



Institute of Social Studies

Graduate School of Development Studies

**The Role of Women in the Liberation Struggle for Namibian's
Independence:
From Active Participants to Passive Victims?**

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KAKUKURU ELIZABETH NAUKONGO
(NAMIBIA)

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Prof. Christine Sylvester

Drs. Amritha Chhachhi

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Enquiries:

Postal Address:

Institute of Social Studies
P. O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31-70-426-0460

Fax: +31-70-426-0799

E-mail: student.office@iss.nl or postmaster@iss.nl

ISS Home Page: www.iss.nl

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May God Bless,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 The role of women before the struggle	2
1.2 Namibia under the colonial era	3
1.3 Formation of the SWAPO Liberation Movement.....	5
1.4 Namibian women in exile.....	6
1.5 Research Problem.....	7
1.6 Research Objectives, questions and justification.....	9
1.6.1 Research objectives	9
1.6.2 Research Questions.....	10
1.6.3 Justification of the study	10
1.7 Research Methodology.....	11
1.7.1 Research Design	11
1.7.2 What is oral history?.....	11
1.7.3 Why oral history?.....	13
1.7.4 Oral history and its linkages to the feminist standpoint.....	13
1.7.5 Ethical issues and controversies in oral history	15
1.7.6 Sample and sampling procedure.....	16
1.7.7 Interview data.....	17
1.7.8 Data collection procedure.....	17
1.7.9 Data Analysis Procedure.....	18
1.7.10 Limitations of the study	18
1.8 Organization of the paper.....	19
CHAPTER 2: Literature review and Conceptual Framework.....	20
2.0 Introduction	20
2.1 Socialist Policy vis-à-vis National Liberation and Women's Liberation	20
2.2 Women and guerrilla movements - Southern African experiences.....	22
2.3 Sexual violence	24
2.4 Conceptual Framework.....	25
2.4.0 Introduction	25
2.4.1 Gender Division of Labour.....	26
2.4.2 Women's Triple roles.....	27
2.4.2.1 <i>Reproductive roles</i>	27
2.4.2.2 <i>Productive roles</i>	28
2.4.2.3 <i>Community work</i>	29
CHAPTER 3: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	31
3.0 Background Information.....	31
3.1 Motivation for going into exile	31
3.2 Daily life in the camps.....	33
3.3 Presentation of Findings and Analysis	34
3.3.1 Activities women were involved in during the struggle	34

3.3.1.1	Reproductive roles.....	35
(i)	<i>Child Bearing and rearing</i>	35
(ii)	<i>Taking care of children</i>	36
(iii)	<i>Foster parenting</i>	37
(iv)	<i>Cooking</i>	38
(v)	<i>Pounding</i>	38
(vi)	<i>Fetching water</i>	40
(vii)	<i>Fetching firewood</i>	41
3.3.1.2	Productive roles.....	41
(i)	<i>Teaching</i>	41
(ii)	<i>Nursing</i>	42
(iii)	<i>Agricultural activities</i>	44
(iv)	<i>Carpentry</i>	44
(v)	<i>Welding, mechanical work and driving</i>	44
(vi)	<i>Brick making and Construction Work</i>	45
(vii)	<i>Tailoring and weaving</i>	46
3.3.1.3	Community Work.....	46
(i)	<i>Participation in military and combat</i>	46
(ii)	<i>Collecting food, medical and ammunition supply</i>	48
	This shows us how courageous women were performing the same activities with their male counter parts.....	49
(iii)	<i>Information gathering (spying) and communication</i>	49
3.3.2	Similarities and differences to their usual activities before the struggle..	50
3.3.2.1	Similarities in these activities.....	50
3.3.2.2	Differences in activities.....	50
3.3.3	Women's usual lives today compared to their future hopes.....	51
3.3.3.1	Future hopes for the country.....	51
3.3.3.2	Women's usual lives today as compared to their future hopes.....	52
3.3.4	Summary.....	55
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		56
4.1	Conclusions.....	56
4.1.1	Reproductive roles.....	56
4.1.2	Productive Roles.....	57
4.1.3	Community work.....	57
4.1.4	Future Hopes - Career, representation and recognition.....	57
4.1.5	Summary.....	58
4.2	Roles of women in post-independent Namibia.....	59
4.2.1	Women in Politics.....	59
	<i>Table 2: Women in Cabinet, Parliament, Regional and Local Council</i>	59
4.2.2	Women in the public service.....	60
	<i>Table 3: Number and positions of women in the Public Service</i>	60
4.2.3	Women in the Parastatals (State owned enterprises).....	61
	<i>Table 4: Women in decision making positions in major parastatals</i>	61

4.2.4	Women in the armed forces.....	61
	<i>Table 5: Women in management positions in the Police</i>	62
	<i>Table 6: Women in management positions in the NDF</i>	62
4.3	Recommendations.....	63
References	66
Appendix 1: Interview Questions Guide.....		i

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This paper explores the roles that exiled women played in the liberation struggle for Namibia's independence. It looks at how these activities were similar or different to their usual roles before the struggle. Secondly, it examines how these women see their lives in Namibia today as compared to their hopes for their own future during the struggle. The paper also examines women's roles today in an independent Namibia.

Firstly, it gives an overview of the role of women in pre-colonial Namibia. Looking at how these roles were altered by the changing political situation in the country during the colonial and postcolonial periods. The paper concludes that women's traditionally ascribed roles were changed during the struggle. However, in postcolonial Namibia the once destroyed power relations and sexual division of labour are restored. Thus, women's roles are switched back to their original traditionally ascribed roles.

This chapter gives a brief overview of women's role in pre-colonial and during colonial rule. It looks at Namibia's history under colonial/apartheid rule. This system produced oppressive policies that resulted in the formation of a resistance movement SWAPO (South West African People Organisation). It is under this organization that these women's roles investigated in this study were carried out. The chapter presents the research problem, questions and objectives, the data collection and analysis procedures. Therefore before looking at the roles women performed during the struggle, a brief summary of women's roles before the struggle is discussed.

1.1 The role of women before the struggle

Namibian women have always been producers like all other women in peasant societies. They played a major role in the subsistence production of food to feed the family. They cultivated the land, gathered food, collected water and wood for cooking. Nevertheless, their involvement in production has been altered by the emergence of the mode of production and by the cultural values. In a communal society in pre-colonial Namibia, a woman's status was regarded as that of an equal contributor towards both her family and the community's wellbeing (Nghatanga, 1990).

However the division of labour based on sex, took account of her childbearing, rearing and caring roles and not the economic power the woman or man would enjoy because of this division of labour (SWAPO Party Women Council, 1990). Thus, the woman's duties confined her to the house and its vicinity although the value attached to it was the same as that attached to the men's work. It was only with time that further division of labour separated handicrafts from agriculture and mental work from manual work.

Men's work required them to have freedom of movement. This is where men started to subject women to an inferior status marking the beginning of 'feudal relations' in Namibia (Wood, 1990: 347). After this period, the woman's status as an equal contributor and consumer of the social welfare was lost. She became an 'adjunct' to the man performing the bulk of the tasks at home and in the fields while enjoying less of the benefits of her products which were controlled by man (Nghatanga, 1990: 29).

In every tribe in Namibia, a woman prepared food and drinks. She carried water and firewood as well as other household utensils over long distances everyday

(Wood, 1990). During the liberation struggle, women's roles were again altered by the war situation as shown later in the research findings. The next section briefly gives highlights on conditions that prevailed in Namibia under the colonial rule.

1.2 Namibia under the colonial era

Namibia was a colony for more than 100 years, first ruled by the Germans in 1884 until 1914. This period of German rule¹ is described as one of the most brutal episodes in world history. It caused death of tens of thousands of Namibian men, women and children (Cleaver, 1990). In 1915 South African forces on behalf of Britain under the mandate of the League of Nations invaded Namibia.

The invasion by the colonial master was accompanied by the disintegration of the primitive community. With it came the establishment of private property and the division of society into classes. Hence, men secured economic supremacy and social predominance. Although women had defined rights in traditional societies, their conditions changed with the appearance of a colonial society (Holness, 1984).

During the 1920's South Africa started to impose the same oppressive and racist laws in Namibia as in South Africa (Wood, 1998). According to Mbuende (1986) "the South African colonial policy had gone through three successive phases in Namibia: that is segregation (1915-1948), apartheid (1948-1977) and internal settlement (1977-1990). Each phase had a new political strategy. This led to the creation of new political institutions accompanied by new ideological representation" (cited in Shinavene, 1989: 26).

¹ The paper will however only briefly talk about the South Africa occupation policies under which the liberation movement was formed and not the period of the German occupation.

The South African regime's policy of racial segregation was formed based on white supremacy, colonial domination and exploitation through cheap labour (Cleaver, 1990). The whites and blacks were to have separate institutions such as schools that catered for the Bantu Education and were inferior to the whites' schools. Hospitals were few, under-equipped and of lower standards and quality compared to those of whites. The indigenous blacks were therefore suppressed and exploited instead of being developed.

In support of the capitalist colonial project, black men in particular were used as cheap labourers. The system brought with it the 'contract labour system. This forced the majority of black men to work in white controlled farms, mines and industry (Meroro, 2002). Ndaitwah (1990) describes its consequences as having substantially decreased male participation in cultivation. This made tasks harder for the rural women than before colonialism, as they became dependents on their husbands' remittances (cited in Wood, 1990: 348).

Women and children under the apartheid system suffered from inhuman practices such as massacres, detentions, mass population removal, separation from families and immobilization in reserves. They were subjected to the detrimental implications of the labour migrant system pass laws and relegation to the homelands. Consequently, they suffered disproportionately from poverty, poor health and illiteracy. Women and younger girls in particular experienced instances of sexual abuse, violence and rape (Vickers, 1993). The aftermath of the colonial system led to the rebellion by the indigenous people in the form of a revolutionary movement as discussed below.

1.3 Formation of the SWAPO Liberation Movement

Formerly under colonial rule, many Southern African countries witnessed frequent incidences of armed conflict. This was marked by decades of anti-colonial liberation struggles (Kazi, 1992). Similarly, Namibia's independence was preceded by a period of prolonged guerrilla warfare. In response to the oppressive and exploitative apartheid system of the colonial rule, SWAPO was founded on the 19th April 1960. Its central objective was to spearhead the struggle for national independence to free the Namibian people from colonial oppression and exploitation. The organization was broadened into a national movement to lead and develop further anti-colonial struggle (Meroro, 2002).

The politically unfavourable oppressive situation inside the country banned any SWAPO activities. Thus, SWAPO movement was based in neighbouring countries such as Angola, Zambia and Tanzania. It was in these countries where its major activities, regarded as 'terrorist activities' by the ruler of the time, were carried out. The SWAPO Women's Council was created in 1969-70 in the United Republic of Tanzania. As a women's wing of the movement it was tasked with mobilizing women and facilitating their contribution to the struggle. It was also responsible for educating, upgrading and organizing women into a powerful force to ensure their effective contribution (Shinavene, 1989).

Nevertheless, SWAPO activists carried out underground activities inside the country. They endured hardships of brutally tortures, killings and imprisonments at the hands of the colonial government. This was in view of the fact that they labelled any SWAPO activity as terrorist activities. Namibian men, women and the youth equally fought the South African Apartheid system. This was done through both the internal and exiled wings of SWAPO. This organization tirelessly campaigned and fought for independence. The next section gives an overview of Namibian women's experience in exile.

1.4 Namibian women in exile

The colonial and apartheid policies produced side effects. This repression and violence against the Namibian people resulted in a large number of women, men and children leaving the country to go into exile in neighbouring countries (Cleaver, 1990). Musialela et. al. (1985) states that the journey out of Namibia to Angola or Zambia was very difficult and hard as they had to go through areas where military activities were intense, thus spending several days on foot to reach their destination.

