves. Thanks to networking.*

Kim believed that although the critical issues for the women trained in England were different from those in Nigeria, there were many areas of common interests to both organizations.

The common area of interest between the WLDC and ABANTU was empowering women through training. They both had their activities based on gender and development perspectives. Through her involvement with ABANTU both in Nigeria and in England, Kim found that women's poverty, lack of economic empowerment, limited participation in politics were universal concerns. Kim talked of exclusion of black women in England, resulting in their very limited involvement in the political life of Britain. All these confirmed Friedman's (1990) claim that all forms of violence is a feminist issue.

When Kim mentioned some of ABANTU's programs for women, I noticed they had striking similarities with the WLDC programs. She explained:

*We have had training programs similar to WLDC and we had shared resources in preparing our manuals. This is a great advantage of networking. We use the same manuals in all our branches even in England, and they are usually relevant.*

I however noticed that ABANTU had a program on environment which WLDC did not have. Esha of BAOBAB had the most accurate description of networking. She explained:

*Networking is serving as resource for each other as women. It is getting together to get ahead.*

Esha, whose organization was also involved in human rights for women but with a different focus, was quite pleased to be involved in the informal networking. However, she added that in spite of all the years of talking about development there was still a need for more impactful operations. The problems of Nigerian women as an oppressed group still needed to be tackled in more intense ways. She thought that complacency was beginning to set in because some successes and triumphs have been achieved.

Esha claimed her organization's primary interest is to look at the violations of women's rights under religious laws. She explained:

*Religious institutions are the worst violators of women's rights. It is denial of rights, if the spiritual and religious concerns of any group is not taken care of.*

As a Muslim, Esha has involved BAOBAB in looking at the plight of women living under Muslim laws. Nigeria is a secular country but Muslim women were subjected to laws which she complained were not Islamic. She complained that there were not many women organizations in Nigeria with a focus on the role of religion in women's underdevelopment. She said BAOBAB's main goal was for women to be aware of the various laws in the country. Women may find that their rights are better protected by religious laws more than legislated laws or at times more than statutory laws. The women need to which laws best protect their interests. Esha clarified that although BAOBAB had collaborated with WLDC in many other programs, it was not involved in this specific program on women living under Muslim laws.

Esha confirmed that networking with WLDC had yielded some results. It was her extensive work on women's rights that gave birth to the project on Muslim women. She believed that networking with WLDC was not a top-down relationship where someone at

the top defines policy and all the other members were expected to follow that policy. She said the principle in an effective network is that everybody has access to defining the policy.

Eyo of the Law Research And Resource Development Center (LRRDC) believed that networking was not as big a phenomenon as it should be in Nigeria. It was needed and it was of great importance as it could lend weight to the voice of women. She explained:

*I believe in networking but I must say I have been very disappointed in Nigeria. I go to every meeting and I hear a lot about networking but all that is lip service. There is still this feeling of insecurity and perceptions of organizations as being threats to each other. I believe in networking because half the time we waste resources. But the inter-organizational problems have to be surmounted, otherwise the whole women movement will not be going anywhere and that we may have wasted our time completely.*

Eyo added that there was generally a problem of networking in Nigeria because most organizations do not want to collaborate with one another. They want to be individualistic. Eyo extolled the importance of networking when she said:

*Definitely networking has its advantages. It is much better than going solo all the time. Every organization has to strategically put that as part of its area of operation and activities. Without networking one is shooting oneself in the foot. One needs to know what is happening in other places.*

This conforms with Martin's and Wallace's (1996) view that in networking, people are inspired to work together to achieve a common goal. By linking with other groups and individuals with similar aims, one will be able to gain access to the ideas, information and resources of each other.

Eyo confirmed that LRRDC and WLDC have jointly had a *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* enlightenment workshops and awareness programs for all categories of women and for students in tertiary institutions. They both believed that CEDAW should be a household word among women. Both organizations have also tested the acceptability and comprehensibility of their simplified version of the Beijing Platform of Action. Both had a free legal aid for women. They have also mutually used each other's personnel as resource persons on programs. Eyo believed that together the LRRDC and WLDC have developed some major resource materials in human rights education. Both organizations have libraries open to the public on human rights and women's rights issues and on development that can be used interchangeably by members. It is obvious that LRRDC and WLDC have worked extensively in areas of human rights, possibly because the leaders of both organizations are in the same legal profession.

Eyo also confirmed the LRRDC together with WLDC had confronted the problem of militarization and direct violence by government against women in Nigeria. She was referring to the systematic elimination of women activists by government agents, and how the women organizations headed by WLDC came out boldly to protest and condemn the military violence. Eyo recalled it was a frightful time for women because no one knew who was next in line to be killed.

Reardon (1982) claims that militarization of the society surely promotes violence and does not make for peace. The process of militarization requires more investment in military institutions and places a higher priority on military values over all others. It is a system that is anti-justice and anti-peace. Military take-over which was rationalized as necessary for development (Reardon 1982) in Nigeria has actually become an instrument for under-developing the country and a weapon of war against the people. This was the system WLDC and others struggled against.

Eyo felt that WLDC still had some grounds to cover. She complained about women, including some women in development organizations, who did not see the connection between their position in society and the deprivation of their rights. Eyo lamented the mentality of some of the women in development organizations. She described:

*Most women development organizations will dissociate themselves from issues of women's rights. Some of them will make distinction between development issues claiming not to be one of those women troublemakers but just lovely women who work to keep their homes and look after husbands and children and manage their organizations. They do not want to rock the boat like the troublesome human rights people. Yet they are the first ones to talk about being deprived of their rights. Some do not even know that they are being deprived anyway.*

Eyo gave a clearer view about the relationship between human rights and women development. She elaborated:

*Human rights is about the fullest realization of all potentials of all human beings and that is what development is all about, therefore there is no separating human rights and development. They are like Siamese twins. You cannot talk about one without the other. Women development became an issue when it was recognized that, as a group, women were disadvantaged. They have not enjoyed economic rights, cultural rights, social rights and political rights. When people have all these rights you would have a developed people. That is the strong relationship between human rights and women development.*

Eyo added that very few Nigerian women organizations were able to see this linkage between human rights and development. For some, human rights issue is for radical

organizations. Eyo exclaimed that this thinking needed to be challenged. This is one of the areas that WLDC with its ally organizations need to work more on. She argued that the dichotomy between development work and human rights work must be eliminated otherwise there will be no significant progress within the movement.

The fact that the WLDC networks with other organizations is an action contributing to the building of a culture of peace in Nigeria. No one organization has all the answers to all the problems. The WLDC's relationship with these seven organizations was cordial and worked well because they were all operating from the same perspective and working towards the same goals and vision. For instance, the LRRDC's focus on human rights education is a complement to WLDC's special focus on women's rights. It is important to bridge the gap between human rights advocacy and human rights awareness. It is only an enlightened populace that can be mobilized. For advocacy to succeed there must be enlightenment and awareness, because that prepares the ground for other actions like mobilization.

The WLDC was open to working with other organizations. It has not felt threatened by other organizations. The relationships have not manifested any trace of jealousy which was presumed to exist among women. This willingness to work together to complement each surely promotes a culture of peace.

Members of the WLDC have gone through their own process of conscientization. The WLDC has attempted to help others so they can improve their own lives. In this endeavor they have countless interaction with outsiders, members of other organizations, people in the community, and funding agencies. These interactions have been, to a large extent, positive. The WLDC focus has been on empowerment for all women, in both its internal and external relationships.

The Center has been doing all it could to achieve its goals. However, I do agree with Eyo of the LRRDC, that there is still so much more to be done. The Center would need expansion, more staff, more money, and a greater vision. The Center could endeavor to create further conditions where more people can be empowered in a natural process and in their relations with others to contribute in more significant ways to the building of a culture of peace in the Nigerian society.

Overall, the organizations involved with WLDC primarily believed that they shared the same goals and vision with the Center. They had the same perception of what the gender problems and critical societal issues are. These they have all identified as political in terms of governance and democracy, economic issues, social issues and provision of adequate

infrastructure, human rights issues and inequities in the system as far as women are concerned. These women organizations believed that in their own ways that they were addressing the problems using various strategies to sensitizing women in issues of politics and good governance. The women therefore believed that with so much to be done there should be more collaboration on projects while trying to avoid duplication which would led to wastage of resources. They believed that they have all maintained a good working relationship with their communities, working hand in hand helping various communities of women, each bringing in its strengths and working as sisters.

The WLDC's policy of collaboration with other organizations was essentially to fulfill what Welch (1991) believes are the benefits of networking. According to Welch, networking is empowering for women because they can help each other to have more clout, more money, and more self-confidence. Through networking, they can help each other beat the system that isolates women as they move up in male dominated environments. From a culture of peace perspective, networking is empowering and ensures full participation of women in all areas because as Welch (1991) also clarified,

It (networking) is asking for help when you need it, knowing when you need it, knowing whom and how to ask for it. It is giving help too, serving as a resource for other women (p. 27).

The WLDC involvement in networking fulfills a culture of peace condition, the empowerment of women which helps women to empower one another to empower all, to help each other to understand the system that oppresses them so that women can altogether improve their lot (UNESCO, 1995).

### **WLDC and the State**

Tade explained the WLDC's relationship with the government as follows:

*We do not have any relationship with the state. The government does not support us, nor does it fund any of our programs. So we are not obligated to the government in any way. They do not agree with what we are doing, we do not agree with them either. So we have this mutual suspicion of each other.*

I followed this up by indicating that the government has responded to the UN call to establish Women's Ministries, Women's Center's, and Women's Units. Would this not mean that the government was gender sensitive or at least responsive to women's needs? Tade responded:

*The government is probably aware of women but I do not think it is gender sensitive which essentially means that one responds to issues. In fact to be sensitive, one must be aware. I do not think that government is aware of gender issues and certainly not gender sensitive. We believe that government has established some of these structures just for window dressing. Government's action and attitude belies the spirit behind the establishment of those structures.*

Kaz added that the relationship between the WLDC and government was not a healthy one nor a happy one. The WLDC is distrustful and critical of the government for valid reasons. I assume that the sentiments are reciprocated by the government, judging from its actions and reactions to the Center's programs. The WLDC was aware that government has never wanted any involvement with the Center and the Center did not want to be involved either. Kaz explained the "cat and mouse relationship" between the WLDC and government:

*We are never consulted by government on major issues of development but at times we receive letters inviting us to one seminar or another, at times to a workshop, conference, or a meeting. If the activity has any relevance to women, we go or we send a representative. We assume we are on the government's mailing list, if not hit list.*

The WLDC was aware of the government's ploy to win over some NGOs through the lure of funding. Busy asserted that WLDC was not ready to compromise its stand, nor did it want to be seen as a quasi-government NGO, nor did it want to be coopted by government because it did not want to be silenced or intimidated. The Center claimed it did not want government's favor, patronage nor financial support because there was always a hidden agenda and there was always a trap. Kaz described further:

*We do not want and need government's support. The risk is that it will apply unattainable conditions. The money will come with strings. If it gives us money it will try to control us or coopt us. This will decrease our legitimacy in the eyes of our constituency. It will detract from our credibility. When government gives money it expect one to keep quiet. We do not want to take the type of money that will gag us. The same caution goes for private donors. Usually they want us to do what they want rather than what we want to do. We cannot take money that will make us compromise our credibility. We realize that funders' money is the lifeline in our operations, nonetheless we are very careful to maintain our credibility.*

The WLDC lamented the fact that it has not been able to change government's direction in any big way. Therefore, it was not ready to go into any unequal relationship. The WLDC believed that although its activities or operations have not influenced government's decisions in any extensive way, the Center would rather not be quiet.

However, the Center was satisfied and convinced that someone in government circle was hearing, if not listening. Feko believed that government was aware of those it regarded as troublemakers in the NGO camp and was certain that the WLDC was among those labeled as such. She added that the Center was not bothered because it is working for a good cause. Tade commented that the Center would like to maintain its autonomy by having less to do with government. She explained:

*We have not been involved in any government project because we are a nongovernmental organization and we do not undertake government projects. We believe that government should be able to undertake its own projects. We want to be able to comment on government's non-performance or inadequate performance. We do not allow government to dictate to us, rather we give them feedback on what they are doing, but we have not allowed ourselves to come under their umbrella. We then leave them to act or reject what ever we propose. We do not want to be coopted, intimidated or silenced.*

According to Livernash (1995), the relations between governments and NGOs usually hinge on several factors, the most important being the prevalent political system. The then Nigerian government was a military one, therefore the mutual suspicion emphasized by one of the leaders of the WLDC was understandable. Livernash (1995) also talked about co-optation, another government's extreme action in its relationship with NGOs. This takes place when government creates quasi-NGOs known as *quangos* or when it publicly sponsors NGOs as affiliates of government. The WLDC has rejected falling into this category, in order to have the enablement to be a conscience of the people and continue in its policy of empowerment, and a project government was never comfortable with.

