



A Research Paper presented by:

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(Ghana)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Human Rights, Gender and Conflict Studies

(SJP)

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Dedication

I dedicate this research work to my family, especially my mother, who could not continue her formal education after the death of her father; and yet sacrificed her resources to put me through formal education.

List of Acronyms

WIPNET.....	Women in Peace building Network
NCCE.....	National Commission for Civil Education
FERFAP.....	Federation of African Women’s Peace Network
NWC.....	National Women Coalition
CPA.....	Comprehensive Peace Agreement.
NSCC.....	New Sudan Council of Churches
SLWMP.....	Sierra Leone Women Movement for Peace
WPM-Tamale	Women in Peace building Movement
WANEP.....	West Africa Network for Peace building
MARWOPNET...	Mano River Women’s Peace Network

Acknowledgement.

The accomplishment of this work is a consequence of concerted efforts of individuals and institutions; it is thus appropriate to recognize the role played by all who contributed to the success of this work. First, I thank God Almighty; the ONLY repository of knowledge and wisdom for the gift of life and good health throughout my studies.

I thank my supervisor, Dubravka Zarkov for the kind of guidance I received throughout this research. You have indeed challenged me to critically reflect beyond assumed norms as far as this topic is concerned. Your knowledge and experience in the topic have really impacted me throughout the research. Also, I express my sincere gratitude to Nahda Shehada (my reader), for her constructive criticism which helped to finetune the structure of the research.

To Chandradath Madho (PhD candidate), I acknowledge you for your critical reflection through my research proposal and offering suggestion. I say thanks to you. I equally thank my brother and friend Abukari Kwame (University of Tromso, Norway) for reading through my interview transcripts and offering useful suggestions. Also, to my fieldwork assistant Abdul-Majeed Sulemana (University for Professional studies, Accra, Ghana) for his unflinching support during my fieldwork. May God richly bless you!

I'm grateful also to Fr.Thaddeus Kuusah (Northern Regional Executive Secretary), National Peace Council for the rich information I got from you and for directing me to potential participants for my research. Hajia Adishetu (General Secretary), WPM-Tamale, you deserve commendation for providing me with audio-visual data of the Movement's activities and programs. Your support has been so much valuable to the research.

I acknowledge and thank equally the various institutions: Catholic Diocese of Yendi, NCCE-Yendi, the Regional Peace Council, Women in Peace building Movement-Tamale and all my research participants, especially the female Chiefs for accepting to be part of this research.

Finally, I thank also Gladys Sayibu for your unwavering support and my family, especially my parents, though not schooled, yet sacrificed and committed all resources in my formal education. I'm indebted to you forever.

Abstract

This study explores the participation of women in conflict and conflict resolution of a protracted Chieftaincy crisis in a male-dominated cultural setting of Dagbon in Northern Ghana. In understanding the major challenges women encounter in the conflict resolution process, it explores first, what the women have or have not done in the conflict and the resolution of the crisis to bring to light the conditions under which the women engage in the peace process. Second, it looks at how the idea of femininity (and sometimes masculinity) impact on women's possibilities to engage in the peace process. The study reveals issues of gender imbalances in the official peace process as it is limited to only men. The patriarchal notions of motherhood and domestic femininity hinders women's participation in crucial issues including the peace process. However, women struggled to engage in the peace process by invoking ideas of strength, as well as vulnerability and victimhood through the images of motherhood to subvert these patriarchal barriers in the peace processes of the chieftaincy crisis and create space for their involvement. The study concludes that believing in the power of motherhood does not mean agreeing with all patriarchal norms that perpetuate structural violence against women and bar them from participating in public matters. The women called on men to tone down their chauvinistic tendencies to make changes in the traditional set-ups. This will create, they believed, other avenues to be explored and provide for fresh ideas to be utilized in the on-going peace process of the conflict, and in Ghana in general, for a sustainable peace and development.

Relevance to Development Studies

There is no doubt that conflict retards development of society and it takes effective interventions and mechanisms to realize sustainable peace to guarantee development. One way of achieving this is to have the requisite knowledge of how gender norms and relations are reconfigured and reconstructed in conflict times. This will enhance better our search for realistic strategies to resolve conflicts. This study brings to light the vacuum created in Ghana in terms of policies and interventions by Government, CSOs, NGOs as far gender relations in overcoming conflict are concern. Consequently, it provides platform for the views of the populace to be incorporated into conflict resolution mechanisms to better enhance effective national policies and interventions for sustainable peace and development.