The majority of the Namibians in exile were based in SWAPO settlements in Angola and in Zambia. Meanwhile several thousands were sent by SWAPO's Educational Department for further training abroad (Shinavene, 1989). Musialela et. al. (1985), reports that there were over 80 000 Namibians in exile. The majority were women, children and the elderly who fled the horrors of war and persecution. For example, she reports that Kwanza Sul was the largest settlement of Namibians in Angola. It hosted over 40 000 women, children, the elderly, disabled and war victims. This population resided in tents and was dependent on supplies from outside for their survival

Cleaver (1990) indicates that women in exile played a significant role in all aspects of SWAPO. He adds that they refused to be restricted to supportive functions such as medics and couriers but were fully trained and equipped as combatants. They were fully involved in the struggle at all levels. They underwent the same training as men in SWAPO and occupied positions at all levels. The SWAPO Women Council directed women to provide greater part of social services. Women were encouraged to make education in refugee camps free and compulsory. They also taught the Namibian refugee children at kindergartens, primary and secondary levels (Musialela et. al, 1985).

Wood (1990) reports that women used education opportunities were available. They were trained as engineers, drivers, electricians, lawyers, medical doctors and assistant nurses, radio broadcasters, administrators, diplomats, secretaries, educators, transport & communication officers. Women produced food and commodities that could be sold to raise funds for other projects. They grew maize & vegetables to feed the camp residents. With their own hands, they made clothes, blankets, tablecloths, furniture covers and rugs. They became workers in mechanized agriculture. Some were tractor drivers, breaking a barrier, which was traditionally a man's job (Shinavene, 1989).

Women had to work harder for the survival of the refugee population. They also took part in the physical fighting as PLAN² fighters. Moreover, they had to fetch firewood, collect water and prepared food in large kitchens for the large population (Wood, 1989). Nevertheless, despite women's active role in all aspects of life in the liberation struggle, this is frequently not reflected in the general history of the country. This shows that women's contribution to the struggle is not equally valued to that of men. Moreover, women are lowly represented at all levels of decision making in post independent Namibia. Having given this background, the next section gives the problem the paper is investigating.

1.5 Research Problem

As seen in the preceding section, women played a major role in the armed struggle³ for Namibia's independence. However little of this valuable contribution is documented. This documentary silence is exacerbated by the fact

² People's Liberation Army of Namibia – SWAPO's armed military wing also known as guerrilla/freedom fighters.

³ SWAPO launched the Armed Struggle on 19 April 1966 that continued until 1 April 1989 when the UN Security Council Resolution 435 (calling for ceasefire, democratic elections and a new constitution) was effected which led to the elections in November 1989 won by SWAPO which led to Namibia's

that many of the people who have played a role in the liberation struggle might be forgotten as time passes. The History Department at the University of Namibia on its initiative to record oral histories of the survivors of the Cassinga Massacre confirms this. It states that the recent death of a number of people who played a significant role in the struggle raised the concern of recording the stories of those who were involved in significant events in Namibia's recent history (The Namibian Newspaper, 22 April 1998).

Namibian women's inspiration and determination for change have rarely been heard. Women are not enjoying the fruits of their sacrifices for the struggle as compared to men today. For example, there were only three women in Namibia's first national assembly (in 1990) of 72 representatives and only 1 Cabinet member out of twenty-one members (Meroro, 2002). Although the number of women parliamentarians has increased recently to 19% (Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, 2003) this is still low as the majority (51.3 %) of the Namibian population are women (Census Office, 2002).

This might be attributed to the value given to certain roles, which are deemed more important than others are although they are complementary. For example on the 26th August which is Heroes' Day Commemoration mostly male heroes feature in statements delivered at the rallies and in liberation struggle songs. Recently a Heroes' Acre was built where prominent figures of heroes and heroines in the liberation struggle are laid down (New Era, 27 August 2002). There was only one woman among the first nine heroes honoured in 2002.

The late Kakurukaze Mungunda was killed on the 10th December 1959 in the Windhoek uprising. On that day, the South African regime forced the black

independence on 21 March 1990 (Cleaver, 1990). I might use armed struggle interchangeably with liberation struggle referring to this period.

people from the so-called "Old Location" which was closer to town centre to Katutura. This area is about 5km away from the centre of town. This is part of a strategy used by the colonial administrators for racial discrimination. The aim was to create a buffer zone between the white residential areas and those of African (blacks) origin. She resisted and tried to fire the Superintendent's car and was shot dead instead (Meroro, 2002). This is the only woman who features in Namibia's recorded history. It is evident that the fact that she tried to kill someone and lost her life in return made her a hero. This raises the question as to what roles are recognized as being heroic? Is it only acts that involve violence as opposed to soft domestic roles women are confined to, that qualify one to be heroic?

Unless women's stories are narrated and recorded, they would not be heard in the large context of Namibia's history. This invisible and unrecognized contribution by women may have resulted in their disproportional low representation in political and public leadership positions. This is shown in the concluding section of the paper. In the next paragraphs, the paper presents the research objectives, the major questions addressed and the justification for this research.

1.6 Research Objectives, questions and justification

1.6.1 Research objectives

- ❖ To record and document the role of exiled women in Namibia's liberation movement⁴ and the armed struggle for Independence as a contribution to the ongoing Namibian Oral History Project⁵.

⁴ By liberation movement, I refer to the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

⁵ The Namibia Oral History Project is a project that is collecting information on war experiences of Namibian women, which is located and run, by the Gender Training and Research Program at the University of Namibia.

1.6.2 Research Questions

The major research questions are:

- ❖ What activities were women⁶ in exile in SWAPO camps involved in during the struggle for independence?
- ❖ How were these activities different or similar to their usual activities before the struggle?
- ❖ How do these women see their usual lives in Namibia today as compared to their hopes for their own future during the liberation struggle?

1.6.3 Justification of the study

The SPWC, as a women's wing under SWAPO has raised the concern of very little documentation on Namibian women's contribution to the liberation struggle. As a result, an oral history project aimed at documenting the history of participation of women in the liberation struggle for Namibia was initiated. It is partly sponsored by the Institute of Social Studies.

At its launch, on the 16th August 2001, the late SPWC member, hon. Ms. Getrude Kandanga Hilukilwa (MP) said that "women are in the majority and have always been at the forefront of the liberation struggle but their efforts had not been recorded as much as that of their male counterparts" (The Namibian Newspaper, 17th August 2001). At the same occasion, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Dr. Peter Katjavivi, told the gathering that women's participation in the liberation struggle is verbally known but not properly documented. He called upon women themselves to take the lead in writing their history and become central actors to present their own contributions.

⁶ Older women who are now in their forties and above who have spent some years in exile and are know to have taken part in some activities for a longer period of time.

In 2001, an ISS consultant, Bunnie Sexwale, trained about 20 researchers on oral history, which will enable them to record and document these women's experiences. I was fortunately part of the team. Exposure to the importance of oral history and the need to record the role women played, inspired me to do my research on this topic.

The second reason is personal as I was born during the colonial apartheid period. My personal experience of the apartheid system has motivated my interest in the topic. Growing up as a black child with parents who were SWAPO activists, made me witness many sacrifices that both men and women made for the liberation struggle inside the country. However, curiosity has made me to focus this research on women who were in exile whose experiences I have little knowledge about.

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Research Design

The research is explorative and qualitative in nature, relying mainly on primary data collected using oral history. Qualitative methodology is inductive using ethnographic approach. It gives the participants the opportunity to be heard and speak from their own standpoint, experience and perspective. It seeks to answer questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings (Hailonga, 2003). The next section highlights the method used to unravel these women's war experiences. It focuses on what oral history is and why it was deemed the best methodology for this study.

1.7.2 What is oral history?

In order to gather stories that would illuminate the questions under investigation, it is reasonable to turn to oral history. Oral history is defined as simply the living memory of the past (Yow, 1994). It is a technique for

preserving knowledge of historical events as recounted by participants. It involves the recording of the interview with a knowledgeable person who knows whereof she/he speaks from. It can be from personal participation or observation about a subject of historical interest (Slater, 2000).

Oral history gives voice to invisible groups. The method provides interviewees with the opportunity to describe hidden spheres of experiences, especially aspects of private life, which might be left out in daily analysis (Hugo and Thompson, 1993). Gluck (1991) subdivides oral history into three categories: "topical (similar to open-ended interview), biographical (concerns an individual rather than the interviewee, or follows a life history format), and autobiographical - the interviewee's life determines the content and form of the oral history" (cited in Reinhartz, 1992:126).

The process includes different stages from choice of topic; narrator selection; preliminary contact; preparation of data collection guide; acquisition of equipment and other technical requirements. It includes collecting and recording narratives, tapes, notes, transcribing, typing and translations. This is followed by analysis, compilation and editing after which the analysis is verified before the results are made public (Yow, 1994).

Reinhartz (1992:131) states that, "oral history, in contrast to written history, is useful for getting information about people unlikely to be engaged in creating written records". It is also important in creating historical accounts of phenomenon less likely to have produced archival material. Relatively powerless groups are typically good candidates for oral history research (Gluck, 1991).

1.7.3 Why oral history?

In doing oral history, the researcher's purpose is to create a written record of the interviewee's life. It is taken from her perspective in her own words. Oral history deals broadly with the person's past covering a range of topics, perhaps the person's life from birth to the present. It thus has the potential of bringing women into history and making the female experience part of written record.

Oral history also revises history in the sense of forcing us to modify previously published accounts of events that did not take women's experience seriously. Oral history theorists believe that injustices can be righted when people tell their stories. Therefore, history can be improved on this basis as it corrects the biased view of history that had not included women's voice (Reinharz, 1992).

Too often, the poor and powerless are further disadvantaged by having to conform to the language and communication methods of those who hold power. Oral history reverses this trend, as it should ideally take place in the narrator's mother tongue. The interviewers should respect the traditional ways of communicating instead of imposing conventional methods such as questionnaires and surveys or insisting on the use of official language (Hugo and Thompson, 1993).

In oral history, this burden of translation and understanding is thrown back to the researcher. It is therefore valuable in uncovering women's perspectives as very often women's unique experiences as women are muted. This is common especially in situations where their interests are in variance with those of men. This brings us to the reason why oral history is important in feminist studies.

1.7.4 Oral history and its linkages to the feminist standpoint.

Reinharz (1992: 134) reports that "feminist researchers are interested in oral history and biographical work in order to develop feminists' theory. Oral history

contributes to social justice and facilitates understanding among social classes and explores the meaning of events in the eyes of women.

Feminist standpoint theorists explore the difficulty of establishing relationships between knowledge and power without abandoning the hope of telling better stories about gendered lives (Harding, 1987). Thus the notion that 'women speaking the truth' results in new knowledge of gendered social lives, grounded in women's experience, is a central theme of conceptions of a feminist standpoint (Holland, 2002: 89).

Feminist standpoint has many different characteristics. This paper supports the standpoint, which is grounded in women's experience. This includes emotions, and embodiment, which entails women voicing their experiences. This strand raises issues of how experience can be known and how connections can be made between experience, knowledge and reality (Harding, 1987).

"Women-oral history is a feminist encounter that creates new material about women. It validates women's experience, enhances communication among women, discovers women's roots and develops a previously denied sense of continuity" (Reinharz, 1992: 126). Therefore, oral history is related to the feminist standpoint that centres on knowledge created from women's experience recorded in their own words.

Thus, the women are considered the knower themselves emphasizing the notion of women's knowledge as reality (Harding, 1987). However, as with other research methods, oral history is surrounded by its abuses, shortcomings, challenges, debates and controversies. The next section sheds light on that.

1.7.5 Ethical issues and controversies in oral history

The main ethical issue concerns the potential intrusion into people's lives. This includes the rights of ownership over what the narrators say and how their testimony is presented and disseminated (Hugo and Thompson, 1993). Confidentiality and privacy is very important since oral history focuses on the hidden spheres of life - a person's private world. The narrator's right to privacy and confidentiality should always be respected.

Information collected can also produce a sensitive form of material. This needs to be respected if the privacy of the individual involved is not violated. It is therefore the researcher's ethical responsibility to respect any difficulty or distress narrators may experience in giving an oral testimony. For example emotional feelings when the narrators tell their testimonies of painful events.

The researcher should ensure that the information is collected as sympathetically as possible. The narrator's right to peace of mind should always come before the researcher's desired questions. Controversies in oral history surround the authenticity of the voice, which implies that their production may be a form of oppression (Anderson and Jack, 1991).