### ***State Violence***

From the discussions in this section, it was obvious that the state had been involved in direct and indirect violence against women, women NGOs, and specifically the WLDC. Limbo pointed to the fact that Nigeria had always officially participated in all the International Women's Conferences since the Decade for Women and had always been a signatory to all the international instruments that protect the rights of women, yet Nigeria had always flouted all the terms of all the instruments. Limbo concluded that the government was not committed to gender issues, it was never serious about its obligation to international laws and in many ways the country has been described as a problem country and an international delinquent.

Eyo gave some specific instances of governments flouting of some of the agreements. One of the decisions at the Beijing conference was that women were to have a minimum of 25 per cent out of all governments appointments. Immediately after the Conference government blatantly



appointed one woman to twenty men, on one of its Commission and on some did not include any woman, yet Nigeria has a very prominent outing at the conference.

Pettman's (1996) claimed that the state is gendered being almost male dominated Booth (1991) said that to many millions of women in the world, it is their own state that is the primary threat to their security. Even though states declare men and women equal, in States discourse and policies women still have different experiences from men.

The relationship between the WLDC and State as indicated by the women was certainly not a cordial one. Government has not always been comfortable with what it has called verbal attacks by the WLDC and some other NGOs and so launched a direct physical attack on some women NGO's, WLDC included. While doing my research at the Center I witnessed a direct government intervention on the activities of the Center. The WLDC organized a workshop on *Democratization and Poverty Alleviation*. The Government sent the army and security agents to disband the workshop and warned the officers of arrests if the workshop continued. It was a frightening scene.

The type, location, and purpose of NGO activities in a country determine the relationship between that NGO and the State (Livernash 1995). Tension arises when an NGO subscribes to a development theory different from that of the government, especially with NGOs who stress people's participation, empowerment and democracy (Clark 1993). Governments have always been tolerant of organizations that are involved in non-controversial projects but has always been hostile to those NGOs working in "sensitive" areas (Burkey 1993). The WLDC's policy of empowerment ran contrary to Government's policy of militarism and subjugation. Government was uneasy about that, it saw the empowerment element as instigating trouble (Clark, 1993).

### ***Non Cooperation***

While I was in Nigeria, I was informed that there was a big crisis brewing between Government and all NGOs. The WLDC claimed that Government was trying to promulgate a decree that would put all NGO activities under Government's control and scrutiny. The draft of the decree, which had been released by Government, stated that all NGOs operating in Nigeria must register with Government. They must describe their activities and give information about the source of their funding They must give annual reports of their activities to the Government. They must indicate all the directors, and other personnel connected with the organization, presumably to detect all radical elements in the organizations. According to Eyo:

*The federal government decided to clip the wings of the NGOs because it thinks that we are some sort of security threat to the Federal government especially those in human rights issues. We are not happy about it and we shall resist it.*

Government's focus was also on the donor agencies funding the activities and programs of the NGOs. According to one of the women, the Government believed some funders were instigating "rebellion" among the NGOs, especially those working on human rights.

Tade said for the first time ever WLDC proposed that government's decision be challenged in court. She said that the Center recognized that it was a very radical way to deal with government but it was a decision at self-preservation. Tension always arise between government and NGOs especially when governments create official structures to prevent organizations from performing their legitimate activities (Clark (1993). It is also a known fact that tension and clashes exist when there is divergence between government's interest and NGOs interests. Governments at times pass bylaws curtailing NGOs activities and asking them to register and report regularly on their activities (Burkey 1993).

WLDC like most NGOs in Nigeria have not had much success at influencing the government. Tade expressed a sense of frustration

*All the lobbying skills we have learnt have not worked with this government. We do not have the sense that we are being heard. All we know is that the government reacts when we say things they do not agree with.*

At this point in time it appeared that the NGOs , with the WLDC spearheading the move had insisted on retaining their autonomy and would move to stop government's interference on the basis that most organizations do not receive government funding.

### ***Ministry of Women's Affairs***

Another ploy and strategy devised by government was to use women to fight women. Government had established a Ministry of Women Affairs which on face value would denote gender sensitivity on the part of government. Tade was of the opinion nothing has changed in spite of the establishment of that Ministry. Government still did not involve women in the decision making process. Tade claimed that apart from the Minister every other person in key position in that ministry was a man.

Tade said the Ministry was supposed to look after the interests of women, but experience has shown the opposite to be the order. To start with, government appointed a woman who openly claimed to be a supporter of people not a supporter of women as the

Minister. WLDC saw this as an affront to the cause of women. Tade claimed that, there had not been any support for women from this Ministry and so the WLDC demanded that she be changed, and be replaced by someone who was sympathetic and sensitive to women's issues and women's needs.

Government responded in a public statement saying it was happy with the appointment and that certain women should not try to use the "back door" to get appointments from government. Tade said this was disturbing to the leaders of WLDC who believed that it was an unfair statement by the government. WLDC responded with another public protest claiming that the Center was genuinely promoting women's cause. Government did not change the appointment. WLDC claimed that this was typical of its relationship with government. Tade described the government as a repressive and insensitive government who was bent on humiliating those whose voice it did not agree with.

However Kaz was of the opinion that government had very little part of the blame. The Women Minister who was quite insensitive to women's issues deserved the blame. She said:

*We can accuse the government of being gender insensitive. What about the few women in positions? Should they be as insensitive as the government that tokenly gave them the jobs? If the women themselves are insensitive and unaware how will they prevail on the government to become aware? If the women are gender sensitive and they can represent women's needs, I am sure that government will respond. Government has always made a big noise about what they will do for the women but what about the women themselves? They should be the one to promote their lot. The women themselves discriminate against themselves. Charity must begin at home. Some women need awareness to be able to influence government policy.*

These views are actually not strange. Marshall (1995) recognized that for every movement there is always a counter movement. The antifeminist movement is on the rise, and they are women who are opposed to change in defining women's roles. They always focus exclusively on upholding the traditional place of women within the domestic sphere. Sen and Grown (1987) talked of women bound by their own oppression. The leadership of the Women's Ministry was probably deliberately chosen by government because her views ran counter to those of women-in-development organizations. Charlton (1990) declared that the state reinforces and increases female subordination through three levels of activities: (i) strategies of state elites, (ii) policies enacted and institutions constructed, and (iii) the political discourse and practice shaped by state institutions and ideologies. Government had

employed all these means to promote male domination, female subordination and support of men in the society.

It is noteworthy that the WLDC has not been spurred to violent reactions in the face of all provocation and different forms of violence specifically unleashed on women individually, and corporately as organizations. The Center has avoided violent confrontations, using the nonviolent means of protests. There has been conflict of opinions but there has been no physical outburst in spite of government's provocation. The WLDC in spite of government's various aggressive and violent strategies had demonstrated leaning towards a culture peace in coping with the direct and systemic violence without losing its purpose. The women at WLDC saw themselves as peace workers and upholding a culture of peace as Tade expressed:

*In spite of the open hostility and blatant slight by the government we try to maintain a tradition of peace. We avoid open physical confrontation with government because we know it will be foolish, but at the same we do not give up on our cause. Government has continued to distance itself from the aspirations of women and the people in general. We only wonder how long this would last. Our achievement is not recognized by the government corporately as a Center and as individuals. But we will continue to press on.*

The leadership at the WLDC always handled situations quite well. At the workshop especially, discretion formed the better part of and what might have been a bloody scene was averted. However in spite of the risks, the WLDC promised it would continue to oppose government's policies as long as they did not serve the interests of women. The Center would continue to organize protests, and widespread use of the media and unofficial communication channels. According to Kaz, the Center would continue to have an opinion on government's activities and would not distance itself from the happenings in government's camp so as to continue to monitor governments activities. This accords with Clark (1993) who said NGOs cannot afford to ignore the state, that would be suicidal. Tade did not believe that the government would be consciously influenced in any way, nevertheless, the WLDC would continue to speak out loud and continue to make recommendations in areas of empowerment for women.

I however think that a responsible government should not underestimate the power of the civil society. The WLDC has manifested a dire resolve to continue with its work, not allowing itself to be co-opted, and avoiding physical confrontation with the government which could have dramatic results of direct violence, imprisonment and even deaths of members. Also confrontation can go on for years without any results being achieved (Charlton 1990). The WLDC's has set a precedence among NGOs, by deciding to go to

court, to resolve issues with government. This was a very severe but effective way to deal with a government that had never demonstrated the ability to listen.

### **WLDC and Elitism**

While talking with the women at the WLDC about relationship with its network, organizations, I discovered that some of the women in addition to being members of WLDC a *grassroots oriented* organization, also belonged to some *service oriented* organizations like Soroptimist International, Zonta International, Inner-wheeler (wives of Rotary Club) and Lioness (wives of Lions). Moser (1993) described *service-oriented* organizations as having a welfare policy approach. She said that they are essentially top-down middle class voluntary organizations, with a low level of participation by local women. They have been linked to the modernization model of development. Their weakness is that, within them, there is limited empowerment, they are **elitist**, and they do not have a clear understanding of gender subordination or its link to other forms of oppression. They are absolutely gender blind being “blind” in the reproduction of class relations.

While *Grassroots oriented* organizations have empowerment and capacity building as predominant policy approach. These organizations operate locally with very high local women participation. They focus on meeting practical gender needs , raising consciousness to address strategic needs such as domestic violence, legal rights, and political struggles. Moser added that some of these organizations have middle-class urban membership. Their main weakness include an inadequate resource base (Moser 1993).

I wanted to know how the women were able to reconcile the divergent paradigms of these two organizations. I asked Eyo of LRRDC if she belonged to any of these service organizations. She responded that she did not because she did not believe in charitable organizations. She was annoyed that some so-called women development organizations (NGOs) behaved more like these charitable organizations, giving away goodies to women in hospitals, showing concern for destitute children by taking them off the streets and giving them milk, institutionalizing programs for the rehabilitation of the lowly, etc. She asserted:

*This is not empowerment, it may be compassion but it is not conscientization. These organizations must be able to let the poor see the reasons for their poverty and be ready to do something about it. Most of their work are short-term measures to alleviate poverty and suffering. The people are quite complacent as they have been intimidated into silence by the long years of military rule and so are ready to just receive the goodies that will make them comfortable but not for long.*

Kepo of WEM revealed that she belonged to Innerwheeler, which she said was essentially for social contacts as a woman interested in politics. However she has used her position as President of the Innerwheeler to invite the WLDC to run some programs for its members to raise their awareness about women issues. Tade too, an executive of the WLDC, was also an executive member of Zonta International, another service organization. She clarified:

*I am aware of the different positions of these organizations but I believe that I could use my position as an executive in both organizations to create some gender awareness among my fellow members. I am also aware that they are international organizations with set mandates but I believe that locally it would not do any harm if I run programs to sensitize the women to some gender issues. Some of the policies of these service organizations are gender blind, so are some of the members. We have had programs for sensitization and we have invited members from service organizations to participate. Many have come out of the programs with some sense of gender awareness.*

If members of WLDC belong to elitist organizations, does that make the WLDC elitist?. I asked members of the WLDC what meanings they had of elitism and whether the WLDC fell into the category of an elitist organization. Rim said some women's organizations actually treat and regard each other as either superior or inferior to one another depending on the circumstances. She added that the WLDC has actually had the experience of both:

*We have had the experience of being treated as if we are inferior. We were being compared to the organizations that have government's favor and so have a lot of money to spend . But we let them know that co-optation is not success.*

Tade believed it was unfair and unjustifiable that this type of discrimination existed among women's organizations because all the organizations do have their own specific and unique roles to play. An organization's claim to success should be determined by the nature of its work and how its efforts are received by the community, not the amount of money that came in. Of the WLDC, she said:

*I believe in what we are doing and I do not think there is any reason for any organization to look down on any other because each organization has a specific role. Just as some organizations might have superiority complex, others too may tend to have undue inferiority complex. Although we have been treated as inferior by some organizations who see themselves in a special class, the consoling thing is that we have helped many people and even many other smaller organizations. Some have come back to tell us how beneficial our services have been. We take consolation in the fact that we are appreciated.*

Koyo interjected that organizations should not be apologetic for being regarded as elitist or superior in one way or another There are different levels of operations, different

ways of fighting women's oppression. This is what determines the strength of the organization, not their superiority. She explained:

*If your struggle is at policy-making level, then you operate among the people in power. If you are working directly at empowering women, or enabling women to improve their own lives, then you are more likely to just have grassroots involvement. An advocacy group will have a different constituency, so also a specialist activist group and a research group. NGOs cannot and should not all be judged by the same criteria because they are all doing different things. Although I agree that they are all helping in their own way towards the same goal of women empowerment but if one is seen as more potent than the other so let it be.*

Obun was more blunt. Her views centered on the power relationship between the teacher and the learner which Gore (1993) had talked about. Although Gore argued that the teacher and the learner are equal, both learning from one another, Obun believed that the one imparting training or facilitating is in possession of more knowledge or information more than the other. She elaborated:

*In every society there are those who know more than the other. There is nothing one can do about that. There will always be some people who are head above others. People will call them elitist. The concept of Train-the-Trainer came about because there are some who know more than others and so they have to teach those who do not know. Before you can go to the grassroots to teach them anything you must have gone to some higher institution to learn. You cannot give what you do not have. If that is elitism so let it be.*

Whether there is elitism or not, Kepo insists that women are still not fully cooperating with one another. She believed that the women's movement could be stronger in Nigeria if there was a higher level of solidarity, networking, and collaboration among women.