Keywords:

Chieftaincy crises, Conflict, Peace process, Peace negotiation, Motherhood, Gender Ambivalence, Femininity/Masculinity, Women and Peace hypothesis, Patriarchy, Northern Ghana, Dagbon, Abudu and Andani family, Emotional labour, Gender Essentialism.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Ghana is considered the most peaceful country in sub-Saharan Africa because of its profound beliefs in the rule of law and democratic values, yet the ubiquitous cycle of violent conflicts that have erupted in recent times has tarnished this reputation. The conflicts - which often stem from disagreement over resources (land), party-politics, ethnic discrimination, and chieftaincy titles - have left different regions in Ghana with untold hardship and lack of development, while efforts by governments, civil society organizations and interest groups to resolve them have been unsuccessful.

Chieftaincy disputes are noted to be a major source of violent conflicts, and Dagbon Chieftaincy crisis and its failed resolution processes in Northern Ghana have been among the most discussed in the country because of its length and violence. The crisis, since 19th century, has stemmed from rivalry over legitimate chieftaincy position between two royal clans: the Abudu and Andani in Dagbon Traditional capital Yendi in Northern Ghana (Albert,2008:51; Ahorsu and Gebe, 2011:7-8).

The crisis is “characterized by wanton destruction of life and property, development reversals, [and] serious abuse of human rights” (Ahorsu and Gebe, 2011:7-8). According Abdul Karim Issifu, the crisis revealed a surge in human rights abuse to an extent that some security personnel who were deployed to maintain law and order were alleged to have engaged in sexual exploitation of women and indiscriminate arrest and unlawful detention of people (Issifu,2015:33). The conflict also had heavy toll on families as

many marriages came to an abrupt end because the partners belonged to opposing clans. That compelled many, especially women and the youth, to migrate to the towns and cities to seek refuge and livelihood, exposing them to further hardships and crimes that characterize city lives such as child labour and trafficking, prostitution, domestic servitude and other forms of human rights abuse (Issifu,2015:34; Ahorsu and Gebe,2011:7-8). The parties in the crisis and their sympathizers alike tend to be hostile and sceptical and lost confidence in one another, and that undermined social bonds that hitherto bound them together (Issifu,2015:34).

There have been several interventions since independence by successive governments, religious bodies and civil society organizations to resolve the crisis, yet the conflict remains protracted. The Mate Committee of 1966-69; the Ollenu Committee of 1972-78, the Wuaku Commission of Enquiry of 2002 and the Committee of Eminent Chiefs of 2003 were governments attempts to restore peace in the area (Tonah, 2012). Also, the Catholic Diocese of Yendi Women in Peace program, National Commission of Civic Education (NCCE), Women in Peace building Movement- Tamale, the Regional Peace Council and West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP-Ghana), were efforts by religious and interest groups to complement the government intervention strategies in the peace processes.

Even though the Dagbon Chieftaincy institution has chieftaincy titles for women (Odotei, 2006), these women Chiefs are, however, exempted from major critical issues. The patriarchal assumption attached to femininity hin-

der their involvement in most crucial issues including the resolution of the chieftaincy crisis in the area.

1.1. Statement of the research problem

This research will focus on participation of women from two specific kinships in chieftaincy conflict and conflict resolution in Yendi, a capital town of the Dagbon kingdom, in northern Ghana. Very little is known about participation of women either in the conflict or in contribution to its peaceful resolution. I am interested to understand first, whether women are involved; second, if they are, how and if not, why not when in other parts of the world women engage in resolving many local and national level conflicts. I also investigate what notions and practices of femininity undermine or support women's involvements.

1.2. Contextual Background of the Study

1.2.1 The Brief history of the Chieftaincy conflict

The historic chieftaincy crisis in Dagbon, in the Northern part of Ghana “involves members of two families - the Abudu and Andani - both claiming ownership to the chieftaincy title” (Awedoba_2009; Tsikata and Seini 2004 as cited in Tonah, 2012:6-7). The recent crisis dates back several decades, but the most documented ones are linked to the events in 1948: the death of Ya Na Mahama II from the Andani family. As customs demand the son was to succeed, but instead Ya Na Mahama III from the Abudu family became the king of Dagbon (Tonah, 2012:6-7). To avoid what the kingdom is facing presently, a rotational system was formed among the two royal families with