There is also disagreement among feminist oral historians about the kind and ownership of the voice presented in oral history. The question remains as to whether it is the voice of oppression, the voice of imitation or the authenticity voice, or multiple voices (Glucks and Patai, 1991). Another contradiction concerns the voice the researcher listens to. Is it facts or feelings of the narrator and how does one avoid giving more authenticity to own orientation than to the women's voice.

Most importantly, because human memory is selective and sometimes faulty in what is remembered, oral history is critical in terms of consistency in the testimonies and accuracy in relation to factual information. Thus, no single source or combination of testimonies can ever give a picture of total complexity of the reality (Hugo and Thompson, 1993).

Thus, there is a danger in oral history of the interpretation of the testimonies, bringing us back to the question of whose voice is presented at the end. Nevertheless, despite all these challenges, its strengths made it the best option for this research. This study followed the same procedures although it is not ruled out that the above-mentioned controversies may have occurred.

1.7.6 Sample and sampling procedure

This research is part of the Oral History Project aimed at documenting women's contribution to the liberation struggle for Namibia's independence. Respondents were supposed to be chosen from the list of people compiled by the project. These people are known and identified for their important contribution to the liberation struggle in different ways. Their names are passed on to the project by recollections of what they did.

However because the list is still incomplete and there are few women from Kavango region⁷ identified so far, a snowball method was used. One person whose name was on the list gave the researcher other names and they identified others. Respondents were chosen purposely on this background depending, largely, on their availability during the two months of field data collection. Five in-depth interviews were conducted.

⁷ Participants or researchers in the Oral History Project have been allocated different regions to cover depending on their conversant in local languages of the area. Similarly since I am from Kavango, I will be responsible for interviewing identified respondents from that region.

1.7.7 Interview data

This table gives a description of the characteristics of respondents involved in the research.

Table 1: Interview data

Respondent	Age	Age & Year at leaving the country	Marital Status	No. of kids	Position in exile	Current position
1	47	23 years old, 1979	Married with 1 st husband	3	Teacher	Teacher
2	51	24 years old, in 1976	Divorced with 2 nd husband, Single	3	Nurse	Health Programmer
3	43	15 years old, in 1975	Married with 2 nd husband	3	Nurse, PLAN fighter	Unemployed
4	44	16 years old, 1975	Married with 2 nd husband	2	PLAN fighter	Special Field Force
5	42	14 years old, in 1975	Divorced with 2 nd husband, single	3	PLAN fighter	Cleaner

1.7.8 Data collection procedure

Face to face interviews were conducted. The respondent was asked to narrate her life history in her mother tongue from childhood briefly reflecting on major events in their lives up to the present. Since the data collected will be used for the Oral History Project, a life history format was followed using the interview guide. For the purpose of this study, only information related to this research was extracted for presentation. The research questions were inserted within the interview guide of the project.

The interviews were conducted in the narrators' vernacular, which is Rukwangali. The interviews were recorded with a tape recorder while at the same time the researcher took notes. The recordings were transcribed and translated immediately afterwards while the interview was still fresh in the researcher's memory.

1.7.9 Data Analysis Procedure

Information collected was analysed using Content Analysis. A matrix was drawn and the five respondents (R1-R5) were recorded in the rows, while the columns represented the responses. Each respondent's responses to the questions were then recorded next to the question number in the rows. This was however, a time consuming exercise because the interview followed a life history format of the respondent and the respondent did not answer the questions directly like in a questionnaire. After the matrix was completed, the responses were then organized using the conceptual framework adapted from Moser (1993) on Women's triple roles.

1.7.10 Limitations of the study

The major limitation to the study was the very short period to collect the data. The first two weeks were spent on identifying and making initial contacts with respondents. Some respondents identified earlier refused to be interviewed and were replaced. Some respondents had others commitments and always postponed the appointments to the date that could not fit with the researcher's timetable. After the first contact, a date was set for the interview. Most of the respondents preferred to be interviewed during weekends, mostly Saturdays. One interview took on average three hours.

The recorded version was in the vernacular and had to be translated simultaneously with the transcription. This was the most time consuming part of the exercise as one interview took about two days to finish. Listening to the tape in one language i.e. Rukwangali and type the version directly into English was not easy. The translation into English required a lot of thinking while bearing in mind nuances of the respondents. The researcher had to go back to the recordings now and then to listen again and this required a lot of editing.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the time limit, the respondents did not have enough time to build confidence and trust the researcher. As a result, some of the issues anticipated in the planning of the research were silenced. However as the project on Oral History is on going, some of the issues will be pursued on later. Therefore, this study cannot and does not purport to be an exhaustive analysis of women's roles and experiences in the liberation struggle. It however paves the way for more detailed research and analysis of women's roles in the struggle.

1.8 Organization of the paper

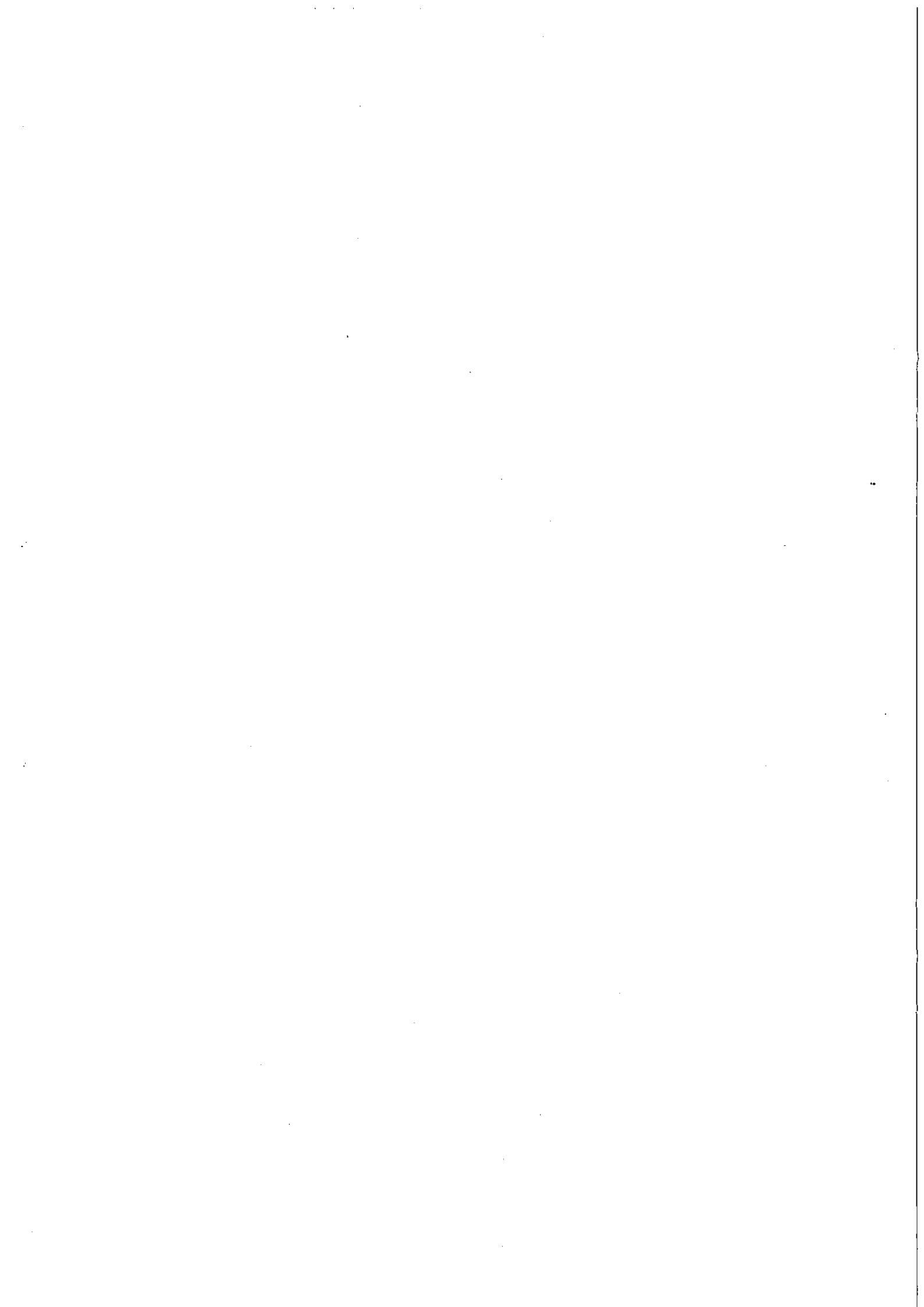
Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that gives a brief description of what the study is all about and the methodology used in gathering the required data.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the conceptual framework used and presents some findings from the literature.

Chapter 3 reveals the findings and analysis of the study.

Chapter 4 concludes and gives a brief highlight of women in decision-making positions in a post-independent Namibia as well as recommendations.

The next chapter gives an overview of evidence from the literature and presents the conceptual framework used in the data analysis.



CHAPTER 2: Literature review and Conceptual Framework

2.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a brief overview of women's roles and experiences in the guerrilla movements in Southern Africa for example Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It looks at how women were perceived in the liberation movements. Due to the influence of the socialist orthodoxy dominated by Marxist and Lenin's view on women, women's emancipation was viewed in the guerrilla movements as being pursued under the national liberation struggle. The last section of the chapter presents the conceptual framework used to organize the presentation of the findings.

2.1 Socialist Policy vis-à-vis National Liberation and Women's Liberation

National liberation movement is defined as a "movement with the aim of liberating the people of a specific nation from colonial or foreign rule or domination. It includes the liberation struggles of colonised people who are subjected to colonial rule characterized by oppression, subordination and discrimination. Hence, exploitation under capitalist productive structures imposed upon the indigenous people's social, political and cultural structures" (Shinavene, 1989: 9).

According to Mies (1981), the struggle for women's emancipation is identical with the struggle of the proletariat against capitalism. Within the feminism movement, Jayawardena and Reddock (1986) define women's liberation as "a struggle to create an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in society. This includes conscious action by women and men to change the situation" (cited in Shinavene, 1989: 8).

Lenin (of the former USSR), on the contrary, believed that equal rights for women could only be achieved through revolutionary struggle for democracy and socialism. Hence, this could be achieved through a radical social reorganization of society. He emphasizes on the relationship between women's oppression and the class nature of society. Thus, women's liberation is seen as achievable through social transformation of society (Mies, 1981).

Similarly, Marxists speculate that male domination is rooted in the economic sphere. Moreover, if this economic sphere is changed through socialist transformation of society, all social problems including inequalities based on gender will be eradicated. Marx and Engels believed that with the "transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of the society (Donovan, 1987). In addition, the care and education of children becomes a public affair. Thus society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not" (cited in Zerai, 1994: 6).

Accordingly, many liberation movements influenced by Socialist orthodoxy saw women's liberation as part of the national liberation struggle. Within the Socialist orthodoxy women are perceived to be emancipated through the removal of class relations and institutions like private property and by participating in productive employment or paid employment outside the household (Mies, 1981).

The problem was not seen to be between men and women as such, but rather between all exploited women, men, and the social order. Therefore, under socialism the need for a strong women's movement to campaign against women's oppression was disregarded. This Marxist analysis is highly criticized

by socialist feminist as being 'sex blind' because it subsumes feminist struggle in the larger struggle against capitalism (Hartmann, 1984 cited in Zerai, 1994: 7).

Despite women's high representation in the liberation movements with a gun in one arm and a baby in the other, women were still seen primarily as mothers. Socialist states and their followers kept a 'biologically reductionist' view of women as 'naturally suited to motherhood' (Waelen, 1996: 79).

Women were obliged to continue as both mothers and became involved in other productive waged employment. Meanwhile nothing or very little was done to change men's roles to undertake women's jobs (Waelen, 1996). Women were therefore drawn into the productive sphere while retaining their responsibility for the domestic sphere. This resulted in double burden for women as revealed in the next section.