Regal reacted saying she did not agree with the view that women have not made much progress because of wrangling, elitism, and oppression of one another.

*First of all I disagree with the concept that there is a problem with women's organizations. I have worked with them all my life. I have taught in the university. I have worked in the UN system. Some of the things that people claim happen in women's organizations like backbiting, fighting, somebody's ego being hurt, somebody using their power to stop somebody else from having some leadership role - all these happen in male organizations too. All these things happen in any badly run organization. But I have found that working with women is much more relaxing. Women's organizations look at the big issues, they fight for general interests. When there is a problem, it is usually because they are economically, politically or externally motivated.*

Regal then added that women have been oppressed for about 3000 years and people expect women to solve all problems in 30 years since the Decade of Women. She claimed that this was an over inflated sense of what was possible to do. She drew a comparison with the post-colonial period where, after all the years of being free from colonial rule, people have not yet been able to free themselves from the shackles of colonialism. Women's oppression has been happening for much longer so there should be a more realistic view of what is achievable in a short time. She believed the reason why women have not overcome the obstacles was that the real "enemy" is out there. She pointed out that the powerful forces out there preventing the progress of the marginalized people, all women inclusive, come in the form of neocolonialism. She said neocolonialism has replaced classical colonialism, transnationalism has replaced patriarchy, therefore women should not be so hard on themselves but should look on the repressive forces out there. She did not think elitism was an issue.

Regal's position confirmed Mohanty's (1991) observation of women as victims of male violence, which she identified as patriarchy and colonialism. Pettman (1996) added to this list capitalism and international political economy which she says have made women more invisible despite considerable writings on development. Gordon (1996) noted that imperialism and patriarchy have undermined most women's potential for success and that the global capitalist economy is a major transformation that has had devastating effect on women.

Nonetheless, Tade claimed it would still be difficult to deny that there was elitism within and among women's organizations although it did not exist in the WLDC. In response to the question on how she would rate the WLDC, Alhaja said:

*I will place the Center between being an elitist and a grassroots organization. I think it interacts well with the both the elitist groups and the grassroots women. It has managed to keep a good balance. It could be "high brow" when there is a need to and grassroots oriented when it wants to. It has learnt to dance well among the two groups effectively.*

The more I listened to the women, the more it looked like there were different perceptions about *elitism* in women's organizations. For some, elitism was inevitable, there would always be some people better than others, a sort of class consciousness. For some, the mere class of people in an organization makes it elitist. The WLDC has lawyers and professors as members. Did that make the organization elitist? For some, the policies and practices of an organization make it elitist. Webster's dictionary defines elite as persons of highest class, a group of persons exercising the major share of authority or influence within a larger organization, and elitism as the practice of or belief in rule by an elite or



consciousness of or pride in belonging to a select or favored group. Rowbotham (1992), Parpart (1995), Ferree and Martin (1995) and Smith Sreen (1995) had all discussed elitism within feminist organizations and in the women's movement generally. They had given different perceptions of what constitutes elitism in an organization. For some, elitism is the top-down technocratic, "I know it all."

Mazrui (1978) has made a distinction between an *elite of leisure* and an *elite of labor*. An elite of leisure is one who minimizes social commitment and exertion and is placed in a situation in which he/she can pursue life of comfort without worrying about social disapproval. While an elite of labor is one who finds it necessary to justify their elite status by providing effective leadership and by setting an example of hard work through their own behavior and performance. At that point I decided that elitism would be a topic for further research. Do elites have roles to play in the development of women? Are all elites detrimental to the development of women? Do elites have a role to play in building a culture of peace?

However it appeared that there were some gains in the membership of these dual organizations. Kepo's talked of contacts for her political ambition. Service oriented organizations have both direct and indirect links to policy makers, and so they command significant resources (Moser's 1993). Tade thought she could use her vantage positions in both organizations to spread her empowerment gospel, to spread the concept of gender liberation among women of other groups. While Eyo with her total disconnection from the organizations, could not claim for herself or her organization any benefit.

### **Oppression of Women by Women**

Oppression of women by women seemed more lucid to conceptualize. With the amount of discussion and exposure to issues of direct and indirect discrimination and domination against women and solidarity among women, I was surprised to hear of women's personal experience of discrimination and veiled hostilities within the WLDC's camp. I did not think that the leaders were aware of these incidents and I did not have the time to take it up with them. The women who were involved did not, however, mention the incidents to the leaders. My conclusion was that the incidents did not represent the official position of the WLDC.

Alhaja M, a market woman and one of the participants of the WLDC workshop and leadership training in Enugu, recounted an experience where a facilitator was downright rude to her. She expressed shock because she had always thought that educated women

generally had good manners and were respectful, but this experience has shattered that view of the so called enlightened women. She recalled:

*This particular woman was very rude to me just because I did not understand certain things. She looked at me as an elephant looks at an ant. Now that she is at the top, she has forgotten that she had started from somewhere possibly at the same level with me.*

However Alhaja said she did not hold it against the Center because this was in another state outside Lagos where they had come for the training. She said she knew that the leaders of the WLDC were not as arrogant as this particular woman. She concluded that the woman just had an obnoxious character and that was why she did not bother to mention it to the leaders of the Center. But she did not hide her disillusion with some of the educated elites. She added that most illiterate women usually look up to the educated women and always desire that their children would reach a very high level of education. But according to her, children of the illiterate women have what she called “home training” and will never go out to be rude to someone. She questioned the value of education if it did not teach people to respect one another.

I was particularly moved by her observation and her perception. Education should truly make people better, should have some transformative effect. It was at this stage I started to think about a nonformal peace education for women in organizations, education for a culture of peace, an aspect of which involves respect for one another as human beings.

Limbo recounted another incident that happened at a workshop on Popular Participation in Ogbomoso. The Center was aware of the incident and took immediate steps to resolve the problem. She said the local women leaders of various grassroots communities were expected to bring some women from their communities to participate in the program. There was a stipend given to the women for lunch allowance and transportation. Limbo said that after giving out the money to the women participants she noticed that a purported woman leader was collecting back from the women some money. She investigated and discovered that the women were giving this so called woman leader a certain percentage of the money they had been given. Apparently this had been the practice. This woman would mobilize grassroots women to participate in programs and she would collect a certain percentage of their allowance. For her it was a business arrangement. She found a program for the women and she got paid. This was on top of the allowance paid to her by the organizers for mobilizing the women.

Limbo was quite shocked that any woman who had any connection with the Center would exploit other women in a situation where these rural women were being helped into some awareness. However, Kepo was not too surprised at the incident:

*It is not surprising that it is happening in the women's camp. People dominating people is a game women have learnt from the men who have been at it for so long. It looks strange on women because women have not come up with more subtle ways of doing it. Men have been doing it for so long that they have perfected it. I think women should do that which is right, in the name of justice and peace and unlearn negative things.*

Moser (1993) and Pettman (1996) believed that oppression of women by women is “power over” or subjugation of one woman by another woman. Empowerment cannot be real if some women still have power over other women (Moser, 1993). But Pettman (1996) then raised the question of unequal power relations among women especially in the domestic service and wondered whether servants and masters can be sisters in the struggle. However, it is not only in Nigeria that there is a manifestation of this domination of women by women or discrimination of women against women. Kim who coordinated an organization in London shared her experience.

*I find from personal experience that it is not only the underprivileged ones who suffer oppression or domination from other women. This can come at different level of operations. I was a victim of domination from some women who felt threatened by my rapid accession in the hierarchy of women's movement. Some women were very helpful and willing to help a younger woman who is just coming up. At the same time there were those who did everything to pull me down. Some felt I was too young to be where I was and more felt I just did not have the right to any ascension, being a black woman in a white dominated environment.*

Straker (1985), while talking about feminism in South Africa, said that white women seem particularly unconcerned with female issues they do not see themselves as oppressed and so do not acknowledge the oppression of others in the system. For the white women, the reality seems the achievement of a good quality of life at the expense of others who, in this case, are the black women. She added that the Black South African women are the victims of triple oppression, sexism, racism and classism. This is true whether they reside in the rural homeland or in the urban areas.

Living in Britain among a dominant group will only compound and highlight Kim's experience of oppression by other women. Feko puts the emergence of this domination of women over women in a political context. This new type of psychological violence, especially in Nigeria, could be related to the prolonged political domination of one section by the other within a country. Feko explained:

*The North has been ruling Nigeria for so long, they have been dominating the rest of us. They have been crafty and repressive in the political arena. The North has used the military, majority of whom happen to come from the North, to perpetuate this domination. This is double jeopardy. They have employed a divide and rule method setting one group against the other. People started internalizing the violence and web of hostilities perpetrated by government. This has generated a lot of rancor, hatred and distrust among the people. In the same way women started imbibing this culture and that is the genesis of women dominating women. It is a learnt practice used for survival and control. To survive in an atmosphere of dog eat dog, women are learning to be extra tough.*

These negative values should not be imbibed by women for the sake of survival as such practices do not promote a culture of peace. While addressing the issues of rights, the WLDC should look into the phenomenon of discrimination and domination of women by women. Just as there can be no peaceful relationships when one gender dominates the other, the same way there can be no peaceful co-existence when within a gender there is oppression and denial of human rights.

### **Strengths and Successes of the WLDC**

To determine where the WLDC was heading in the struggle for peace it was not only necessary to know where it was going but also how it would get there and with what tools. The WLDC needed to verbalize its strengths, successes and then its frustrations and weaknesses. Of the WLDC's strength, Tade identified "good sense" which had always prevailed at the WLDC. She clarified:

*The wisdom of the elders have always prevailed among us. It is not easy for women of different background, ages, cultures, dialect or languages to come together and work together. We started very cautiously that is why we have become this strong.*

Limbo believed monitoring of the growth of women they worked with had served as an encouragement. She said the enthusiasm displayed by the participants had always given them the assurance that the programs were relevant to the women's lives. This has feedback has helped in strengthening the activities of the Center. She said:

*It gives me joy when I see the women lighten up and show sudden awareness of something we are trying to tell them. It tells me that there is hope for women's cause.*

Kaz added she was always thrilled by the feedback that came to the Center and the requests of the states for the Center to go back and replicate the programs. These requests always made her feel that the Center's work was relevant and appreciated. She exclaimed:

*The response we have had from other people about the work we are doing has been very encouraging. This has convinced us that we are on the right track.*

Rim claimed that the WLDC was the first organization to address the issue of governance for African women. That has been particularly rewarding because she has witnessed the growing awareness of what women have suffered by being excluded from rulership and having a voice in state affairs. Feko a facilitator ascribed the WLDC's success to its peaceful structures.

*Many women's organizations get so engrossed with the issues at hand that they forget to organize themselves peacefully or establish peaceful structures. Most do not reflect and plan. They just want to get by and behave like firefighters who only come on the scene when there is a crisis. But the WLDC has been mindful of all these shortcomings and has been more strategic in a peaceful manner*

For Funkie the success and strength of the WLDC was due to the quality of networking:

*I will ascribe the success of the WLDC to the type of relationship it has with the network organizations. Things are easy when one works with people among whom there is mutual likeness and respect. We were able to have a sense of personal solidarity because we were working with people who have the same ideals, principles and vision with the Center.*

When strengths abound, these help sustain organizations and these are responsible for their successes (Livenaugh, 1995). Success is better than failure because it validates one's actions (Freeman 1995). The primary challenge facing women today is to maintain and increase the momentum of their participation and empowerment (Karl, 1995). The WLDC seemed to possess some necessary skills and perception needed for the years ahead, good sense, monitoring and evaluation of programs for feedback, having a global focus and networking. All these the WLDC had used as instruments of peace.

### **Problems of the WLDC**

According to Tade , the WLDC has tried to be effective and peaceful in the execution of its duties, yet it has had to face several problems and limitations. Tade however, admitted that it has been good to have challenges. The true test of an organization is the resilience and strength in the face of problems. The WLDC was able to identify and name problems it had

encountered and also how those obstacles were overcome observing the culture of peace principles.

Kaz identified the Center's major problem as follows: limited financial resources, difficulties in raising funds, and limited access to network that allocate resources. She declared that the major problem that had beset the Center was money.