respect to the chieftaincy position. This means that when a chief is selected from one family, the death of the incumbent will give reason to the other family to produce the paramount chief to fill the vacant chieftaincy position. But for several years the Andani family felt they have been side-lined in the rotational system and this brought antagonistic relationship between the two families until the encounter between them led to the death of Ya Na Yakubu II (Staniland 1975; Anamzoya 2004 as cited in Tonah, 2012:6-7). The effects of the dispute in Yendi, and other major towns of the kingdom (Savulugu, Karaga, Tamale, and Kumbungu) and the nation as a whole have been tremendous, and finding way(s) to resolve the dispute has been the concern of the government and other stakeholders as well as individuals in Ghana. The use of state's resources intended for development is diverted into security to maintain peace. Correspondingly, investors are not attracted to Dagbon because of the intermittent violent nature of the conflict, and that has negatively impacted revenue generation and growth. The crisis has serious implications on marriages and families of people living in and around Yendi and has gravely affected social capital. This is because the disputants, by virtue of their position as royals of the kingdom, have created some sort of rivalry system among individuals in all domains of life. Apart from the broken marriages and relationships and the total impact of the conflict on development, the risk of losing business partners and customers as vendors in food business seem to affect many people. The suspicion of being poisoned at the restaurants in support of a faction in the dispute has negatively affected the food industry in Yendi.

Several attempts by successive governments to resolve the crisis proved futile. For instance, the Nkrumah government of 1957–66 tried restoring the rotational method of succession and so was the Mate Kole Committee of the National Liberation Council government of 1966–69 (Ahorsu and Gebe 2011; Ladouceur 1972; Olawale 2006 as cited in Tonah, 2012:6-7). Similarly, the Ollenu Committee of Acheampong's government of 1972–78 also attempted to ensure the rotational system, but like previous attempts, failed as parties were not ready to co-operate (Anamzoya 2004; Mahama 2009 as cited in Tonah, 2012:6-7).

The Wuaku Commission of Enquiry was also an effort by then Kufour government to investigate the crisis that erupted on the 25 to 27 March, 2002 which led to the death of the paramount chief of Dagbon Ya Na Yakubu Andani II. The task of the commission, among other things, was to investigate and make the necessary recommendation for resolving the deadly encounter between the two families. The Commission reported that the conflict was a result of unresolved past misunderstanding of the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis; the non-performance of the funeral rites of Ya Na Abdulai IV who died since 1974 by the Abudu family as custom demand; and the denial to his son, Mahammadu Abdulai -Bolin La Na (heir apparent) to become the paramount chief by the rivalry Andani family. (Tonah, 2012:9).

The most recent government attempts to settle the disputes was the Committee of four Eminent Chiefs led by the paramount chief of the Ashanti kingdom, Asantehene, set up by the Kufour government in 2003 to find a lasting solution to the Dagbon dispute. The Committee, upon series of deliberations and negotiations with the feuding factions came out with a "Roadmap to

Peace” (Tonah, 2012:10) in 2006. Contained in the blueprint, as Tonah’s writes were suggestions for “the burial of the late Ya Na Andani II; the installation of the regent of the late king; the performance of the funeral rites of both of Ya Na Mahamadu Abdulai IV and Ya Na Yakubu Andani II respectively; and finally, the selection and enskinment of a new Ya Na for Dagbon” (Tonah, 2012:10). After signing the peace accord by the two families, the objective of the committee is yet to be fully achieved due to disagreement among the two parties (Tonah, 2012:10).

It is noteworthy to also state that Dagbon has chieftaincy positions customarily reserved for the daughters of the Ya Na. According to Irene Odotei (2006: 81-84) the communities such as Gundogu, Kpatuya and Kulogu are ruled by the daughters of the royal families. This implies that the impact of the conflict would have serious consequences on the wider society. Additionally, the inclusion of these women chiefs at the negotiation table may have positive influence on the peace processes because of the respect attached to motherhood as a symbol of peace which privileges them to plea to aggrieved parties in peace negotiation (El-Bushra, 2007:140). Moreover, there have not been local initiatives in finding lasting solution to the crisis. The Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs that has the statutory mandate to ensure mutual coexistence among traditional authority may have a result that the local population thinks of peace imposed by the government.

It was after the 2002 encounter between the two disputants that the Catholic Diocese of Yendi and the National Commission for Civic Education

(NCCE), and other interest groups started to organize programs for women which targeted among other things inter-religious dialogue, child labour and conflict management and resolution. In view of this, this study aims at examining the influence of gender in the peace negotiation process of the chieftaincy crisis. The position of Maoz “that women show high propensity for peace and compromise and are less likely to support the use of violence as compare to men” (2009:519-520) will be explored further.