2.2 Women and guerrilla movements - Southern African experiences

Many guerrilla movements in Africa such as the ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) & ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) in Zimbabwe, FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) in Mozambique; the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in Angola including SWAPO of Namibia (own emphasis) began their long drawn-out campaigns in the 1960s (Waelen, 1996). "These liberation struggles stressed their commitments as part of the socialist program to an agenda for women's emancipation.

Having been influenced by feminism and socialist analysis of the woman question, variants of programs and policies implemented were based on this

notion" (Waelen, 1996: 75). SWAPO also in its Political Programme (1976) formulated an economic and social policy for the future independent Namibia along the lines of Socialist tradition (Shinavene, 1989). One important strategy of these movements was to gain the support of large numbers of women. They were needed to play the role of mobilization, activists, provide support, cooks and get involved in combat (Kriger, 1992).

In Zimbabwe, evidence shows that women sacrificed their lives in preparing and carrying food to the guerrillas, guiding and hiding them. They carried messages, watched the enemies' movement and informed the guerrillas. Women also took the arms of the dead enemies, gave them to the guerrillas and hid wanted people from enemies (Staunton, 1990 and Hèlie-Lukas, 1988). Nevertheless, they were considered to be only performing their normal nurturing tasks. Therefore, they were helping their men and not participating in the war.

Evidence from Mozambique also shows that women were encouraged to participate more actively in the struggle at all levels. They served as political mobilizers and their roles centred on social services. This included transporting the much-needed medical supplies and ammunition on their heads over long distances. Women were required to set up health and education programs. The running of small orphanages for children who had lost their parents to war was also women's responsibilities. They also received political and military training to work in the militias, which defended the liberated zones rather than fighting at the war front (Waelen, 1996 and Urdang, 1989).

The few women guerrilla fighters were rarely given the opportunity to be in the front in the Mozambican Liberation Movement. This was due to stereotypes of women in relation to fighting. Men strongly opposed this initiative reasoning that it is against tradition for women to fight (Urdang, 1989). Largely this was

based on the perception of the socialization of men to aspire the masculine characteristics of a good soldier who is expected to be strong, brave and aggressive. Meanwhile the feminine traits, on the contrary should be passive, weak and in need of protection (Daniell, 1985). The man is therefore 'supposed' to fight while the woman 'should' heal the wounds of the fighters, be it physical, spiritual or emotional.

However, despite these women's increasing participation in the struggles and the expressed commitments of many movements to women's emancipation, there has been a 'widespread disillusionment'. This is mainly because the gains made during the struggles have not been consolidated in post-struggle contexts (Waelen, 1996:78). Therefore, women have not figured in post-liberation political institutions in the same numbers as men. They have not been equally represented in policymaking positions at the higher levels. Moreover, women also experience and suffer gender-based violence both within their own movements and outside as shown in the next section.

2.3 Sexual violence

Displaced women are particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment. This is due to social control that breaks down in addition to problems they face of resource loss, cultural dislocation and psychological trauma (Moser, 2001). Parties in conflict situations often rape women. Sometimes systematic rape is used as a tactic of war (Enloe, 2000). Women in war situations experience violence such as murder, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization (Isaksson, 1988).

Enloe (1993) argues that women serve a wide variety of military needs, not only as soldiers but also as military wives, prostitutes and nurses. According to Isaksson (1988), evidence shows that women in the military face high levels of

sexual harassment and rape, which are higher than in normal daily life. This is due to the opportunity and the situation of impunity, which exists during armed conflict. Women (Staunton, 1990) have reported instances of sexual abuse in Zimbabwe and Mozambique during the struggle.

Cockburn (2001) also reports that the most widely documented victimization of women in armed conflict is sexual violence and abuse. Thus, women are more vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse during the struggle than in normal life from both within their own movement and the enemy's side. In the next section, the conceptual framework used in the analysis of the findings is discussed.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

2.4.0 Introduction

The analytical framework used in this study is adopted from Moser's concept of women's triple role. It is based on the gender division of labour within the household. Moser (1993) states that women's work in the household include not only reproductive work - the childbearing and rearing responsibilities required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. However, it also includes productive work often as secondary income earners. In rural areas, this takes the form of agricultural work. Meanwhile in urban areas women frequently work in informal sector enterprises located in the home or neighbourhood. Women also undertake community-managing work. This centres on the provision of items of collective consumption undertaken in the local community in both the urban and rural contexts.

2.4.1 Gender Division of Labour

Mies (1986) defines gender division of labour as the allocation of roles, tasks and works in society based on gender at the level of the household and the society. She emphasizes that, "when we try to analyse the social origins of this division of labour, we have to make it clear that we mean the asymmetric, hierarchical and exploitative relationship. And not just a simple division of tasks between equal partners" (cited in Zerai, 1994: 11).

In most patriarchal⁸ societies, the stereotype of man as 'breadwinner' prevails. The notion of the male as productive worker predominates, even when it is not borne out in reality. Thus, men do not have a defined reproductive role. Nevertheless they undertake some community activities but in markedly different ways from women.

This reflects a further gender division of labour, which is believed by feminists to embody and perpetuate female subordination (Moser, 1993). This gender division of labour provides the underlying principle for separating out and differentiating the work men and women do. In addition, it also imparts the rationale for the difference in value placed on their work. Hence, providing the link between the gender division of labour and subordination of women (March et. al, 1999).

Mackintosh (1981) elaborates more that "in areas where women and men work for wages, women workers tend to be segregated into certain industrial sectors. Certain occupations within those sectors where women's jobs are typically lower

paid, defined as less skilled, lower in the hierarchy of authority, have relatively poor conditions of work. Furthermore in non-wage work in farming and urban self employment, trading or manufacturing and domestic tasks such as cooking or child care, the sexual division of labour frequently works to the relative detriment of women" (cited in Zerai 1994: 12).

Underneath is a description, according to Moser (1993) of women's triple roles.

2.4.2 Women's Triple roles

Moser (1993) divides women's roles into three categories; reproductive, productive roles, and community work as differentiated below.

2.4.2.1 Reproductive roles

Reproductive role comprises "the childbearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks undertaken by women that are required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. It also includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the workforce (husband and working children) and the future workforce, which is infants and school-going children" (Moser, 1993: 29). The role is naturally considered women's work mainly because women bear children and this is related naturally to the reproduction of all human life.

There is however no reason why this should extend to the nurturing and caring, of not only the children but also adults, the sick and the aged. This contradiction reflects the diversity of definition and meaning of reproductive work. Thus, while "biological reproduction refers rigidly to the bearing of children, the term reproduction of labour extends further. It involves the care, socialization and

⁸ From Patriarchy which is defined as "the rule of men" and the rule of the father originally used to describe a specific type of male dominated family – the large household of the patriarch, which include women, junior men, children, slaves & domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male (Omveldt,1986).

maintenance of individuals throughout their lives to ensure the continuation of society to the next generation "(Edholm et. al 1977, cited in Moser, 1993: 29).

A crucial issue relating to women's reproductive work is the extent to which it is visible and valued. In addition, since it is seen as natural work, it is not regarded as real work and therefore invisible in national accounts. Reproductive work though has no clear demarcation between work and leisure (as compared to male's productive work). Nevertheless, women tend to work longer hours than men do without rest, except at night. Although women go to sleep last they wake up first to prepare the household for the new day. Lack of recognition of the economic cost of reproductive work has resulted in the separation of the paid work, which is allocated an exchange value from that of unpaid domestic work (Moser, 1993).

2.4.2.2 Productive roles

Moser (1993) sees productive roles as work done by both men and women for payment in cash or in kind. This includes both market productions with an exchange value and subsistence home production with an actual use value as well as a potential exchange value. For women in agricultural production this includes work as independent farmers, peasants' wives and waged workers.

Nevertheless, the gender division of labour has ensured that although this is one area in which both men and women work, they do so unequally due to the asymmetrical gender relations in productive work. Whether it is in the formal or informal sector, rural or urban, in production women as a category are subordinated to men. Thus productive work is defined "as a task or an activity which generates an income and therefore has an exchange value either actual or potential" (Moser, 1993: 31). Hence, this is most visible in cash economies and not in subsistence production.

2.4.2.3 *Community work*

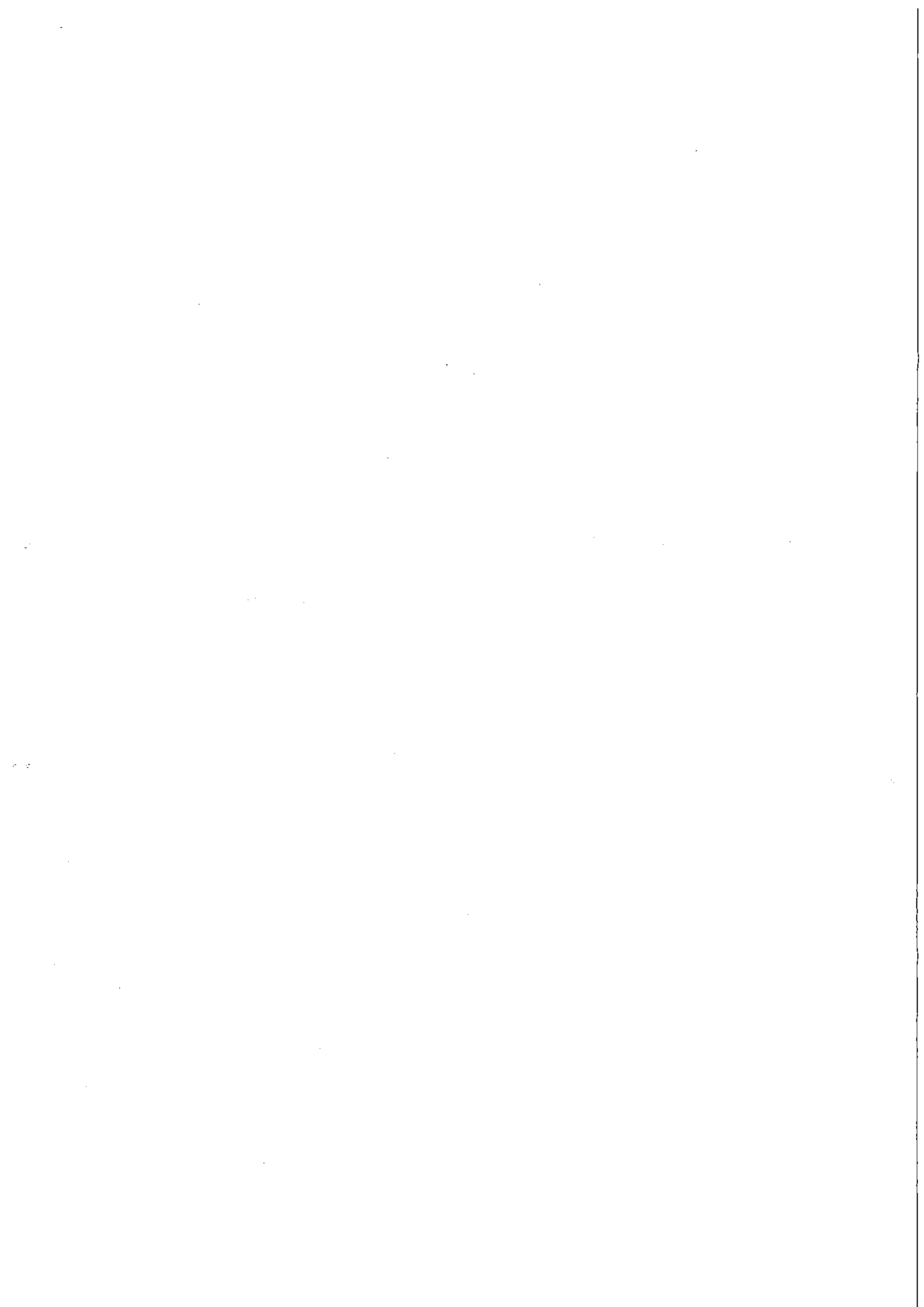
March et. al. (1999: 56) defines community work as “activities that include the collective organization of social events and services – ceremonies and celebrations, activities to improve the community. This involves participation in groups and organizations, local political activities and so on”. This kind of work is rarely considered in economic analysis. Yet it involves a lot of volunteer time and is important for the spiritual, social and traditional development of the community.