*The major problem is money, funding. There has not been enough money to achieve all our goals. We need money to get the participants together. We need money for information dissemination, telling people what we are doing. Money is needed for the women's transportation. Nigeria has a major transportation problem. If we are to continue to involve a larger community of women in all these issues there must be adequate money to run the programs. Right now money is a major problem.*

Tade also confirmed that money did not come readily to the Center as in the case of most women's organizations. Livernash (1995) confirmed that money is a perennial problem of most nongovernmental organizations. For Olu, dealing with the funders was a problem. She said getting money from them was like squeezing money from stone. It involved a lot of running around, a lot of paper work, and a lot of defending the program. She said:

*It has not been easy getting money from these funders. It is a lot of running around. It does not matter how supportive they want to be. They are all hard. Dealing with funders is not easy.*

Busy said she was irked by funders who also subscribe to negative notions about women's organizations. She explained:

*There is financial problem coupled with financial restriction imposed on organizations by funders, which makes operation very difficult and tedious. Then there is the moral environment which makes the donor agencies treat organizations with suspicion. With that type of atmosphere it is very difficult to operate, to think about the survival of the organization and think of how to do the work well. With all these who needs a women development organization?*

She said that all the so called aid by the funders have not solved the problems of underdevelopment especially among women. There seemed to be a basic problem somewhere and although the WLDC had availed itself of some foreign funds, the Center had always recognized the flaw and the catch in some of the funding patterns. The Center was therefore working towards freeing itself from the clutches of funders. Burkey (1993) observed that a major phenomenon in most Third World countries is that NGOs still have umbilical connection to funding agencies. However Limbo say she did not have a conscience problem about the Center taking foreign aid because she saw it as reparation of

all that had been stolen from the developing nations. I immediately thought this would be an interesting point to explore in another research, *Funding to organizations: Aid or Reparation*.

Hallack (1994) had actually asked if these development aid are really aid or humanitarian assistance or something else. He suggested that these foreign aid are not acts of charity. Aid is an instrument to promote the business and commercial interests of the North in the South. Allahar (1989) had argued that aid packages are based on social control since the way they are intended to help South nations masks the understanding of the sources of the problems of underdevelopment as linked to the behavior of the North and serves to perpetuate the very conditions of underdevelopment. Allahar and other critical dependency theorists consider foreign assistance to be detrimental to the interest of the South. They believe the foreign aid is a tool deliberately and skillfully used by the north to keep the South in a subjugated position to perpetuate all forms of dependency. It was therefore commendable that the WLDC stated it would not want to be perpetually tied to these funders in an unequal and exploitative relationship.

Limbo focused on the inadequacy of infrastructure in Nigeria. There were times when there would be no regular supply of electricity, no water, no reliable use of the telephones. Transportation was expensive. The WLDC claimed that its performance was inhibited at every level because of all the frustrations from infrastructural inadequacies in the country. For Limbo, the worst problem was lack of effective banking system.

*It is quite a frustrating thing that the basic infrastructure to operate does not exist. Apart from no light, no water we face the problem of transferring money. When we want to hold a conference in another part of the country we have to carry cash around. This is always very risky for us.*

Feko identified government as another source of frustration and problem. With a repressive government the Center lived each day with the threat of being closed down by government. Nonetheless the Center had not demonstrated any form of apathy or discouragement nor has it shown any signs of giving up. Luckily she added the survival and growth of the Center did not depend on government's policies, directives and funding. The WLDC leaders had spoken vehemently against government's policies as a constraining factor in the Center's activities.

Rim identified staff capacity as another major problem the Center faced. She said:

*We need more staff but we cannot afford them. We also need higher capacity in terms of quality, and we cannot afford that either.*

Rim added that there were very few women adequately trained in gender issues. Secondly there was the problem of keeping staff due to migration. She regretted that after investing in the training of the staff, they sometimes move on to another organization or to form their own. Feko wished the Center had some volunteers to help, but she observed that the spirit of volunteerism was dead in Nigeria. Gold (1991) describe volunteerism as the fulfillment of social responsibility in a climate of national conscience. It appears that this climate does in Nigeria and so the people could not take it upon themselves to give of themselves or of their time.

Funkie identified societal attitudes as part of the socio-cultural issues hampering the activities of the Center. Some men did not favor the training of women on the excuse that the Center was planning to take over the men's kingdom and so husbands have come to complain about the Center's encouraging their women not to stay home to fulfill their God given roles. Jade added that working with some women has not been easy either. Some women still have negative attitudes about themselves and were hesitant to break from the roles they have been socialized into.

*The negative attitudes about women still exist. But there is gradually coming a breakthrough. The inhibition is gradually dying. But the major problem is that some women themselves are not letting go easily, especially those from certain religions who agree that the subjection of women by men is a divine injunction.*

As Livernash (1995) has observed women's organizations have had to face many problems and impediments in their multifaceted tasks. She added there are various sources of problems and there are also various reactions to these problems. Some confront obstacles beyond their control, are not able to cope and so they give up. Some are as rigid as government departments, so they are not able to achieve much. Some may simply not have the ability to replicate projects and sustain themselves after the initial outing, so they collapse. Some are simply not as innovative as others, so they do not make the mark (Burkey 1993, Moser 1993, Livernash 1995).

Like most organizations, the WLDC had its share of problems. However, the Center seemed to have been coping well with problems the women themselves identified. The level of involvement and commitment was rather high. The women were still positioned and poised to continue the Center's quest for women's empowerment, helping to address inequities and related problems, all in accordance with a culture of peace.



## **The Future of the WLDC**

I specifically asked the women leaders what the future held for the WLDC. Eyo simply predicted the Center could achieve a lot more than it was doing now because of its inherent potentials and capabilities. She said the Center should expand its scope:

*The WLDC should take on a lot more responsibility. Nationally it needs to widen its scope and bring in more people on board and expand its activities to all the states of Nigeria, with offices and branches all over. The Center should see itself as taking on international responsibility especially on the continent of Africa, being network members of Women in Law and Development for Africa (WILDAF) and Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) which are Pan African organizations and the fact the Executive director of WLDC is the current international president of AAWORD.*

Eyo added that the WLDC needed to provide more leadership for more women's organizations. In fact it should formally establish an umbrella organization for women's organizations to replace the moribund National Council of Women Societies (NCWS). She said:

*It is an organization that could impact more if it restructures to face the vast challenges of working with women. The WLDC must be ready to go far beyond what it appears being ready to do now. It is an organization that could do a lot more if it accepts the challenge of doing a lot more. WLDC should not just want to do so little out of so much.*

The Executive Director smiled and responded:

*Sure we would like to do a lot more than what we are doing. We really wish we could, because our efforts are just like a drop in the ocean. So much still needs to be done but everyone knows our problem, our major constraint is finance to operate.*

Limbo's dream is the eradication of poverty where every Nigerian woman has equal access to the resources and wealth of the country. She believed the WLDC would continue to work to achieve this.

*Poverty is a major factor mitigating against women and even though they understand their rights they are unable to enforce them because they do not have the wherewithal. So women need to be economically empowered to be able to see the vision through.*

According to Olu, the women's movement had talked enough about the problems of women. Everyone knows what the problems are, so women should be pushing for more changes, doing more in the area of action.

*We at the Center have been involved in awareness raising for women towards their empowerment. We are just beginning to go further and spur them more into action. This is what I want to see. More action, action, action, and for me politics is the arena for more action.*

Funkie urged the WLDC to continue to empower women, using all strategies available to the Center. She exclaimed:

*We want to have better coverage of the country, we want to reach every nook and corner of Nigeria and carry this gospel of women's emancipation to the uttermost ends of Nigeria. We want to reach more people by number. We also want to translate our materials into more languages in Nigeria. We have them in the main Nigerian languages: Pigeon English, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. But we want to translate them into some minor languages like Urhobo, Fufude, Edo and Ihogbe and so on.*

It was very interesting that many women in the Center were looking forward to a woman president in Nigeria. Many thought it was time for Nigeria to have a woman president. Limbo spoke in specific terms about what the Center hopes to achieve.

*The Center will continue to teach the gospel of women liberation, freeing women from the chain. We want to encourage women to participate more in governance. We want to see women governors, we want to see a woman as the president of Nigeria, so we are working towards that. Personally I am committed to every thing that the center is committed to.*

Although Kaz, the Program director, had put it slightly differently, it still had the same ring to it when she said:

*We have dreams. We hope to continue to do what we are doing to empower women, in totality. We will continue to look at various aspects of the subordination of women both from the societal point of view and from the women's point of view. We will continue with our research into land inheritance, succession, family laws, etc. We will then take our data and start to lobby until men come to accept that women are 50 percent of the society and therefore have a right to participate in the development of the society.*

The WLDC had a focus on the next generation It planned to vigorously put in place programs that would interest, involve, and invigorate the younger women as Tade put it:

*By the time I retire, the WLDC would have got the younger people interested. There will be a whole core of younger women who can carry on the work. I want to have the satisfaction that we have taken care of succession, I am looking forward to a viable Center that we can leave for the younger generation. I want to be able to write my memoirs and so leave a legacy.*

However, there was an interesting twist to it all. As much as all these women were interested in increased women participation in politics and decision making, none from the Center was interested in going into active politics. None of them had political ambitions. Various reasons were given for the lack of desire, ranging from lack of money, to the difficult terrain and the hostilities and potential violence in the game.

Feko, a facilitator saw the future in terms of peace. She was looking forward to the day when women will be at peace with each other and with the men. She pledged that the Center would continue for peace between and among men and women. Kaz' vision was for the Center to be a haven for all women, the professional women, the retired women, the young women, the educated women, the grassroots women so they could all be empowered to pursue peace in society. She would like to see Nigerian women become more self assured and more self confident in every area of human endeavor.

Bos had a different vision for the WLDC. She was looking forward to a point when the Center would become a funder of projects. She believed that Nigerian women's development organizations did not have to run to foreign agencies to look for funds for their programs. She strongly believed that funds could be generated by Nigerians among Nigerians and the WLDC could be the initiator of that move. I would like to share this optimism with Bos - that the day will come when women, who have always been regarded as the poorest of the poor, would become funders of poverty eradication programs and projects for both men and women, in the true spirit of a culture of peace.

Slaughter (1988) believed that education must take a peep into the future, and fear about the future must be dealt with. Any fears which arise will be acknowledged, focused and directed towards constructive and creative ends. He added that any education that does not consider the future is repressive. A culture of peace program should have future components, a range of futures, probable and preferable.

In sum the future focus of most members seem positive. Members seemed to know what is needed for a peaceful world. While based on this study I generally share WLDC's optimism about the future, it is pertinent to reflect on some possibilities for changes in WLDC as an organization. For example external developments such as a shift in governments policies may lead to differences in viewpoint among members over how the Center should relate to the State. Some members might feel the best strategy is to maintain the WLDC's critical stance from the government , so that the Center can continue to be an effective pressure group. Others might feel that it will not be harmful to cooperate more closely with the government since it has moved to a civilian rule.

The WLDC may at a later date decide to change some aspects of its ideology and practices such as allowing for the inclusion of male members which was mentioned by some members. WLDC should be aware that proposed changes or even resistance to changes by some members could lead to conflict . However the evidence of the study would suggest that the present leadership and membership would if faced with such internal conflict be able to willingly resolve them constructively thereby hopefully avoiding the organizational splits that have often occurred within social movements and NGOs

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a synthesis of the major findings and conclusions of this research study which is a basic qualitative research that sought to find out if the development activities of women NGOs contribute to building a culture of peace in Nigeria. The study focused on a selected women NGO, Women Law And Development Center to respond to the research question. To address the research problem, there were three clusters of research questions. The first one was to determine if the visions, goals, purposes, practices of WLDC contributed to a culture of peace in Nigeria. The second cluster sought the understanding of the leaders, members, and participants of the Center of a holistic concept of a culture of peace focusing on its themes and also of peace education for a culture of peace. The third cluster sought to determine if the internal and external relationships of WLDC contributed to a culture of peace. This summary will highlight the major findings of the research.

#### **Summary of Major Findings**

As far as I have gathered from my literature search, this research was the first study on a *culture of peace* in Nigeria as well as on the possible contributions of a women's development NGO. The term culture of peace was new to virtually all my participants. Nevertheless, the women were familiar with the multiple issues and problems that constitute a culture of peace. Moser (1993) noted that there have not been many studies on the activities and operations of women's organizations even at a global level. The NGOs themselves have conducted researches on various aspects of women's issues but not many of them had focused on organizations within the movement. This study therefore contributed to filling that gap. This study gave the women in the organization the opportunity to express their views and meanings on the concept of a culture of peace especially as they relate to the role of women in a south context like Nigeria. This research also provided me the opportunity, as an activist and a member of the women's movement, to stand momentarily outside the movement, look in, listen, and critically analyze the movement as an insider from outside (Parpart, 1995). Here is a summary of my findings.