Moser (1993: 43) divides community work into two types; “the community managing roles that are predominantly for women. This she defines as comprising activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level. These activities are done as an extension of women’s reproductive role to ensure the provision, allocation and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption such as water, health care and education”. Community political activities in contrast are undertaken by men at the community level organizing at the formal political level and are usually paid work, either directly through wages or through increase in status and power (March et. al, 1993).

However many feminists criticize this framework as endorsing the sexual division of labour. Although this framework is used in this study, it does not imply that the author fully support and endorse Moser’s categorization and distinction between reproductive, productive and community work. This is mainly because some roles, which are seen as reproductive work, can also be categorized as productive.

Many activities seen as reproductive such as child caring and domestic chores can also involve the exchange value in terms of payment although traditionally

women are supposed to do that free of charge. For example cooking and cleaning can be done as productive activities in restaurants etc. It is therefore difficult to make a distinction and categorization that will be satisfactory to all situations. The next chapter presents the findings and analysis of this study.



CHAPTER 3: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.0 Background Information

Firstly, a brief background is given on why these women went into exile as well as the set up in the camps where they resided. With the intention of giving the reader, a better understanding of conditions under which these women carried out their duties. Secondly, the findings are presented based on the three major questions this paper addresses. These are activities women carried out in exile.

It also looks at differences and similarities in these activities to what these women would normally do in Namibia. Finally, the chapter examines how these women see their lives today as compared to their future hopes during the struggle. Instead of using names of respondents, codes are used to protect respondents' identity and maintain confidentiality of information provided.

3.1 Motivation for going into exile

It is very important at the onset to establish why people left the country to join the struggle and whether it was a voluntary action or through recruitment. Three of the respondents stated that they were influenced by attending guerrilla meetings held in the villages at night. At these rallies, they danced and sang slogans of liberation. The guerrillas taught them about politics and informed them about the war and the importance of joining the guerrilla movement.

The brutality of the government forces was cited to be the major reason why the respondents left the country to go into exile. However, political influence through the contact established with the guerrillas and the encouragement and promises of educational opportunities by the guerrillas played a major role in stimulating their interest to join. DW said that *at those meetings we were told that*

we could go and study in Zambia, we were very much attracted by the idea of getting educated as we wanted to get educated and be able to do some of the things they told us like driving cars (although she cannot drive a car now). The songs were so nice and touching, they told us how to go into exile and that they can escort us and show us the way. We registered our names and became regular attendants of the rallies – we were so much interested that we did not even listen to our parents, but just wanted to go in exile. Sometimes even if we were busy eating and the guerrillas started singing, we left the food and go to join the singing and dances.

One of the respondents said she left because she was 'blacklisted and wanted' by the police. She was a student nurse at a Lutheran church hospital. They used to give medical treatment and medicines to the guerrilla fighters secretly. One day the guerrilla fighters asked for their names, which they gave on a piece of paper. Unfortunately, the SADF (South Africa Defence Force) found that list of names. She speculated that it happened in a clash between them and the guerrilla fighters.

One police officer from her village who knew her saw their names at the police station. He informed her about the incident, that the police were looking for them and if found they would be arrested. He then advised her to leave the country as the list was circulated to all the checkpoints⁹ in the country. Having realized that there was no way she could escape the arrest if not by 'sneaking out of the country' she decided to leave the country. However, whatever the motives were for people to leave the country, all respondents stated that the guerrilla fighters escorted and accompanied them on their way.

3.2 Daily life in the camps

The population in the camps consisted of guerrilla fighters, elderly people, disabled people and victims of war, women and children. The camps were permanent and geographically located in combat or war zones and there were widely dispersed fronts where fighting occurred.

Some women were married with children, thus had their own households. However, not many of them stayed with their husbands due to the war situation. There were also orphaned children who were placed in kindergartens. The other children were dropped in day care centres by their mothers on a daily basis when going to work.

The research revealed that it was a routine that every morning the people in the surrounding camps gathered at a parade where daily announcements were made e.g., how the fighters at the war front were progressing and daily activities were distributed among the different groups. After the gathering, the SWAPO flag was raised and the people started with their daily activities. Women carried out many tasks on a daily basis as shown in the presentation of the findings. It should however be noted that these activities carried by both men and women in these camps were not paid for, so no salaries were received for these jobs.

The people survived on donor assistance in terms of food, groceries and clothing from the donor community. One respondent reported that *We got supply of food*

⁹ During the colonial rule in Namibia, there were so many police checkpoints all over the country where proof of identification was checked, and there was no way that one could travel from one of the so-called 'homelands' to another without passing through one of them.

for the whole month such as maize meal, cooking oil, sugar, milk, cheese and cookies for children as well as clothes. (WC)

Nevertheless, it was reported that sometimes the supply finished and the people have to go for days without food or other basic needs. PP reported that *we could stay for a month without soap. If there was nothing that day, we did not bother about that. We could stay for about three days without food, or eat only once a day but it was never a problem because we got used to it. We had one belief that we are fighting for the best. And that we will enjoy the fruits of our suffering back home, when the country gets independent and live a happy life. (PP)*

Women had to make ends meet to ensure that their children had food. Sometimes they exchanged their clothes for food with the local people in the surrounding villages as one respondent said, *sometimes we had a shortage of food, especially meat and in that case, we exchanged our clothes for food e.g. chicken and sometimes goats with the local people in the surrounding villages. (WC)*

In the following paragraphs, the activities women were involved in while in exile in these camps are presented.

3.3 Presentation of Findings and Analysis

3.3.1 Activities women were involved in during the struggle

These activities are divided into reproductive, productive roles and community work. The responses are presented in summarised version with some quotes as well as the authors own interpretation of the findings.

3.3.1.1 Reproductive roles

These activities will include activities that are socially ascribed to women. They are normally seen as naturally suitable to women and in most cases done without payment in cash or in kind. Most of these roles surround the childbearing, rearing, maintenance and caring of the family members in the household. This comes into existence through a union such as marriage whether legal, traditional or cohabitation.

(i) *Child Bearing and rearing*

Women were involved sexual relationships and marriages. In many instances, these relationships were affected by the war situation, as many couples were separated due to work commitments. Women were involved in child bearing under very difficult conditions. The research established that pregnancy did not disrupt women's participation in other activities such as combat. Moreover, women were expected to go back to the war front after giving birth, when the baby was six months.

Meanwhile some women lost their husbands in combat and many marriages ended in divorce due to different reasons. Ibanez (2001:121) reports confirms this that, *"in a war, one's life can pass in a very brief time; a young woman who has established a relationship could lose her beloved one during the next combat, or either one of them could be transferred to another camp, since couples in guerrilla groups had to follow orders"*.

Child rearing is the role of the woman in the Namibian society. However, the absence of the father due to the war situation exacerbated the situation leaving women alone to care for their children. In addition, the fact that more emphasis was put on heroic attitudes, militant readiness and absolute commitment to the

war provided men with a ready-made justification for lack of responsibilities towards their partners and issues of paternity.

Thus, the mother-son or mother-daughter bond was the only assured relationship due to the separation, disappearance or death of the partner. However, this relationship was disrupted at six months, as separation of mother-child was compulsory at six months. These women only got the chance to build relationships with their children afresh again after independence when they returned home.

(ii) *Taking care of children*

The research found out that the camps at the home front had kindergartens, which took care of the orphaned children and children whose mothers were sent on official missions or studying elsewhere, or were disabled or due to ill-health were unable to take care of their children. All women with small children dropped them at the day care centres on a daily basis when they go to work. Thus, some women were taking care for these children, bathing and clothing them, feeding, giving them love, attention and all the necessities required by children.

Because some of the children were permanently placed in these kindergartens, the caretakers had to work night duty as well. When the number of children increased in the camps, some of the children were sent overseas to other countries that assisted Namibia such as Czech Republic and the former German Democratic Republic¹⁰. Nevertheless, the unintended repercussion of this is negative as these children suffered problem of identity and cultural differences

¹⁰ The Namibian children who found refuge in the GDR during the liberation war (the so-called "GDR-Children") came back to Namibia in 1994. 291 were school children in a school (*Schule der Freundschaft*) at Staßfurt near Magdeburg and 134 pre-school children from the SWAPO children hostel at Bellin near Güstrow. Eight were small children. 29 Namibian adults accompanied them. (Klaus Dierks).

upon their return home. This made their reintegration within the society and their families a very difficult task.

(iii) *Foster parenting*

Many women played a major role as foster care parents for children orphaned by the war or from any kind of illness. The women who were sent for studies left their children either in the kindergartens or with foster parents who were mostly mothers as most of the men were at the war front. Similarly, some female PLAN fighters left their children in the care of foster parents upon their return to the war front.

One respondent reported that after giving birth to her son in 1978, she breastfed for six months then went back to the front for military training. The baby was given to foster parents with whom he stayed ever since. She only came get the son back in Namibia. In another incident, DW said that *after giving birth to my son in 1979 I left him in the kindergarten when I went back to the front. With my second pregnancy I went to Lubango where I gave birth to my second born. I remained there and got my last born there. During that time, my first son was staying in another camp in a kindergarten. He never saw his two siblings until the time when we came back home.*

Although she came back in 1989 to Namibia during the repatriation, she only saw her son in 1994. He stayed with the foster parents the whole time. Many children placed under foster care came to know their biological parents when they came home. During the repatriation period, people registered their places of residence in Namibia and this has made it easier for parents to look for their children who came with foster parents.

MB remembered her own experience with her son that *during the repatriation I was studying in Zambia. My son came back home with his foster parents and they were from another region. Fortunately, during the registration process one of my friends saw the address of the foster parents. The woman was from Uukwanyama but the husband was from Ondonga. Therefore, I had an idea of where to start in searching for my son. It took me two weeks to find their homestead and get my son.*

(iv) *Cooking*

It was reported that women were involved in cooking for the thousands of refugees in the camps, which was very big as stated that there could be about 800 people in one camp. Cooking was done for the guerrilla fighters, pregnant women, the disabled, the elderly and the young. Similarly, women fed the children in the kindergartens, day care centres and schools, war victims and the sick in hospitals.

MB reported that *for example at the hospital where I worked there were many sick people. After pounding in the morning, we prepared food for them. We made porridge from the flour that we produced and we made sikundu (a very nutritious traditional soft drink made from millet flour) for them as well. Since there were no power-driven stoves, the food was cooked on open fire in big pots on a daily basis. One respondent stated that we prepared the food in very big pots outside. These pots were so big that we climbed on drums to be able to cook. (DW)*

These women were still responsible and did cooking for their own households after completing their daily duties.

(v) *Pounding*

Women pounded millet and it was compulsory for every woman to do it in addition to other activities assigned to her daily such as teaching, nursing etc. To

make sure that women combined these activities well, they pounded the millet at night. When they finished pounding in the early morning hours, they went to fetch water from the wells before dawn.

One respondent reported that *in those camps the major tasks that women played was pounding millet to produce flour. All the women pounded millet throughout the night to produce enough flour to feed the whole camp as well as to supply to other small camps. Every time we were pounding, reminded me back home when there was a wedding in the village. In such an event, the girls in the village came together to pound a lot of mahangu for the wedding. We could pound up to five bags (50kg each) of millet to produce enough flour for the wedding.*

It was the same in these camps. All the women and girls had to be strong and hardworking because pounding was done twenty-four hours a day, giving each other turns. One group could get about 200kg of mahangu to pound at a time. We produced the flour with our own hands, as there were no milling machines. Very excited by these recalling, she started singing one of the songs they used to sing in Rukwangali, which she said she liked very much that goes like:

Tatu tu roroka nyee

Tatu tu roroka nyee

Tatu tu roroka nyee tu hepe. (MB)

It literally means that we are pounding but we will never suffer.

This shows that women had very little time to rest as compared to their male counterparts as some of their activities were carried out at night to ensure that during the day they are involved in other productive roles.