### ***Culture of Peace in WLDC***

The Women Law and Development Center (WLDC) is a women's non-governmental organization, that can strategically be defined as a development organization (Moser 1993). Smith-Sreen (1995) defined a development organization as one engaged in implementing development efforts that provide higher benefits to its members and its community. The thinking that development organizations get things done because of the sense of solidarity, mutual support, identification with a local group and warm feelings which usually accompany such organizations (Karlson, 1995) rang true in the case of the WLDC which is an independent democratic organization committed to assuming responsibilities, working to expand the capabilities of people.

Isaac Asinov (1974) called the earth a spaceship. He said all human beings are encased in this spaceship each working for the good or ill of each other. The WLDC appeared to be working for the good of other members of this spaceship. The good, as conceived by members of the WLDC, is a society defined in terms of justice, freedom, equality, human rights and dignity, development and peace, all of which are issues of a culture of peace.

Women in South nations have usually been constructed as vulnerable, helpless, and pre-modern with statistics chronicling their many problems, emphasizing their subordinate status, high mortality, lack of education, poverty and powerlessness by development experts and even in feminist discourse in the North (Parpart, 1995; Mohanty, 1997). Women in the South have frequently been portrayed as women who needed not only aid and support of the North, but also the North to plan for them. The role models of women in the WLDC from leaders to members have helped to demystify such stereotypes. These women were not only adequately empowered but they themselves were empowering women to make them their own agents of change in their struggle for their empowerment.

The phrase "women in development," (WID) was coined in the early 1970s and was adopted by women development organizations as their guiding principles for their work with women. The women at WLDC recognized the limitations of focusing on women alone in their work in development (Anand, 1985; Moser, 1993) which was the deficiency of the WID approach and saw the need to sensitize women to the institutions responsible for their marginalization. Thus the Center shifted from women-in-development (WID) paradigm to gender-and-development, (GAD) paradigm.

The women at the WLDC have been able to identify the various circumstances and institutions, like patriarchy and militarism, that have caused the sufferings of the masses and marginalization of women in Nigeria. For the women at the WLDC, the solution lay in

working with women, the victims of these institutions and sensitizing them to these realities. The WLDC through its policies and practices, has shown great sensitivity to the peoples' needs, especially the women with whom they worked with. The Center had established a good connection with members of its communities with whom it worked closely and was able to discern their problems, and hence in a position to design programs to meet their needs. Tinker (1997) and Parpart (1995) consider this as the basis for effective operations. The women at the WLDC understood the dynamics and principles of participation. The Center had diversity, credibility and creativity and the women have managed to engage with the local populations and gain their trust in ways which the Nigerian government found impossible (Clark, 1995).

The women at the WLDC were not only exposed to the various theoretical positions in development, they also constituted a positive link between theory and practice which Gore (1993) said is crucial for a learning experience. They were qualified researchers who were able to investigate and theorize about realities in the community as they relate to women. From my encounters with the WLDC women and observations in my field visit, I was impressed with their capacity to articulate problems and translate these into meaningful educational and problem solving experiences for marginalized Nigerian women.

Recognizing the patriarchal institution as the source of women's problems was not adequate but the direct inclusion of men in women's activities will achieve a quicker sensitization, as some of the women recognized. Some members of the Center would like the programs and membership of the Center extended to men. This they believed would make the adoption of the gender and development paradigm complete since gender issues include men.

To meet its goals and visions, the WLDC appreciated the fact that development must start with the development of the people, the development of the self. No development activity can succeed unless it has a strong element of human development (Burkey, 1993). The leaders at the Center therefore resolved to help women acquire new skills and knowledge so they can actively participate in the economic, social and political development of their community (Burkey, 1993). The Center has put in place a process by which the recipients of its programs and other women connected to the Center became more self confident, self reliant, cooperative and aware of their potential as catalyst for positive change. This was conscientization. This was achieved through the Center's various programs, which were rich in content and most relevant to the society and community within which it operated (Blumberg, 1990).

Some development organizations try to address every possible social and economic ill in the society and so they always include a wide array of goals in order to authenticate their viability for undertaking various projects and programs. When goals do not reflect an organization's capacity or the communities' needs, it forms a shaky foundation for program implementation (Smith-Sreen, 1995). The founders of the WLDC knew that mobilizing and setting goals were usually the link between prescribing and achieving change. Hence the officers of the WLDC did not attempt to engage in all possible activities and risk losing a sense of direction. The WLDC goals were well defined, reflecting the Center's capacity and specific development direction which was empowering women to make them their own agents of change. The WLDC was quite realistic in the goals it has set for itself.

From a culture of peace perspective, the WLDC's justification for working with women is that women constituted at least half of the world's population. Hence, there could be no sustainable and authentic peace if any sector of society is marginalized. The WLDC's option to work primarily with women in itself recognized women's contribution to societal peace.

The WLDC wanted the women's voices to be heard through the ballot rather than the bullet (Buchard, 1985). They believed that women could be peacemakers among family members. They knew that women have experiences to share. Women have experienced violence in all forms. Women experience various forms of discrimination which close doors in their faces - economic, intellectual social and religious doors. Women bear the burden of poverty and marginalization. Women can bring peace not by being passive but by being active pacifists (Saraicino, 1988). As Gandhian activists have argued, nonviolence needs to be active in intent and strategy (Fahey & Armstrong, 1992). Giving women a priority of place is, in itself, a contribution to a culture of peace, because this is empowerment for women.

Working with women had helped the WLDC to clearly identify and articulate some critical societal issues for women. Some of these issues were widowhood problems, girl child problem, women's rights, women's education, women's health, basic literacy for most women, functional skills for some category of women, lack of basic amenities like water, light, housing, badly polluted environment, acute poverty of material wealth as well as of thought (Beijing Platform of Action 1995). The WLDC had attempted to restore peace into the lives of women by motivating them to understand the root causes of these problems which they have identified as patriarchy, militarism, and sexism, and which were systemic and structural, empowering them to seek constructive nonviolent solutions.



The world has seen three decades of “development” involving huge amounts of financial resources and thousands of projects designed and implemented by local, expatriate, governmental and nongovernmental consultants, experts, administrators, trainers, volunteers. Yet poverty and development has continued to thrive, especially among women (Burkey, 1993). The question has always been asked *what is wrong? Why?* It has been discovered that programs and projects aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of people, including women as a group, tended to be initiated from the top-down by agencies and institutions without systematic consultations and involvement of the intended beneficiaries. As a result, services offered to the people were often rejected or under-utilized because the services did not meet the peoples’ needs, nor respect the peoples’ sensitivities, nor respond to local realities (Askew, 1993).

The general view has been that too many development professionals have believed that development will be achieved through the efforts of governments and official development agencies. Today there is a reflection that development will only be achieved through the efforts of the people themselves working for their benefit and that of their families and communities (Burkey, 1993). It has been discovered that the best thing is to change the development approach from *top-down* to *bottom up* where the people can do something themselves to change their own lives. This is what was labeled “participatory development” by the ILO (1990) or people centered development by advocates like Korten (1994) which is the foundation for authentic development, human, economic, political, social development. Participatory development is totally dependent on men and women themselves assisted by those who are willing to help and work with and among them (Burkey, 1993).

The WLDC was engaged in participatory development. Women in the WLDC recognized the fact that participation in the development process was an essential part of human growth. It is the development of self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility, and cooperation. Without such a development within the people, all efforts to help the people will be immensely difficult. This was a process whereby the women learnt to take charge of their own lives and solve their own problems (Burkey, 1993). Paulo Freire (1978) believed that attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects, which must be saved from a burning building. It is like leading them into a populist/vanguard pitfall and transforming them into masses who can be manipulated.

The WLDC’s training strategies which included program design, selection of program participants, selection of facilitators, were quite participatory, collaborative and

appropriate which contributed to a culture of peace. I heard the word participation used extensively during my field experience at the WLDC. For the WLDC, participation was democracy in action (Hicks, 1988). The Center used participation for the development of social and political skills, and as a learning process, by allowing the women to learn by doing, as praxis rather than unreflective technical practice managed by “experts.” (Burkey 1993). The WLDC used participation to achieve its goals, to help the women gain greater control of their life situation.

I observed how the WLDC attempted to translate into practical context the concept of gender and development in a participatory way. The WLDC was involved in helping women have control over their lives in a collective way, in an effort towards participatory development. The planning and execution of programs were participatory because they involved the participants of the program throughout the process. Through my interaction with the program participants, I discovered that they were quite satisfied and content with their involvement in all phases of the programs. From these practices, the Center demonstrated its ability and capacity to contribute to a culture of peace.

One of the goals of the WLDC is to instill the value of self-reliance in women. For the WLDC, participatory development means developing self reliance, which is doing things for one’s self, maintaining one’s self confidence, making independent decisions either as individuals or within the context of a collective group to which each member has voluntarily allied himself or herself. Self reliance helps to promote personal peace which means spiritual tranquillity, an inner peace achieved through religious pursuits and through interaction with nature (Pickus, 1991). Although self-reliance develops within the individual, the WLDC has put in place strategies for external assistance from the leadership, essentially by the type of programs the Center institutes. Self-reliance leads to empowerment of women for full participation, a concept which ensures the rights of women to access resources from which they might have been excluded.

The WLDC took the challenge to help women in this growth process of self reliance which in the economic sense, is the ability of an individual, a family, community or nation to produce some or all its basic needs. Self-reliance at times leads to self-sufficiency (Burkey, 1993). The women at the WLDC knew this, hence they networked with other women in other organizations who were like-minded. They have voluntarily pooled their resources together to enhance their efforts towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency. They were all aware of the fact that if women were to manage and control their own development they must gain self-confidence, and have faith in their abilities and trust in their comrades. Constructive participation demonstrates mutual trust, honesty and concern for others

(Smith-Sreen, 1995). These women have also learnt to avoid autocratic leadership and misuse of money. The women leaders at the WLDC have also recognized and taught the fact that development is predicated upon conscientization which is a process in which people try to understand their present situation in terms of prevailing social, economic, and finally believe in their own ability to change the situation. They become active subjects in their own development (Burkey, 1993). Conscientization is a process whereby the oppressed understand the political roots of their problems and are ready to act to liberate themselves.

Participatory development has a time factor. Development needs patience (Rimmerman, 1996). The WLDC has demonstrated that it was willing and ready to exercise patience. Usually development workers feel an enormous pressure to produce visible results as quickly as possible (Burkey, 1993). The WLDC officers and staff were patient with the women they worked with. The Center did not have one program and then stop. It would invite and re-invite the women to come for programs knowing fully well that changes in attitudes is a slow and gradual process. The Center tried to strengthen the people rather than get things done quickly. At times they had to repeat programs so that participants could derive the full benefits. The WLDC believed in training the people to the level that they feel empowered enough to go out and train others. One participant testified to her own personal transformation, how empowered she had become to assume more responsibilities in her place of work and empowering other women as well.

For the WLDC, participation was more than a policy statement. It was a philosophical approach. The leaders displayed genuine commitment to encourage participation in all aspects and at all levels of its development programs. Through my attendance at the meetings and observation, I heard the staff discuss mistakes made and steps taken to rectify them. Burkey (1993) explained where there is genuine participation, mistakes will be made. There may be failures but there will also be progress, because participation is essentially learning by doing exercise, a cyclical order which helps to produce desired results. The WLDC pursued a cyclical order. Plans were made, actions were taken, results were studied, lessons learned and new plans and actions took place. This was the praxis, the critically reflective practice pursued by the WLDC. Participation in peace education and in a culture of peace promotes self-respect, appreciation of others, concepts of justice and nonviolence. The WLDC's adherence to participatory development promoted and enhanced a culture of peace.

Participation created the possibility of empowerment which was the major goal of this organization. The Center acknowledged that empowerment is needed for all women to take control of their lives, not only as individuals but as a group equipping them to meet the

challenges of living in their world. The funding agency I spoke to, claimed to support the participatory approach to development by the WLDC. This agency also recognized the fact that participation promotes the effectiveness of projects and the benefits received by the community (Smith-Sreen, 1995).

The Center used participation as a continuous, educative process, a process of progressive conscientization (Oakley & Marsden, 1994). This conscientization is contributory to a culture of peace. Through collective reflection on its experiences and problems, the Center and its program recipients have become increasingly aware of the many dimensions of reality and what can be done to transform it. Oakley and Marsden (1994) believed that participation is an end in itself. Words such as empowerment and liberation frighten some people because they generate images of revolution and violent change. However, WLDC was not afraid of change. Its approach to the development process was very radical. The only frightened entity, I believe, was the government who was not at ease with the Center's policy. This was clearly demonstrated when government sent security agents and the police force to disband the workshop on *Poverty and Democratization*. Government agents claimed that the Center was inciting the people against the government and hence the workshop should be stopped. Due to the ingenuity of the leaders and cooperation of the people, the workshop was shifted to a very innocuous site and went on as planned. This management of conflict was one of the ways that the Center contributed to a culture of peace.