(vi) *Fetching water*

Women fetched water carried in buckets on their heads from the wells in the surrounding villages. There was no piped water in the camps as many were situated in the remote areas far from towns. The water was used in the camps' institutions such as the hospital, kindergarten and day care centre, schools and the common kitchen and for their own households. There was water scarcity as the camp residents shared the same wells with the local villagers. Therefore, women in the camps woke up very early in the morning before the sun rises to ensure that they get sufficient water and had to collect many rounds every morning.

One respondent reported that there was a day she will never forget in her life, saying that *there was a night when the SADF came to our camp while we were sleeping killing all the security guards on duty, who were quite a big number. After that, they painted their faces with black/dark paint since they were whites and pretended to be our guards. We woke up very early that morning as usual to go and fetch water while it was still dark. We passed through the gate, saluted them not knowing that these were the enemies who have disguised themselves.*

Meanwhile, they already killed our colleagues who were on night duty. We fetched the water, dropped for the first round and went back for the second time, and yet we did not recognize that these people were our enemies, because it was still dark. While busy with the second round, we heard gunshots. We ran away to go and hide in the bush. When we came back during the day, we met some Zambian nationals who were also running away from their homesteads. They told us that the SADF had killed many people in our camp. We went to hide in the bush and only went back to the camp three days later. (FF)

This shows that women were equally at risk, whether they were at the battlefield or home front, although this might not be recognized.

(vii) *Fetching firewood*

Fetching firewood was another task that women were involved in. They carried firewood on their heads, for both their own households and for the entire camp. WC reported that *every morning we fetched water and firewood also for our own households as well as for use in the big kitchen. Sometimes if you are not able to go due to maybe sickness or other commitments, you could ask your friends to fetch water and firewood for you.*

Since a lot of food had to be prepared daily, the camp required a lot of firewood for boiling water used at the kindergartens and the hospitals. Firewood was used as a source of power as many camps were located in remote areas far from towns without power supply.

3.3.1.2 Productive roles

This section presents findings related to the roles in which both men and women took part. These are jobs that normally involve an exchange value in terms of salary/professional jobs or in kind. For example, in Namibia, both men and women do agricultural work for subsistence production or for commercial purposes. However, with the exception of teaching and nursing which women in Namibia dominate the remaining activities are confined to the male domain.

(i) *Teaching*

Many women were involved with teaching the children in exile. Women who were already teachers in Namibia continued teaching in the camps. After finishing their primary education in the camps, some of the children were sent to different countries to continue with their secondary education. One respondent reported that *I accompanied some of my learners to Cuba to continue their secondary*

education. I taught them in Cuba for two years. I was later called back to come to Lubango to teach again in the pre-primary schools. (PP)

Adult literacy programs were part of the teaching projects women were involved in. (PP) also said *there were many teaching programs in the camps, apart from the children's primary teaching we also taught the freedom fighters who were injured and were sent to the home front due to ill health. Since many of them were illiterate, we taught them how to read and write in English, mathematics as well as leadership courses for women. English was important to enhance and upgrade their understanding and communication skills before they could go for other courses outside the camps.*

She added that she feels so proud today when she sees some of her students who are successful in life today.

Community awareness creation and campaigns on health education including topics such as pregnancy, nutrition and environmental health were also women's duty. DW reported *that there were women in the camps who taught us on hygiene and health related issues especially for pregnant women and younger children.*

(ii) Nursing

It was reported that the majority of the nurses in the camps were women. This was attributed to the fact that before independence, nursing and teaching were the mostly available profession that women could get. Thus, the majority of nurses and teachers in Namibia even today are women. The nurses and doctors in the camps worked very hard in the hospitals under difficult conditions. MB reported that in some instances very little or no medical supply was available but had to treat the people especially the PLAN fighters injured in the war.

She said, it was very difficult working in the hospitals. Sometimes a person injured in combat was brought to the hospital after many days. The person could have broken legs or arms and it was difficult to come closer to such a person who is under severe pain. By that time, the wounds were septic or started to develop gangrene¹¹.

In some instances, we did not have anaesthesia and no gloves to wear and neither injection. We boiled water and cleaned the wounds barehanded with hot water only. Since the injured person is under severe pain and thus becomes aggressive, counselling was first given to the patients to calm them down and be patient before we cut the wounds with scissors while the person was awake. It was very tough and even our own lives were in danger because the injured person could harm us as well. (MB)

Due to the high demand in nurses in the camps, assistant nurses were also recruited among those who have not been nurses but were trained in a very short period. One respondent reported that she was given First Aid training and basic nursing work. This included how to use the thermometer to measure the temperature, give injections, measure the Blood Pressure and how to insert intravenous drugs. After that very short training, she was expected to practice that under the supervision of qualified doctors among whom some were women.

Apart from treating the injured people, all other sicknesses were treated in the camps. Remembering the time she was a nurse in the camps, MB said that *we treated all kind of diseases in the camps but pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers were more vulnerable to diseases due to the situation in the camps. For example, many girls impregnated by the freedom fighters died before their babies were born. The majority died of pregnant related complications and other sickness such as malaria, leaving behind many orphaned children.*

¹¹ The decay that takes place in a part of the body when the blood supply to it has been stopped because of illness or injury – if very serious, it can cause someone's limb to be amputated (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000).

Thus, one can see that women worked very hard to save the lives of both women and men under very harsh and difficult conditions.

(iii) *Agricultural activities*

To be self sufficient in producing their own food, the camps had fields. Women worked in these fields where they ploughed and planted crops such as maize, millet and vegetables. MB supports this saying that *we had fields where we planted mahangu (millet) and after the harvest, we carried the grains into the camp. It was women who worked in those fields to produce enough food to feed the camp population instead of only relying on donated food, which was sometimes not enough. We were involved in the ploughing, planting, weeding and harvesting of the produce. Poultry was also part of the agricultural initiative women were involved in. The chickens were fed to the camp population especially the children in the kindergartens.*

(iv) *Carpentry*

It was reported that women were involved in carpentry as well as reported by some respondents that they were trained in carpentry and afterwards made wooden chairs and tables used in the camps. DW reported that *we sometimes made wooden artificial guns that we used during the training, while awaiting for the supplies of ammunition to arrive. These guns looked real that it was difficult for someone to notice that it was not real. This is where I first learned about woodwork, later on, I went for training, and we made wooden tables and chairs used in the camps.*

(v) *Welding, mechanical work and driving*

The research found out that women were trained in different fields together with men. Respondents repeatedly said that *there was no distinction made between men and women we all got the same training and did similar activities.* One respondent

said that when I went to do my training in welding, there were more women in our group than men. (FF)

One of the respondents reported that *we were a big group of both men and women sent for training. They trained us in carpentry, architecture, mechanical and electrical work and welding. I did welding, upon completion, we went to different camps and I was based in Luanda working as a welder in a car warehouse. Driving was one of the activities that women were involved in, although traditionally it used to be a male job. One respondent stated that it was her first time to see women driving cars when she went into exile in 1975.*

(vi) *Brick making and Construction Work*

Before independence women were hardly involved in brick-making and/or construction work. This is one of the fields that has been a male domain in Namibia and is still male-dominated today. The research reveals that women in exile were involved in the constructing of huts and buildings in the camps. One respondent reported that *when we arrived at the Cassinga camp in 1977, the camp was very small with few huts. We constructed many huts there to accommodate the new arrivals from home. She reported that the camp grew to the extent that in 1978 when it was bombed it could host up to thousands of refugees.*

In another incident one respondent proudly remembering her involvement in the building of one training centre said, *in 1980 our leaders told us that there was a UN school in Luanda where we could go for training. They sent us and when we arrived in Luanda they took us to Sumbe where the school was supposed to be. When we arrived there, the place was clear as there were no buildings and we were surprised by that. However, they explained to us that we should build the school ourselves. In addition, that the training will only start after the construction work is completed and only then will the training starts.*

Later on, the UN officials arrived with the building materials. We began with the construction work in 1982. After completing the construction work, we started with the training in 1983 and finished in 1985. (FF)

This training centre (known as the United Nations Vocational Training Centre) located at Sumbe in Angola is reported by Shinavene (1989) to have trained a large number of women, who were strongly represented in the various programmes in different fields.

(vii) Tailoring and weaving

It was reported that some women were sent for tailoring and weaving training in countries such as Tanzania and Zambia. Upon their completion of the courses they became instructors in the camps teaching other women how to weave and sew. *DW reported that women in the camps made clothing such as school uniforms, dresses, beddings, under wear, women, children, and baby wear.* Women also gained skills in weaving and therefore many materials needed in the camps were produced locally.

3.3.1.3 Community Work

(i) Participation in military and combat

Three of the respondents reported to have been involved in actual combat as PLAN fighters. *FF reported that I was involved in actual combat/fighting although I did not have any rank because it was only commanders who had ranks in PLAN. She said that we were given military training when we just arrived in the camps it was compulsory. This training included the use of arms, what to do in case of an attack, how to defend ourselves during ambush or fighting. We were also trained on what types of*

guns to use at which specific time for example when the enemy is on foot, in cannons or in helicopters.

They were also trained on how to set up explosives, as reported by one respondent said *setting up explosives was my area of expertise.* (DW) Apart from setting them up some women reported that they were involved in making explosives. For such complicated training and other advanced military training, they were sent to other countries such as Cuba, the former GDR and the Soviet Union.

It was stated that during combat, women also buried their counterparts who died in combat. Although in some instances, there was no time to bury the dead. They left the bodies at the spot where they died and came back after the situation calmed down to bury them. One respondent reported that *one day my colleague was shot and was wounded. There was nothing that I could do since we did not carry any medical supply with us. The place where we could get medical attention was also very far. With sadness in her voice and eyes she said, I decided to sit next her until she died. Then I took her belongings - military belt, backpack, gun and ammunition and went to report her death. We came later on with some colleagues to bury her.* (DW)

All respondents who were fighters shared the same sentiment that they were sent to the home front when pregnant. They however, returned back after the baby was six months as it was compulsory to place the baby in the kindergarten at this age. Upon their return they were given military training again and continue with their combat work. This support what Yuval Davis (1991) asserts, "in times of war, women often expand their occupational roles on the home front, in order to fill in for men who are engaged at the battle-front.

This does not necessarily represent, as many women would like to believe, a relaxation of the sexual division of labour in society. It rather indicates a temporary shift in its boundaries, dictated by the perceived necessary role of men rather than that of women". (cited in Kazi, 1992:54). This is why the situation is so swiftly reversed at the end of the national crisis, although not without protest on the part of women. This shows us how women combined combat work and child bearing. It is of great significance to notice that pregnancy did not deter women from participating in combat.

(ii) *Collecting food, medical and ammunition supply*

The research reveals that not all the camps stored supply. Thus, food, medical or ammunition was collected from the camps where the supply were dropped and stored. Due to lack of transportation and long distances between camps, both men and women were divided into groups and had to make turns to go and collect the food supply on foot. It was stated that sometimes it took a group two days to reach the place where the food was collected from and two days to get back.

It was reiterated that there was no distinction made between men and women, irrespective of age but were treated equal. One respondent said that *I can remember the time I arrived I was 16 years old. Nevertheless, when we had to collect the food supply, we found them already packed in bulks of the same weight. We all carried the same amount irrespective of age or sex, men and women both alike. The camp where we collected the supplies from was very far. We spent two days walking to get there. The commander divided us into groups of about 15 people irrespective of how many women or men as they selected the groups randomly. We had to walk very fast and each group had one commander who ensured that none remained behind. We carried the supply on our heads. (MB)*

This shows us how courageous women were performing the same activities with their male counter parts.

(iii) *Information gathering (spying) and communication*

The PLAN, which is SWAPO's military-wing operated from the war fronts in Angola and Zambia. They have to sneak into the country to carry out their military activities. They did this secretly because if the enemy noticed they faced death. It was not easy, as they had to walk on foot with their heavy load of ammunition, food or water on their back in the rain, cold or sunny weather, while the enemy was using planes, helicopters and cannons to trace them.