As part of its training strategy the WLDC produced many documents apart from its bi-monthly newsletter, as supplement to its training programs. After each workshop or seminar, pamphlets were produced as training manuals for participant-trainers to use at their various organizations level. Information is power and the abundance of it is a check against ignorance. Sharing and free flow of information is one of the themes of a culture of peace.

Although Smith-Sreen (1995) stated that the traditional kind of accountability, which deals only with financial accounting, is being challenged within development circles because it is a very narrow interpretation of accountability and responsibility, I would still say that the WLDC seemed to be accountable in its financial operation. There was an in-house accountant and financial decisions were collaboratively taken. Clark (1991) emphasized the need to look beyond financial accountability for assessing performance. From my observation and study of the documents, the WLDC was quite equitable in the distribution of its resources, which was an issue of fair play and justice. Burkey (1993) said money is always an issue within many women's organizations, a source of severe conflict within organizations and a problem which seems to engulf most of them because whoever controls

it has the power. Burkey (1993) also believed that most people in voluntary organizations commit themselves to a specific cause, and because of this commitment there is usually financial accountability. Such accountability results in very little or no cases of embezzlement within organizations. She concluded that an activist would hardly violate the ethics of running an organization because of this commitment.

I believe this was quite true of the WLDC. There was no hint that money management or mismanagement has been a problem, or that allocation of resources has been unfair or lopsidedly. The WLDC leaders gave the members and program participants their due share and did not exploit them as confirmed by the participants and members themselves. I witnessed the WLDC give out transport money to participants as specified in its proposals to funders. I also believe that the WLDC leaders, as conflict managers, were able to prevent conflict that might have risen from financial mismanagement by the very values promoted within the organization. Conflict prevention and management of conflict are issues of peace within which the WLDC operated.

One of the problems and frustrations faced by the Center focused on funds, specifically the lack of adequate funds to execute all its programs. This was attributed to the fact that the Center was donor driven. However, the funder I interviewed testified to the financial credibility of the Center. The WLDC was considered by its funders to be good managers of money, very prudent and frugal.

The WLDC expressed dissatisfaction with funding agencies who usually insisted on their own agenda. The women thought that donors should begin to show sensitivity to the needs of the organizations that they fund, rather than always urging or rushing them to finish a program and send in the report, in short to give an account of how the money was spent, rather than show the effect of the programs on peoples' lives. The Center's leaders seemed to agree with Smith-Sreen (1995) who claimed that there was an urgent need for the revision of policies and procedures of donor agencies and warned that those disbursing the funds should take into consideration performance and effect of programs on the recipients, rather than how money is spent. Masefield (1992) noted that a great deal of heartbreak would have been saved if those who wish to help in development could learn to do good slowly.

Gandhi believed that women have a different upbringing from men. Women are more peaceful and more capable of solving conflicts in a nonviolent manner (Taylor & Miller, 1994). Reardon (1992) used as metaphors for peace the women-centric notion of conception, labor, birth and parenting which she said would move us from a warring society to a parenting or caring society. Summarily, I would therefore say that in its goals,

vision, strategies, and practices, the WLDC has demonstrated a very high level of sensitivity to building a culture of peace even though it was not consciously aware of this concept. Building a culture of peace by the Center came naturally to the women at the WLDC. I did not sense a show or an attempt to impress. The WLDC style and manner of operation was simply peaceful.

### ***The WLDC's Understanding of a Culture of Peace***

#### **Violence/Peace: General Ideas**

The women at the WLDC defined peace in three categories. They saw peace as spiritual tranquillity, an inner peace achieved through religious pursuits and through interaction with nature. It therefore seemed that this essential condition for a peaceful world is not located in the minds of man (and woman) as in the preamble to the UNESCO Charter but in the soul of humanity (Pickus, 1991). They also saw peace as positive peace (Hicks, 1983) which is a world of justice and sharing, a world governed by compassion and the fulfillment of human needs, a world where human beings have given up selfishness and greed for a world of love and harmony. They saw peace as an end to structural violence. They saw economic and political structures of deprivation and oppression as the first violence which is the cause and justification of the second violence of war and revolution (Pickus, 1991). Positive peace for the women at the WLDC was reflected in social justice, and economic well being and the constructive integration of human society, which were valid and necessary and related to the achievement of world peace. They also saw peace as negative peace which is absence of organized mass violence or war. Negative peace is an antonym of war, an end to physical violence from local to global levels. Peace was also seen as public order, security from mass violence achieved in a well-governed community.

Prevention and resolution of conflict was considered a prerequisite to peace. The WLDC women conceded conflict as a natural and inevitable part of all human interactions and so conflict management and conflict resolution was taught to women participants, acknowledging it as a useful skill in human relationships. The WLDC stated in one of its training manual that conflict is resolved when parties reach a joint agreement that satisfies the interests and needs of the parties in conflict, when it does not sacrifice any party's important values and meets standards of fairness and justice.

Taylor and Miller (1994) said that conflicts within organizations is a major reason for peacelessness and violence. The findings of this research query Kolb and Bartinek's (1992) claim that conflicts and disputes are pervasive in organizations. It also challenged Kolb and Putnam's (1992) claim that conflict is a persistent fact of organizational life,

usually embedded in the daily routines of work, usually private and informal and usually handled behind the scenes. By and large, the Center's staff proved to be effective conflict managers and were able to manage and resolve minor incidents of conflicts before they became full blown. The WLDC was able to get by and operate without being immersed in squabbles, conflicts, and arguments that can lead to fragmentation of the organization. There was visible cohesion and a spirit of amity was prevalent. The WLDC, an organization with women at the top, have confirmed Ruble's and Schneer's (1995) suggestion that women are socialized to value relationships, maintain harmony and openness, and these are skills they bring into any organizations that they lead. Generally, women try to emphasize a peaceful approach to leadership and to problems solving within the organization.

### ***Militarism***

The women at the WLDC defined militarism as the spirit or tendencies of a professional soldier, the undue prevalence of military spirit or ideals. Nigeria's political institution was a fertile ground for militarism and institutional or structural violence. The women identified the spirit of "do what I tell you or else" which Franklin (1989) called the "threat system." The WLDC believed this system was very oppressive, a system that has been quite inimical to the development and progress of women. The women severely condemned the policies of the military, not only its militarism stance but also its militarization policy. They criticized the military spending of the Nigerian government claiming it was not a sound economic policy. Many social areas like education and health were neglected because the government would rather expend the resources on militarization of the country. The WLDC argued that security pursued through excessive public expenditure on military equipment and defense left the lives and well being of citizens in jeopardy. The military system operated on the assumption of a superior/inferior relationship, unequal status, which did not make for peace. The WLDC identified militarism in Nigeria as one of the hierarchical structures that oppress women. This confirmed Franklin's (1989) claim that opposition to women's rights and militarism in all its forms are two sides of the same coin. The women at the WLDC looked to a livable future of democracy that has ingredients of respect not only for all women but for all members of society.

To the WLDC women, militarism in Nigeria was largely entrenched through successive military regimes. They agreed that governance by the military has caused untold social ills and havoc including direct violence, violations of human rights, corruption and poverty of the majority. A military culture has also invaded the people's language, attitude, relationships and conduct within all levels of society. The role of media in promoting a

culture of violence was also criticized by the WLDC women. Militarism has led to the repression of minorities like the Ogoni peoples whose struggle against exploitation by transnational oil companies is made more difficult by state support of the companies. Religious and ethnic conflicts have also resulted in militarism. However, the WLDC women understand that this is not due to religious beliefs per se but stems from the manipulation of religious, ethnic and political leaders.

### **Economic Security and Equity**

The women at the WLDC were clear about the interdependence of development and peace, the connection and close relation between abuses or misuse of wealth and economic inequalities. Jacobsen (1994) noted that conflict between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is an expression of the struggles of the "haves" for influence. The women claimed that poverty was often the result of injustice, suffering, and misery and also the cause of violence. They deduced that commitment to development and economic security did not always lead to justice and equality. Economic security was thus predicated on peace. They believed that peace was unattainable without some basic structural economic change in Nigeria. Economic security was also unattainable without a peaceful environment.

To the WLDC women, a peaceful society clearly must uphold economic security and equity. They recognize the various components of structural violence within Nigerian society and in the world economic system dominated by the North countries, the IMF/World Bank, and the transnational corporations. Policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programs have aggravated economic insecurity and inequity in Nigeria. However, the WLDC women were understandably most concerned about the lack of economic security of Nigerian women. The women end up being the poorest of the poor. The dominant paradigm of agricultural modernization has further marginalized rural women. Nonetheless, the WLDC women also acknowledged the capacity of poor women to seek survival strategies such as the informal sector which hence deserves more support. While migration to find work has become a coping mechanism for some Nigerian women, it has significant social and personal costs. Most importantly, the WLDC women were critical of the powerful obstacles posed by patriarchal attitudes in the domestic and social sphere. In sum, the WLDC women see major challenges in transforming Nigerian gender relations and structures to improve economic security and equity for women as a basis for building a culture of peace.



### **Respect for Human Rights**

The WLDC women clearly understood that the human rights situation in Nigeria has been severely affected by the nature of the Nigerian State. While Nigeria may be signatory to all major instruments of rights and conventions, policies and practices of the Government (especially the police and military forces) systematically violate those conventions. Similarly, the Nigerian Human Rights Commission has failed to deliver on its responsibilities.

The WLDC operated on the understanding that equality and nondiscrimination between women and men are among the cardinal principles regulating the enforcement and enjoyment of human rights. The women at the WLDC recognized the fact that women in Nigeria were being denied their civil and political rights and were therefore taking steps to ensure that these rights were restored through the elimination of practices and principles that discriminate against women. The Center was actively engaged in raising awareness among women about their rights. The WLDC has openly challenged some discriminatory traditional and cultural-based laws and practices against women which incorporate violations of women's rights. The Center rejoiced over a court case that recognized and upheld the rights of a widow to inherit from her husband. The Center cooperated with other organizations to take the government to court for wanting to stifle nongovernmental organizations in Nigeria by promulgating a decree which would inhibit their free operations even though these organizations were not being funded by government. The Center saw this move by government as a violation of their rights and they decided to resist it. As earlier summarized, militarism and military rule have aggravated the violations of civil and political rights. Notably, corruption is identified by the WLDC women as a significant human rights issue, since it diverts public funds from meeting the needs of all citizens.

### **Political Security and Democracy**

The WLDC believed that a stable political order was essential for long term economic growth and ultimately for peace. However, such stability does not mean a repressive order maintained by threats and coercion. Political security to the WLDC women hence implies a genuine democracy in which all citizens can fully participate. The Center was able to establish a relationship between political systems and violence. Militarism was a fertile ground for state violence they claimed. Democracy was the least prone to violence because it is participatory and the chances to have a voice is enhanced. This conformed with Kant's (1795) position that political freedom eliminates war and constitutional republics assure universal peace. Peace is an indispensable condition for political and economic

progress which ultimately also depends on peace for its sustenance. The WLDC has been one of the greatest proponents of democracy in the country because it believed that democracy would protect the people, especially women, from tyranny through the dispersion of power.

One of the concepts that emerged during the discussion on political security was **femocracy** which is essentially power to the women. This was proposed by a member of the WLDC on the grounds that men have failed to rule the country justly and that the women would do a better job. Although there was no official stand nor statement about this, it seemed a popular concept among the women. While some women felt that Nigeria was ready for a woman president, some other women, especially the grassroots women, thought that Nigerian women should start by aspiring to fill some lower positions. When they have demonstrated aptitude at these various lower levels they should then aspire for the highest position in the land. This was thought to be a wise strategy by some of women. However, all agree that women should be given the opportunity to be actively involved in the decision making process in the country, since they constitute more than half of the population.

### **Empowerment of Women And Full Participation**

For the WLDC, empowerment was the key to the development of women. Empowerment is the possession of the desire for improvement and the ability to bring it about, using what one has to improve one's quality of life and that of others. The WLDC believed in equity and self-reliance for women and saw traditional attitudes as serious barriers to women in politics. The WLDC sought to counter and eliminate the pervading belief that politics and public life were exclusively for men. It promoted the idea that politics was also women's domain, since politics is not just about voting or being voted for, it is about having the power to effect changes. It is about being part of decisions that affect one's life. The WLDC saw education and training as the most critical factors influencing the effectiveness of women's participation in the economy and development of the society. The WLDC believed that decision-making powers should be distributed more equitably in order for peace to reign in the country.

Sisterhood was a word that was frequently used by the women at the WLDC. It was also a word which reality was quite challenged. The vision of sisterhood was evoked by the women's movements based on the idea of common oppression in the form of sexism and patriarchy (Hooks, 1991). But it seems that the idea of sisterhood was a myth because of the evidence of barriers separating women. While acknowledging that women are enriched when there is bonding, the women maintained that some women exploit and oppress other

women. This was identified as a barrier between women especially as the origin of this was traced to the military rule in Nigeria and the sudden coming to wealth of some women.