While at the war front, women interviewed said they were involved in what they called "reconnaissance¹²", which included gathering information and spying where the SADF bases were located in Namibia as well as along the borders. They had to cross the border into the country and trace where the SADF army bases were located and monitored their movements. The information was recorded, and communicated to their commanders or planned an attack.

FF reported that *during the training we were taught how to spy on the enemy's bases and check on their movements as well as the location of their bases for ambush*. Some respondents indicated that in some instances they had to set up the explosives after detecting where these bases were and had to do it very fast, carefully and disappear.

Contrary to what other experiences show regarding women's political involvement confined to social services, this research has shown otherwise as women were also involved in the actual fighting.

3.3.2 Similarities and differences to their usual activities before the struggle

The research established that there were both similarities and differences in the activities that women carried out while in exile to their normal activities they were doing while inside the country. However due to a lot of repetitions of activities carried out as reported in the preceding section, this section has been shortened and summarized briefly.

3.3.2.1 Similarities in these activities

Women reported that the similarities in the activities they carried were mainly in their reproductive roles. They repeatedly said *we were responsible for all the household related activities that we used to do in Namibia before going into exile. We cooked, pounded millet, did laundry, fetched water firewood, just as we could do back home.* (FF) As shown in the preceding section, women were involved in the traditionally accepted women roles that are concentrated within the household/ domestic domain.

3.3.2.2 Differences in activities

All the respondents reported to have noticed a big difference in new activities that they could not do while in Namibia as these were seen as male jobs. It was repeatedly reported by respondents that while in exile *there was no distinction made between men and women, when it comes to any activities that have to be carried out, we were also expected to take part in activities that were mainly done by men back home* (MB). It was reported that all residents of a camp were divided into working groups irrespective of their sex and all were given the same tasks to perform.

¹² Activity of getting information about an area for military purposes using soldiers, planes etc. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000).

(FF) reported that *before I went into exile I have never seen a woman who is a mechanic who could repair cars. I also saw women drivers for the first time in exile because women and men were doing the same tasks; we were both treated equal when it comes to daily tasks in the camps.*

Roles such as women participating in combat, carpentry, mechanical, welding, electrical engineering, brick making and construction as well as driving were cited as the area in which women noticed a very big difference to what women could do in Namibia.

Although this 'equality' applied in activities normally done by men in which women were expected to take part and not vice versa, women did not see this as biased but they felt that they were treated as equals to men. The fact that men rarely took part in normally female roles but were concentrated in their traditionally male ascribed roles did not make women question this notion of equality.

3.3.3 Women's usual lives today compared to their future hopes

The respondents reported that their hopes for their own future were primarily based on their motivation for going into exile, which was the deteriorating situation in the country at the hands of the apartheid government. In that same light they were convinced that once independence is achieved, it will improve their own individual situation. They believed that through the process of achieving independence they would have the opportunity to improve their own educational level.

3.3.3.1 Future hopes for the country

All the respondents shared the same opinion that their major reason for leaving the country was due to the unbearable colonial situation inside the country.

Regarding that, the respondents showed their satisfaction that they are happy today that the country is independent. Citing that people are now free, living happily as compared to those sleepless nights, beatings and killings that the people endured at the hands of their colonial masters.

This is evident from what (PP) reported that *I actually think that my major hopes for going into exile have been achieved because getting independent was the main reason for me to go into exile. Now that we are free, I feel that it is good that I went to fight for freedom. It shows that we have achieved the objectives and aims of the struggle.*

On her hopes for the future MB stated that *I feel proud because what we wanted has been achieved – to liberate the country and we are now independent. I feel that we have achieved our goal but it will take time before all our hopes are achieved, as we wanted them to be.*

All respondents showed their appreciation that at least they were able to contribute to the fight aimed at changing the country for the better, which was the aim of the liberation struggle.

3.3.3.2 Women's usual lives today as compared to their future hopes

Nevertheless, the respondents had other dreams that they wanted realized, but which have not been the case. One of the respondents indicated that due to personal disability she is not able to do everything that she thought she would do. The majority of the respondents reported that they had hopes to get educated or further their studies. They wanted to make making a difference in their communities when they came back and impress the others who did not go into exile. This has however proved to be a very difficult task to accomplish.

The majority of the respondents said they did not get the opportunity to further their studies. PP reported disappointingly that *the only hope that I had which was not achieved was that since I was already a teacher before going into exile, my hope was not to teach again while in exile but to go and study further. I wanted to come back home holding a bachelor's degree. However, this did not turn out the way I expected it. So today, I found myself back home with the same qualifications that I went into exile with, so I did not achieve what I had expected before but I have to accept that.*

Two of the respondents stated that they were offered training opportunities to study further. Unfortunately, they were pregnant and the scholarships were cancelled due to pregnancy. Only one of the respondents managed to upgrade her studies but stayed behind when others went home for independence to complete her studies. Another one indicated that she dropped her studies because she wanted to accompany her children home since they were very young.

It was reported that the only training that was compulsory for all of them was military training and chances to go and study in a field of your choice was very slim. One respondent, showing her discouragement by her current situation disappointingly, with sadness in her voice said *when we came back home I struggled to get a job. I can say that I have wasted my time in exile and my suffering (as a PLAN fighter) went in vain. Because when we came back only some people were selected for employment. I went to the offices everyday to register but I was always told to wait. I was wondering why those of us who were fighting while in exile had to struggle for a job while the people who were studying without suffering were easily recruited and not those who suffered.*

Thus, these women's personal dreams and hopes for going into exile have not satisfactorily been achieved as some showed their regrets.

The moment of coming back home was described by women with mixed feelings among which uncertainty predominated, although the end of war meant military triumph that would make their dreams come true. However, at this moment they lost their weapons, they were separated from their comrades, men and women alike.

They had to look for their families/relatives and try to set up a routine of self-sufficiency, even though for years they had not known working for a salary. There was no longer a superior order telling them what to do or calling them to go and get their food supply. Subsistence was not guaranteed and neither work but they had to compete on the job market, which is full of unfamiliar requirements although many lacked the educational attainment needed to compete successfully.

As a result the majority of the female 'ex-combatants' were employed in lowly paid jobs such as cleaning services. Nevertheless, some had been integrated into other departments such as the Special Field Force Branch in the Police. Reunion with families was for some difficult due to feelings of untrustworthy, as they had to build relationships amid feelings of guilt and resentment. Thus, the length and intensity of the liberation struggle affected men and women alike, but for women the losses are innumerable and incalculable, as the risks and pressures that this struggle imposed abruptly and radically changed these women's lives irreversibly forever.

3.3.4 Summary

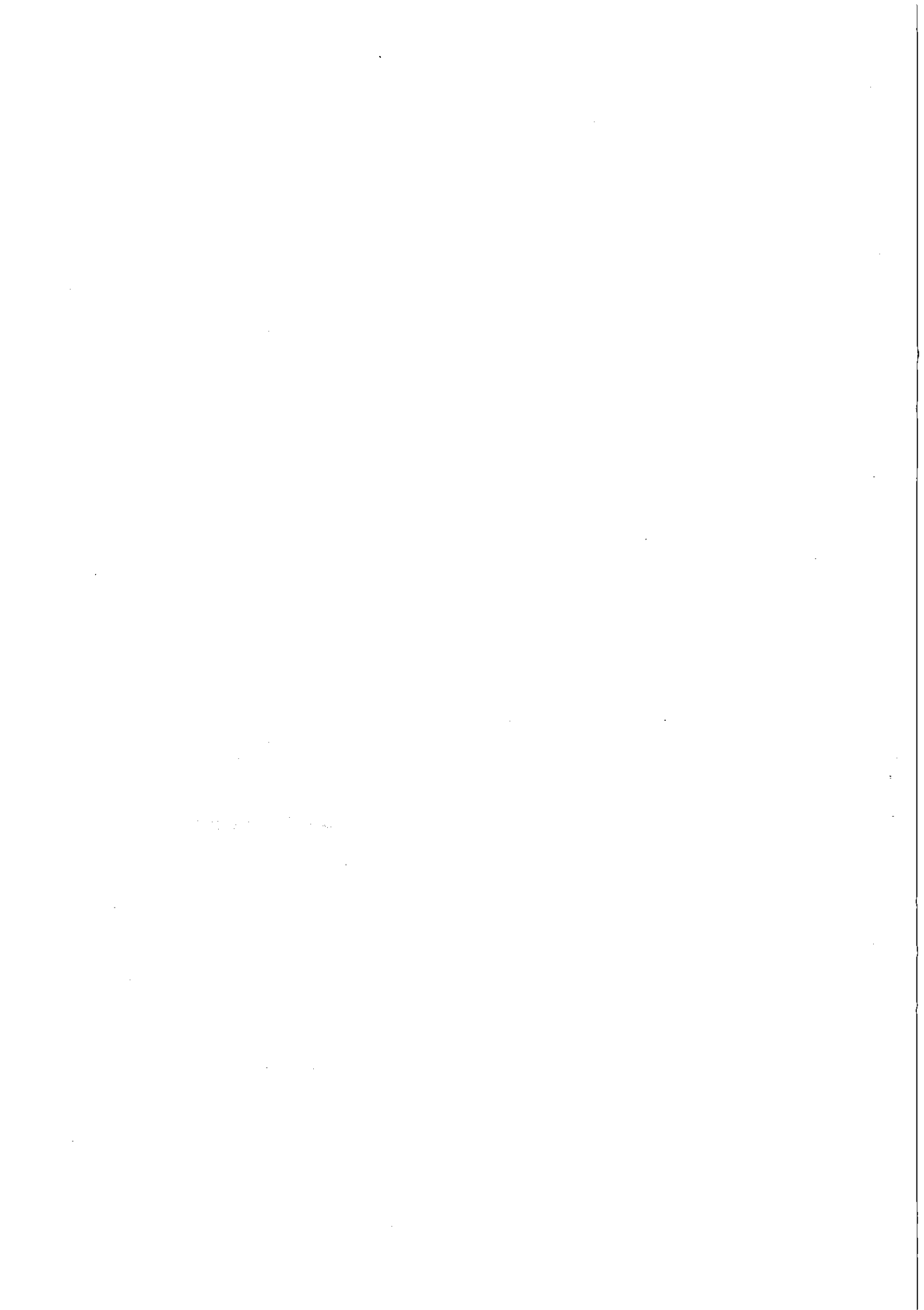
The research findings support evidence from the literature that women were involved in both their traditionally female ascribed roles as well as male traditional roles. The fact that women were involved in actual combat is however contrary to what the literature shows in other Southern African countries where women were not allowed to participate in actual combat but were restricted to their usual socially expected supportive roles.

Their involvement in traditional male roles combined with their socially ascribed roles shows that women were involved in double burden. For women to defeat the cultural view of the distinction between the gendered socially/traditionally ascribed roles, they have to prove and show men that they are equally capable of doing what they are traditionally denied to do.

Women had to put in extra efforts in carrying out these activities to prevent being labelled as failures. This was repeatedly reported by the respondents that *when we are given tasks normally done by men we always try our best and do it perfectly even better than men will do.*

Women's combination of productive, reproductive and community work put them under enormous performance pressure.

There were however, silences on the issue of sexuality and sexual violence and this might be attributed to the fact that the time the researcher spent with the respondents was very short to make them feel comfortable to talk about this sensitive issue. However, during the interviews, the researcher observed through some statements and expressions made that there might have been cases of sexual violence. These are issues that the researcher will follow up with the project, as the same respondents will still be part of the project.



CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter draws on conclusions from the research on women's involvement in traditionally ascribed male and female roles while in exile. It also gives some highlights on the current situation of women's involvement in decision-making roles in an independent Namibia and gives some recommendations.

4.1 Conclusions

Women joined the liberation struggle, not through their experiences as women, but because of their experience as part of the oppressed society. Thus, they joined the liberation struggle to search for an alternative, which could recognize their roles and participation on an equal basis with men, as oppressed people. However, the findings show that although their participation was on an equal basis with that of men, their post-independent roles show the contrary.

4.1.1 Reproductive roles

Since reproductive roles are traditionally ascribed female roles extending women's biological role of reproduction. Women carried out all activities related to human reproduction, maintenance, caring and nurturing. In addition, all domestic related chores were seen as fit for women. They guaranteed the reproduction of the future generation to keep the struggle going.