“Wifeism” was a concept that was coined to depict the emergence of a group of nouveau riche women, a special and privileged class of women who exploited their new positions to their own advantage and to the detriment of other women. The wives of the military rulers in Nigeria have constituted themselves in to a class just as their husbands have become the ruling elites. These wives have been accused of promoting themselves rather than using their position to promote the cause of women. Wifeism generated some controversy. Some felt that women could ride this tiger’s eye and use it as a ladder to the top as some other women like Benhazi Bhutto, Eva Peron and Indira Ghandi have used their father’s and husband’s position to get to the top. Others however, thought that these crop of first ladies in Nigeria were too egocentric to use their positions as wives to the advantage of all women.

#### **Environmental Care and Sustainable Development**

In terms of environment and ecological sensitivity, the WLDC has not shown much involvement in this area. It did not have programs within the organization that promoted harmonization or discouraged destruction to the environment. Environmental problems loomed large in Nigeria. I believe this was a vital area that should have arrested the attention of the Center because long-term human survival depends on appropriate attitude and practices toward the environment. There was not one program that addressed environmental problems and issues while I was at the Center. Although there were some women who called themselves “Women in Agriculture” trying to get the attention of the Center, I do not know what came out of that initial contact. But during the time of my research, the Center did not have a focus on agriculture nor did it have any program on environment. The WLDC therefore needs to make some efforts to achieve the goals of education for the environment set after the UNESCO-UNEP Conference in 1978. These goals were to help social groups and individuals acquire and develop the right set of values, attitudes, an awareness of, sensitivity to, basic understanding of, and an opportunity to be actively involved in working towards the resolution of the total environmental problem. I am not implying however, that the WLDC therefore should shift its focus into a full-fledged environmental group. Rather, from a holistic culture of peace paradigm, ecological principles need to be integrated into the WLDC’s major themes of development, human rights and militarism.

### **Cultural Solidarity**

The WLDC acknowledged the fact that Nigeria is a land of cultural diversity, at the same time recognized that there was a cultural crisis and so the Center's policy emphasized the need for intercultural understanding. The government was identified as the agent of violence fostering the various facets of ethnic crisis in an attempt to divide and rule, a ploy they said was used by the colonials to divide the country. The country's ethnic conflicts were usually tense and at times severe. These have not contributed to a culture of peace. The women were worried about external influences on the ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, and the government's involvement in generating conflicts for selfish gains. There was the problem of the "catch up" syndrome, Northern Nigeria trying to catch up with the South, a major factor of the cultural crisis. The women also identified the amalgamation of cultures as the genesis of Nigeria's cultural crisis, a phenomenon that was described as hybridity and which was causing severe cultural identity crisis. Religious intolerance was also identified as a problem, and Government was deemed as the culprit fanning this to its advantage.

The WLDC tried to promote cultural solidarity in its selection of participants for its programs, not to favor one ethnic group over the other. The Center also did not limit its operations to its immediate environs. It arranged to have programs all over the country, even at the remotest areas of Nigeria, to enable as many women of different ethnic background as possible to have access to the programs. This in itself is consistent with a culture of peace paradigm. The women at the WLDC proposed that every child at school should grow up learning a language and culture outside their own, a move they figured would help to promote intercultural peace in society.

### ***Peace Education at the WLDC***

There is no formal or structured peace education program at the WLDC. Nevertheless, the WLDC women are sensitive to and recognize the vital role of peace education in changing the ways of thinking, values, behavior and relationships to form nonviolent citizens. Understandably, the WLDC leaders see education for peace as integral to the Center's vision, goals and activities, even if the "peace" label is not explicitly used. As a training center, the WLDC has organized women in programs of gender equity empowerment and advocacy which reflect the theory and practice of peace education. Likewise, by focusing on education for economic security, demilitarization, human rights, democracy, good governance, active citizenship and political participation, the WLDC can justifiably claim to be educating towards a culture of peace. The initiative by the WLDC to establish peace clubs in schools is certainly consistent with UNESCO's Culture of Peace program. The

WLDC women also stressed the cultivation of values of openness, accountability, information sharing, conflict resolution and volunteerism which can all enhance peaceful relationships. In sum, the WLDC women and their activities contribute to almost all dimensions of educating for a culture of peace. It is primarily in the area of environmental care where the WLDC is clearly less aware and active. From a holistic perspective of a culture of peace, it can be recommended that the WLDC consider the integration of ecological principles into its major themes of work, thereby enriching its impact.

### ***Culture of Peace in WLDC's Relationships***

The WLDC has established peaceful structures within and outside its rank, in its internal and external relationships, and operations as a women development organization. Participation seemed a fundamental issue with the WLDC in all its relationships. Its participatory manner of operation are efforts at inclusiveness, at bringing all together for all to have a voice. The WLDC appeared accountable and responsive in its relationships which has contributed to higher organizational effectiveness. The Center has established a flow of responsibility and distribution of power within the organization, without compromising autonomy (Burkey, 1993). Information was always provided. The Center has ensured that the goals and objectives set forth were met through various decisions taken by the staff. Participation flowed through the informal day to day interactions of the Center which took into account its participants' needs who were directly influenced by the actions of the Center and whose views were considered in the decisions of the Center. The Center ran an inclusive government, as it allowed the staff a voice and encouraged contribution in its weekly meetings. The leaders also carried along its facilitators and resource persons who were allowed input in the Center's programs and were not reduced to consumers of predetermined programs. The Center's leaders did not behave like a mini empire treating its staff as subjects. Domination and oppression within a group is always a source of internal conflict but the remedy is participation and collaboration which Kolb (1992) called informal peacemaking. Participation at the WLDC has been of particular importance because it has promoted peace.

In its operations, the WLDC has employed appropriate and maximum use of local, human, and cultural resources. Most of the Center's facilitators were members of the organization. Some were full time staff, others were drawn from different parts of the community, from different specialization. Some facilitators were also allowed to be participants in programs of their choice. In its networking and external relationships, the WLDC took advantages of available resources and shared its own with others, the same

way it shared its vision with other organizations that were like-minded. The Center freely collaborated and cooperated on programs with other organizations. This style of operation was deemed as contributing to a peaceful environment.

In the WLDC's relationship with the state which I will call WLDC's "dance with the wolf," has continued to stave off governmental attempts to undermine its programs. The Nigerian government wielded tremendous power. While it did not fund NGO projects, yet it had always sought to control and monitor non-governmental organizations, especially those it suspected were operating around radical themes. The WLDC has so far peacefully resisted this intervention. It did not feel compelled to work with government and has therefore been subject to harassment by government. Nonetheless it had remained undaunted, trying to achieve its goals in spite of the restrictions placed by the government. It has continued its work, trying to uphold its positional attitude on relevant issues and has at the same time continued to be very critical of government's policy. The WLDC has not compromised its stand despite threats and intimidation by government, neither has it allowed itself to be coopted by government through manipulation. It continued to demonstrate what it believed in, while at the same time trying through active nonviolence to prevent serious physical conflict with government.

Pettman (1996) noted that although states remain the dominant actors in the international arena, nongovernmental forces like transnationals have penetrated every area of human activity. She added that as much as problematic women's relations is with the state, women would still prefer this to an enforced relationship with powerful transnationals whose interests are not only eroding the power of the state but which are gradually resulting in unprecedented marginalization of women globally. I tried to reflect on WLDC's relationship with government and its perception of transnationals, from its reaction to the Ogoni issue.

The WLDC employed Gandhi's principle of nonviolence in its operations and relationships. Gandhi's perspective of nonviolence is inclusive. It is a mind of tolerance and not of division (Bose, 1987). The WLDC policy of nonviolence ensured that the Center was not torn inside by division or outside by intolerance and exclusion. The Center seemed mindful of Gandhi's position that the fabric of society is made up of constantly changing relationships and has thus employed nonviolence to cope with this dynamism and bring together human beings in an age of conflict between and among peoples and nations while being clearly conscious that every individual is related to every individual through a basic human unity (Stiehm, 1972). The WLDC believed in the resolution of conflict and attainment of peace through nonviolence. This was clearly manifested in its relationship with

the government, as the Center's thoughts were in terms of its commitment to social peace and social justice, using nonviolence as an effective tool of social change.

In terms of conscientization of its women participants in its programs, the WLDC's approach could be considered radical especially with its involvement in human rights issues, questioning structural violence, and the democratization process. The WLDC has not acted nor operated like a charitable organization giving out goodies to women in hospitals, or having concerns for destitute children, taking them off the streets to give them milk. These activities were not seen as a long-term solution to problems by the participants. The Center has been involved in activities that would address changes in attitudes, personal and societal transformation. The Center has sought to raise awareness in its participants, about violations in their situation. It has tried to foster a process whereby the oppressed would understand the political roots of their poverty and marginalized situation, and be motivated to do something about their situation and liberate themselves. The Center has tried to bring to the forefront the voices and concerns of women, the doubly exploited sector of society. While acknowledging and extolling the Center's activities and achievements, the Center's work has not reverberated far and wide enough. It has only been significantly felt by the small population in its milieu, in its immediate community. It has however not been able to change the overall face of women's issues. As observed by one of its peers, the WLDC is an organization that could be more impactful if it was restructured to face the challenges. She advised that the Center could do more than it was doing, if only it would not slot itself into a cubicle, operating in a limited way, or rather limiting itself, claiming financial limitation. She believed that the Center should expand its horizon and area of operation.

I believe this could be the door to the WLDC having a wider overall influence in the Nigerian society, and possibly Africa at large. The WLDC could be the instrument of extending the culture of peace to the states of Africa where it is most needed right now, considering the all pervading culture of violence all over the continent. Although Memmi (1965) has argued for the justifiable counter violence of the colonized against the colonizer and against the domination-dependency syndrome of imperialism which seemed to be a continuing part of the problems facing Africa. Nnoli (1987) believes a culture of peace paradigm will achieve more for Africa, and I add even more so for women as nurturers of peace.

### **Conclusions and Implications of Findings**

UNESCO (1995) claimed that although often invisible, the building of a culture of peace at the local level by individuals or NGOs can be most effective and produce the most durable

results. This seemed quite true of the women at the WLDC who in their own way have been building and weaving a tapestry of a culture of peace in a society that was quite fragile, a society engulfed in violence, repression, and militarization which had restricted individual freedom and which had been a weapon of dominance (Toh & Cawagas, 1995). The WLDC had demonstrated concern about the marginalized condition of women and tried to promote a culture of peace through its various activities of empowerment and full participation of women.

The leaders, staff and resource persons at the WLDC have demonstrated compassion for women in Nigeria, recognizing the structural injustice responsible for their disadvantaged position. The WLDC has not refrained from speaking out against systemic and structural violence, while making efforts to transform the women socially, economically, politically and culturally. The Center has helped the women through a process of conscientization, sensitizing them to the issues that had brought about their marginalization. The WLDC seemed to have leaders, staff, facilitators, members and participants of programs who are committed to the cause. The women at the WLDC struggle, despite the limitations and lack of social amenities, to develop skills for self-reliance.

The WLDC members believed in the spirit and practice of conciliation and of nonviolent conflict resolution, especially in their relationship with government despite. The WLDC practiced communion by allowing, encouraging and empowering women to work as individuals and as groups to share their knowledge, skills, resources, visions and strengths. This communion was achieved networking with other women organizations who shared the same visions. The WLDC did not place any restriction on ethnic and other cultural divisions. All groups were represented one way or the other in the operation of the Center.

Women at WLDC have demonstrated a deep sense of commitment to the cause they believed in. The leaders worked full time at the Center, always available designing new programs to meet the needs of participants. They were not absentee leaders who only came in occasionally to reap the gains, the fruit of other people's labor. The women have cultivated the practice of self criticism and evaluation during staff meeting and taking immediate steps to rectify whatever needed to be done. Commitment meant carrying on the programs on human rights even while it invited the ire government.

The WLDC staff have sustained commitment, compassion, conscientization, conciliation, and communion through the spirit of contemplation, which had helped them to draw upon their inner strength and conviction. Their conviction was nurtured by their



willingness to contemplate on personal values and motivation to build a more peaceful, just and loving world (Toh and Cawagas, 1995).

There is reason to believe that the process of women's empowerment at the WLDC will continue to go forward, because many conditions and mechanisms for women's empowerment have been established. The Center has shown greater emphasis on women's participation and a growing gender awareness creating a favorable climate for women to bring their concerns and perspectives on to a women's agenda. Through the efforts of the WLDC, women have taken some strides forward in empowering themselves which has led them into opportunities for participation in their communities, groups, and public life and in development organizations. Participation in these programs has had transformative effect on them. For instance, there has been increased participation by women in both basic and higher education as well as wider representation of women in electoral politics. Nevertheless, awareness and skills building among women should still be intensified. There is further need for more women to gain confidence to participate in decision making processes and recognize their rights. The Center needs to continue the process of empowerment including the courage to participate in active politics.

While the WLDC women are striving towards higher goals, it would be useful to work for greater gender awareness within governmental, intergovernmental and even nongovernmental bodies so as to increase and strengthen the strategies and mechanism for gender equity. Gender awareness needs to be translated into policy and action.

The interest of governments and international agencies, including funding agencies, to collaborate with women development organizations, should be tapped in order to ensure that necessary linkages for the advancement of women are established and maintained. Women must continue to be presented with the opportunity to collaborate to increase and strengthen their capacity for networking, lobbying and influencing policy.

There is convincing evidence that the WLDC was effectively contributing to the building a just and peaceful society. The programs and operations of the Center were implemented based on the values of peace and justice. Social inequalities and discrimination were being constantly addressed by the Center. While doing this, there was an unconscious effort being put in place towards the building of a culture of peace.

The WLDC's unifying efforts to build peace in the minds of women however, excluded the men. This exclusion of men in their programs is justified by the WLDC leaders in terms of creating a space for women to empower themselves towards greater equity, rights and self reliance. However, from a culture of peace perspective, it may be

asked whether some inclusion of men in programs and activities may yield synergistic outcomes.

The women talked about democracy but there is need to create a deeper awareness that democracy is more than just preparing women for election. While the Center has been trying to promote human rights issues, there seemed to be an emerging concern about not seeing the interconnectedness between development and human rights. The women wanted full participation for empowerment and empowerment for full participation in social, political and economic life. They knew the issues involved. However, it seemed that not all of them were ready to be personally involved in the political arena. The women promoted cultural solidarity and respect for cultural diversity by encouraging all ethnic tribes in Nigeria to participate in their programs. The Center has been in search of political and economic security for the women. It would contribute to the Center's effectiveness if it had programs on economic independence and establish projects and structures that would facilitate economic security.

Some of the women saw the WLDC as playing the role of catalyst in breaking down entrenched traditions and practices harmful and disadvantageous to women. For instance, the widowhood practice had gone on for so long but the women themselves were taking action to effect changes. Through the WLDC, the women have formed groups to stay in the house of the widow thereby not allowing the family members to cart off the children and the property of the deceased and further impoverishing the woman. Women should be granted rights because they are entitled to them as human beings. What ever language or concepts would be used, all women no matter their situation in life, professionals, business women, grassroots women, need to work together, relate to each other, and help each other in the developmental process in an atmosphere of peace. There was one participant who did not agree that women should be seeking equality with men. When I reminded her that equality means equal opportunity, equal access, equal advantages, she did not agree with this concept of equality with men and the upliftment of women in all dimensions. She argued that on closer look women cannot be equal with the men in some areas, there are some things that men do that women cannot do. Instead she would rather talk about equity rather than equality.

Finally, as an overt observer, I simply observed what happened and what did not happen (Patton, 1990). I did not worry that every body at the center was putting on a show for me. I made it clear to everyone that my research was not an evaluation of the Center so that the participants were not put on edge nor did they try to please me. I therefore believe that my study is a valid and reliable report of what I saw and did not see at the Center. As a

researcher I became a part of the reality that was being investigated. There was a relationship between me and the group I worked with. I did exactly what Halcoms (1985) recommended in his Methodological Chronicle.

“Enter into their world. Observe and wonder. Experience and reflect. To understand a world, you must become part of that world, while at the same time remaining separate, a part of and apart from. Go then and return to tell what you see and hear what you learn and what you come to understand.”  
(Quoted by Patton 1990:199)

### **Recommendations for further research**

Although this study is the first of its kind in Nigeria, it could arouse interest among researchers to further investigate the issues raised. I therefore recommend that consideration for the following aspects for research would be a useful endeavor.

1. Militarism was an issue that came forth very strongly in this study. There are many aspects of militarism that could still be looked into. Nigeria could be described as a "warfare state" (Andrews, 1985) where militarism is a way of life. There is a need to further evaluate the full costs and consequences of militarism, a national attitude that places the highest value on military solutions at a high cost on the lives of the people
2. Said (1971) saw the military as a subculture, one of the protagonists of change where interaction produces a wave of emulation. There could be a focus research to see if and how a society that has been highly militarized, can restore its own ideals and recivilianize that society. It would be of some value as a follow up when Nigeria has been restored to civilian rule to see how much traces of the military culture still pervades in the society. Could civilians with the right values be protagonists of change? It will be worthwhile to find out how plausible it is to re-infuse and re-inject values of social order and justice into a society that has gone awry with military values.
- 3 In this study, a strong focus on the rights to survival surfaced: the right to basic needs of life and provision of basic infrastructure. I recommend a broader perspective on human rights. The focus of rights in Nigeria has been on individual survival. Individual rights have always been considered and promoted higher than group rights and the question of group rights was never considered. Osaghae (1996) said group rights at times have something to do with ethnic conflicts. In short, denial of group rights can lead to ethnic conflicts as was seen in Nigeria, while restoring and granting of group rights lead to equity, fairness, and justice. Every group has a right to exist. Focus on individual rights

are at times not enough. Group rights regard groups as deserving protection and justice (Osaghae 1996). There is therefore a need to focus on group rights by the WLDC and some other organizations. There are many minority groups in Nigeria whose rights are being trampled upon like the Ogoni people, the Modakeke people, the Urhobos, and the Itshekiris. I therefore recommend a research on the state of group rights in Nigeria, for the sake of women, men and children who cannot come to full potential, or to empowerment due to their marginalization as a group.

4. There is also a need for a more global perspective of human rights. Osaghae (1996) argued that human rights are not entirely a domestic affair of individual countries. They have an international dimension. Andrews (1985) believed that the international community must be prepared to make some sacrifices for the sake of human dignity. Although the women touched on the issues of the TNCs, and violations of international treaties by Nigeria, there is a need to further assess the role, the contributions and the impact of North countries' activities and their operations on the denial of individual and group rights in Nigeria.
5. There is a need to take a more critical look at the relationship between religions and human rights. The specific religions mentioned in relations to Nigeria are Christianity and Islam. Some practices of these religions violate the visions and rules laid down by the Founders. There is therefore a need to assess and document the specific roles of religious institutions and instances of the violations of individual and group rights in religious context in Nigeria.
6. The need for Nigerian men's contribution to these discussions was indicated by Shane who said that the WLDC should rescind its decision not to involve men in some of their programs. She said in the spirit of Gender and Development, (GAD), it is important that the men be carried along for development to be effective and for a culture of peace to reign. At different stages of this research many wondered why men were not included in my research or at least invited to be part of the discussions. Many felt the men should hear the things women had to say about the issues because individually women would not be able to convey all that was being said to husbands, brothers, fathers, and fathers in law. The messages would be more effective and more likely to have an impact when heard directly by the men themselves. I totally agree with this and I believe that I should have made provisions to hear from the men. I resolved there and then that as a further

stage of this research which will not be a data collecting exercise, I will provide opportunity to hear from the men for a more balanced view towards resolving some of these gender problems. Nyerere (1984) said that the struggle for women's development has to be conducted not in opposition to men, but along with men.

A culture of peace is a complex multidimensional concept which translation into local, national, international and global relationships and structures will not be easy or quick. The WLDC, as this study has shown, demonstrates how people in one society that is entrenched in a culture of violence, can share knowledge, take risks, and commit their energies to build a culture of peace.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Interview Questions**

These questions were conceived to guide the study.

#### **Interview guide for a,b,& c**

- (a) WLDC leaders, and staff
- (b) program participants
- (c) for network organizations that have collaborated with WLDC

#### **1 Personal background -for a,b,c**

- a. How did you come to be involved in WLDC ?
- b. What are the reasons for your involvement in WLDC programs?
- c. Did you know about WLDC before becoming a part of the program?
- d. What are your responsibilities ?
- e. What are your social, cultural, and educational experiences, especially related to women, development

#### **2. WLDC Visions, Goals And History -for a & b**

- a. What is the background history of the formation of WLDC?
- b How is the organization managed?
- c. How does WLDC meet the goals of Women-in-Development (WID) Women and development (WAD) Gender and development (GAD) paradigm..
- d. How would you describe the position of women in Nigeria in development terms?
- e. What are the visions, values, and goals of WLDC as they relate to development of women in the Nigerian society?

#### **3. WLDC's Programs- for a & b**

- a. What is the nature and purposes of programs being carried out at WLDC?
- b. What is the extent of your involvement in the development of the Center's programs?



- c. What is the justification for such programs ?
- d. Who are the participants of your programs?
- e. What is the selection process?
- f. How does the Center's programs reflect the goals, visions, and aspirations of the Center?

**4. WLDC Strategies And Outcomes for a & b**

- a. What (i) educational strategies (ii) pedagogical principles and (iii) empowerment strategies have been employed by the Center in executing its programs?
- b. How effective have these strategies when employed by the Center in executing your programs?
- c. What feedback have you gathered from the participants of your programs?

**5. Program Goals And Purposes- for c only**

- a. What are the goals and purposes for your attending the programs at WLDC?
- b. What is the relevance of the program to your work and role in the society?
- c. Which specific program did you attend at WLDC?
- d. In what ways are these programs different from other programs that you have been involved in.
- e. What do you think of the educational strategies that have been employed by the Center in executing its programs?
- f. What are your feelings, concerns, about these strategies?
- g. How relevant to your needs are the programs at the Center?
- h. What have been the outcome of these programs suggestions for changes.
- i. What have been the outcomes of the programs ?
- j. What have been the impact of these programs on your personal life, your work and your social role?
- k. What impact on community ?transformation? empowerment?

l. What have you learnt about Center, the staff, the facilitators during the program?

m. What improvements would you recommend ?

**6. WLDC Relationships-for a & b**

**a. At internal level, WLDC leadership/other members relationship**

(i) what decision making process has been adopted by WLDC

(ii) explain any crisis situation that has arisen within the organization.

What conflict resolution strategies have been employed by the organization?

(iii). How would you describe the relationship between the leadership/executive and the other members of the organization?

**b. WLDC/program participants level**

(i) What assumptions do you have about the program participants at the Center?

(ii) What is the selection process of participants?

(iii). What is extent of WLDC's involvement with its immediate community and the society at large ?

**c. WLDC/ other women organizations**

(i). What in your opinion distinguishes WLDC from some other women organizations?

(ii). What is the relationship of WLDC with some other organizations?

(iii). What is the level of collaboration on projects programs with other NGOs

(iv). Which women NGOs would you say share the same goals visions as WLDC and why?

**d. WLDC/Community level**

- (i) What outreach programs do you have in the Center what are the determinants of such programs and what are the target communities ?
- (ii). What have been the outcome of WLDC's outreach programs in the communities
- (iii). What would you describe as the critical societal issues in these communities?

**e. WLDC/State relationship**

- (i) What is the relationship between the Center and the State? b. How many of governments projects /programs is the organization involved in?
- (ii). How often is the organization consulted in the decision making process of some government policies and activities?
- (iii) How would you describe governments level of gender sensitivity

**7. Problems, Obstacles, Difficulties, Achievements, Successes, Future Of The Center**

- a. What problems have you encountered in the attempt to achieve the goals and aspirations set out by the Center How do you address these problems? Probes: indicators of success, obstacles, difficulties, strategies to resolve them, transformation
- b. What are the future plans of WLDC, and what do you see as your personal role in this plan?

**8. WLDC And Culture Of Peace-for a,b & c**

- a Violence was identified by the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies as the greatest obstacles to women development, from your view could you describe meanings and instances of violence most prevalent against women and the effects on women in Nigeria?
- b. Peace has been said to be the antithesis of violence . What meanings do you have of peace at personal level, societal level, professional level?

- c. This research is about building a culture of peace. What meaning would the expression **Culture Of Peace** convey to you?
- d. What do think is the contribution of WLDC programs to building a culture of peace? How do the visions, values and goals of WLDC relate to the building of a culture of peace in Nigeria?
- e. Which of the Center's programs relate to the building of a Culture of peace
- f. What would be your suggestions for program changes to enhance contributions to a culture of peace?
- g. What has been your Center's effort at executing para. 257 of Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies which says

*para. 257: governments, non-governmental organizations and the mass media should encourage women to promote education for peace in the family, neighbourhood and society .*

- h. What research activities are you involved in in response to NFLS para 273 which says

*para. 273: opportunities should be provided to organize and choose studies training programs and seminars and to undertake research relating to peace .*

- i. Are you familiar with UNESCO's "Culture of Peace " program? How would you relate this to the Center's work ?How would you describe the relevance of this program to women development issues in Nigeria? What is the relevance of this program to the Center's work?
- j. If the Center has to teach peace education for a culture of peace what would be the essential components of such a program?