While performing their essential female roles, which mirror the social construction of gender, women also participated in professional responsibilities. This is an indication of how socially constructed gender identities can be utilised to suit and fit military prerogatives.

4.1.2 Productive Roles

Women were drawn into the traditional male roles while at the same time retaining their traditional women ascribed roles. This resulted in increasing their work burden while lessening those of men. However, although the findings indicate that there were clear changes in gender roles, yet these changes were just extensions of women's traditional roles rather than real and permanent transformation that one can observe in Namibia today. Thus, women's involvement in productive roles during the struggle did not remove the sexual division of labour but re-enforced it, revealing the gendered ideology, which combined women's roles with conventional female roles.

Women had been equal to men during the struggle fighting side by side. However, they now have to conform to the post-struggle scenario where their primary identity is female and therefore secondary to that of men, reassessing the gender identity that was subsumed during the struggle.

4.1.3 Community work

It is evident that during the time of the struggle, at the most decisive moment in the winning of political independence women took up arms alongside men. Consequently, women gave great proof of their revolutionary spirit and combat readiness in defending their territory for peace and process. They did this for the benefit of both their temporarily established fragile communities in the camps as well for the betterment of their own future and country in large.

4.1.4 Future Hopes - Career, representation and recognition

The findings reveal that women had future hopes during the struggle regarding their career opportunity, representation and recognition in an independent Namibia. However, this has disappointingly, not been the case as many respondents have shown unsatisfactorily disbelief and mixed feelings with their

current life as far as their career, representation and recognition of their role in the struggle is concerned.

4.1.5 Summary

In conclusion, the findings supports Molyneux (1981) argument that socialist states' policies prioritized policies geared towards economic development, rapid social change and transformation of the colonial order. This is achieved by dismantling and reforming social relations, ideological, legal and political structures. Thus, women's emancipation is not considered essential.

It is however unfair and incorrect to say that there have been no changes in post-colonial Namibia as far as the women's status is concerned, although this is not to the fully satisfaction of the Namibian women's wishes. Nevertheless, women's contribution to the struggle has created a heightened awareness of women issues. This has contributed to a national debate on women's representation at all levels of decision-making positions. Consequently, this created a platform for women to pursue their issues of concern into the national agenda.

Some official support and recognition by the state has helped in gradually improving the status of women in Namibia today. Nevertheless, this did not solve the more fundamental ideological issues of women's subordination. Thus, the end of the liberation struggle for Namibia's independence meant the beginning of another long struggle for women's liberation from the oppressive patriarchal values.

The ideology of a patriarchal, hierarchically structured society embedded in sexual division of labour oppresses women while promoting male domination of women. Hence, regarding women as second-class citizens who should play a

secondary role to that of men. This is evident in the next section that show the deficient participation of women in decision making positions in post - independent Namibia.

4.2 Roles of women in post-independent Namibia

In the preceding chapter, the study has detailed the activities that women were involved in while in exile. It is evident that women's important contribution towards the struggle for independence is incredible and cannot be ignored without recognition. This chapter therefore seeks to provide information on women in management positions in the major institutions of the country, as a reflection of how much of women's contribution is rewarded today. The data is drawn from the government institutions and state owned enterprises.

4.2.1 Women in Politics

The table underneath presents the number of women in the highest decision making bodies of the country.

Table 2: Women in Cabinet, Parliament, Regional and Local Council

Government Body	Women	Men	Total
National Assembly	18 (23 %)	60 (77 %)	78
National Council	2 (8 %)	24 (92 %)	26
Total Members of Parliament	20 (19 %)	84 (81 %)	104
Members of Cabinet (Ministers)	3 (15%)	17 (85 %)	20
Regional Governors	2 (15 %)	11 (85 %)	13
Regional Councillors	6 (6 %)	96 (94 %)	102
Local Councillors	135 (44 %)	169 (56 %)	304

Source: Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare (MWACW), 2003.

The above table reveals that women are only having a bigger share in the local council. This can be attributed to the fact that Affirmative Action that was introduced in the first two elections, thereby culminating in the current status of

women in local government. Meanwhile in the regional council where affirmative action was not applied there are few women. In the remaining categories, women's positions mainly depend on the mercy of their political parties to put them on the list. Although women activists and organizations have recommended the zebra list system, political parties are too reluctant to put women candidates on their lists.

Thus, Namibia being a patriarchal society, the patriarchal male domination attitudes plays a major role in the extent that women participate in decision-making positions.

4.2.2 Women in the public service

The next table shows women in management positions in the public service.

Table 3: Number and positions of women in the Public Service

Position	Women	Men	Total
Head of Public Service	0 (0%)	1	1
Deputy Head of Public Service	0 (0%)	1	1
Permanent Secretary	4 (17%)	19(83%)	23
Deputy Permanent Secretary	2 (8%)	23(92%)	25
Under - Secretary	6 (24%)	19(76%)	25
Directors	23 (20%)	91(80%)	114
Deputy-directors	43 (32%)	90(68%)	133
Ambassadors/ High Commissioners	4(19%)	17(81%)	21

Source: MWACW, 2003.

As table 3 indicates, likewise the number of women public servants in management positions is very low. Although the composition of women is over 50% of the public servants (Public Service Commission, 2001), they are more concentrated at the bottom of the hierarchy.

4.2.3 Women in the Parastatals (State owned enterprises)

Table4: Women in decision making positions in major parastatals

Parastatal	Women	Men	Total
National Housing Enterprise (NHE)	3 (16%)	15 (84%)	18
TransNamib Holding Ltd	3 (5%)	53 (95%)	56
Namwater	16 (18%)	71 (82%)	87
Windhoek Municipality	15 (13.5%)	96 (86.5%)	111
Namibia Development Corporation (NDC)	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	6
Namdeb (only one headed by a woman)	20 (12%)	149 (88%)	169
Telecom Namibia	32 (18%)	148 (82%)	180
Nampower	13 (23.6%)	42 (76.4%)	55
New Era	3 (37.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8
University of Namibia	14 (19%)	58 (81%)	72
Nampost	7(28%)	18 (72%)	25
Government Institution Pension Fund	6(46%)	7 (54%)	13

Source: MWAC W, 2003.

The situation for women gets worse as one move away from the public service into the parastatals and the private sectors, which are highly paid than public servants. This also indicates that as you go up with the hierarchy the number of women decreases. The fact that there are more women students in the institutions of high learning in the country shows that women are equally educated in Namibia today to compete with their male counterparts. However, due to the stereotypical attitudes of society towards women, men are dominant in the major decision making bodies.

4.2.4 Women in the armed forces

This section shows the percentage of women in the decision-making positions in the Police and the Defence Force as it is vital to see at which extent women are involved in such activities and the positions they occupy.

Table 5: Women in management positions in the Police

Position	Women	Men	Total
Inspector General	0	1	1
Deputy - Inspector General	0	1	1
Commissioners	0	7	7
Deputy - Commissioners	1 (4%)	25 (96%)	26
Chief Inspectors	5 (6.5)	72 (93.5%)	77
Inspectors	18 (10%)	165 (90%)	183
Warrant Officer (Station Commanders)	26 (13%)	168 (87%)	194
Sergeant (Shift Commanders)	119 (23%)	398 (77%)	517

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Personnel Office, 2003.

Table 6: Women in management positions in the NDF

Position	Women	Men	Total
General	0	1	1
Lt. General	0	1	1
Major General	0	1	1
Brigade	0	6	6
Colonel	0	11	11
Lt. Colonel	1 (1.7 %)	60 (98.3%)	61
Major	5 (4%)	112 (96%)	117

Source: Ministry of Defence Personnel Office, 2003.

Women are, similarly, located at the bottom of the heap in the armed forces. This confirms Molyneux's (1985) observation that although women are used during war as fighters, when the war is over they are expected to switch back to their normality as females and forget about fighting no matter how good they were at the battlefield. This is primarily why women are very lowly represented in the high levels of the hierarchy, as shown above.

The majority of the women PLAN fighters are now concentrated in the cleaning services as indicated by one respondent that *although I was a PLAN fighter all my years in exile (1978-1989), I remained without a job for a long period when we came back home in 1989. I only managed to get a job in 2001 (after 12 years of suffering) as a cleaner in the Namibian Defence Force Base. I accepted the job but was surprised that I now have to clean in my colleagues' base whom I used to fight side by side with. I have*

worked for about two years now but the money is so little it hardly makes a difference in someone's life. I really feel that I have wasted my time when I see my peers I used to play with during childhood who are now teachers and nurses. (DW)

The fact that women are lowly represented at all levels of decision making despite their equal contribution to the struggle as their male counterparts raises issues of concern. Thus, the situation needs to be righted. However, this cannot be done without proper and strict measures in place.

4.3 Recommendations

The government of the Republic of Namibia has put in place instruments geared towards closing the gender gap in society, such as the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act (Act 29 of 1998). Its aim is, among others, "to ensure equal opportunities in employment and to redress through affirmative action plans the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by persons in designated groups (i.e. racially disadvantaged persons, women and people with disability) arising from past discriminatory laws and practices" (Namibia Institute for Democracy, 2000: 13). In addition, the government established the Employment Equity Commission for the effective implementation and proper monitoring of the Act.

- ⇒ This research recommends that for proper monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Affirmative Action Act, stringent measures should be put in place to punish or reward offender or compliers to the Affirmative Action Act.

There is currently a National Gender Policy and Plan of Action (1998-2002) in place (Department of Women Affairs, 1997). These documents seek to close the

gap created by socio-economic, political and cultural inequalities that exist in the society. Its aim is to attain gender equality in Namibia at all spheres of life. However, experience has shown that the policy is not fully adhered to by all relevant stakeholders.

⇒ This study recommends that the National Gender Policy be enacted to become a legally bound instrument. All stakeholders should put proper and stringent measures in place to ensure its effective implementation. Similarly, a monitoring body should be put in place to ensure that the process is effectively implemented.

The government also signed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Declaration. All signatory states legally agreed and confirmed to reach a minimum of at least 30% of women representation at all levels of decision making by the year 2005 (SADC Gender Unit, 1997).

⇒ Thus with only one year left to attain this minimum target this research recommends that the provision of this declaration be adhered to, especially with the upcoming national elections in 2004. This provision should be taken into consideration during the elections to increase the proportion of women seeking for elective posts.

⇒ The research therefore recommends that the Affirmative Action provision, which was applied in the 1992 Local Authority Council Elections, be implemented in the upcoming elections for Local, Regional and Parliamentary Elections. Thus, political parties should be requested to forward party lists with alternating male and female candidates (zebra list system) which will give women a better chance of gaining positions in the

high decision-making levels and play an important role in post-independent Namibia.

Equality between men and women will only be realized when women's suffering both under colonialism and during the liberation struggle is fully recognized.

⇒ Therefore, women should be accorded full and equal rights to that of men in all aspects of life as guaranteed to them by the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia.

⇒ Lastly, this study recommends that further research be done in areas, which this document did not cover such as issues of sexuality and sexual violence.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions Guide

In most cases the narrator was just asked the first questions and she narrated her life history. The researcher followed up with questions. Some questions were from this list while others were following up on what the narrator was saying. So these questions were not entirely followed in sequence as prepared.

1. Can you tell me about your life history, from the time when you were born, when you went into exile, your life in exile - what you were doing until the time you came back up to today?
2. When, where and how did you hear about the liberation struggle?
3. When and how old were you when you left the country to go into exile?
4. Why did you decide to join the struggle? What motivated you to join?
5. What motivated you to go into exile?
6. How did you go into exile? Describe your journey into exile? With whom did you go?
7. How long did it take you?
8. After joining the struggle what activities were you involved in?
9. What activities were other women involved in while in exile, in the camps?
10. What were the similarities in these activities to what you would normally do in Namibia before the struggle?
11. What were the differences in these activities to what you would normally do in Namibia before the struggle?
12. When you look back at the time of the struggle and your life today, do you think that your hopes for the future during the struggles have been achieved?
13. What job are you doing currently?