1.2.2 Women in Governance and Political Systems in Ghanaian Society

The governance and political structures of the Ghanaian society, like most societies in sub-Saharan-Africa, have women playing different but complementary tasks to men. The active involvement of women within institution of the family, politics and the economy has been an integral part of the Ghanaian society since pre-colonial times. And even though social change has influenced some aspects of these practices, women’s contribution in these institutions in contemporary times stands non-negotiable (Oppong, 1973).

At the family level, women have duties and responsibilities towards siblings. They assist siblings economically and contribute materially during ceremonies such as marriage, outdooring and funerals. In the patrilineal societies, such as those in Northern Ghana, where Dagbon kingdom (under scrutiny in this research) is situated, women rarely play formal leadership roles in the family, but they do have a say in matters concerning the family. Conversely, the matrilineal societies in the Southern part of the country, especially the Akan ethnic groups, the “women hold leadership positions and

exercise authority equivalent to that of men” (Sudarkasa, 1986:95). Opong’s (1973) study on the status of women within social structures in Dagbon concludes that within the domestic sphere, the mother of the landlord or the first wife (within polygamous system; called the *Mmapaani* and *Walgira* respectively), is the leader of the womenfolk. In a chief’s household, they act as hostess to visiting strangers, and also in charge of the well-being of all the children in the husband’s absence. Similarly, women preside over the preparation of meals and distribution of food supplies and settles disputes among the women. The *Magazia* is the name used for female leadership role and responsibilities among the women in the community (Interview, Magazia Hajia Folo, 15th July, 2016)

Even though there are not many studies on the position of women in contemporary chieftaincy, governance and political systems in Ghanaian society, some existing research offers interesting insights. The political systems of most Ghanaian communities recognize female leadership, and therefore Queen Mothers as part of the institution of chieftaincy are dully recognized as chiefs in their respective communities (Stoeltje, 1997:52). A notably cases are recorded among some communities in Dagbon where women chiefs represent their people both within and outside their communities, as in Gundogu, Kpatuya and Kulogu which are headed by female chiefs (Boafo-Arthur, 2003:135-136; Odotei, 2006: 81-84).

But more pronounced in terms of female leadership is the institution of chieftaincy in the matrilineal societies of southern Ghana, especially among the Ashanti Kingdom. Unlike patrilineal groups in the North - where tradi-

tion defines limited role of female leadership - the practice of female leadership (the Queen Mother) in the Ashanti kingdom forms an integral part of political systems (Stoeltje, 1997:52). As part of her religious duties the Queen Mother leads in the celebrations of festivals and funerals, and occasional performance of libation to the ancestors for protection and fertility of the land. Also, she organises the women in her area for communal activities such as clean-up and provision of free labour during infrastructural development of the area.

The idea of motherhood that resonates with the influence of women in matrilineal societies is the fundamental source of authority of the Queen Mother (Stoeltje, 1997). As ‘the mother for all in the kingdom’, the Queen Mother is seen as ‘the fountain of knowledge’ and repository of history of the kingdom. As such, she provides advice and educates the chief on the customs and tradition of the kingdom. More importantly, she has the moral prerogative to select the paramount chief for the consideration of the council of elders when the chair becomes vacant in the event of death or destoolment of the chief (Stoeltje, 1997:58). One of the most important roles played by the Queen Mother is her judiciary position in the kingdom. She has a court where she settles cases ranging from divorce, child abuse and domestic violence among others, and has the authority to fine perpetrators in court cases (Stoeltje, 1997:56; Stoeltje, 1998:177).

In the case of Dagbon, Boafo-Arthur (2003) and Odotei (2006) reveal that the women chiefs have authority in their own rights, and the “Gundogu [chieftaincy title] is said to be the woman’s equivalent to the Ya Na”

(Odotei, 2006:81-84) and the highest chieftaincy title in the kingdom. They settle disputes which range from land use, livestock and water use among their people. They equally make by-laws for their communities. She provides also spiritual guidance to the Ya-Na and the whole Dagbon Kingdom (Interview with the Gundogu Chief, 10th July, 2016). But their roles with respect to the wider political issues are limited and strictly defined by culture. In terms of the economy, the majority of women in Dagbon are in the informal sector. In Haug's findings, a total of 90.9% labour force of the informal sector is represented by women (2014:1). Gender division of labour is prominent in subsistence communities; men are the primary producers of staple food such as yam, cassava and cocoyam, while women complement with vegetables. Women also engage in art and craft such as *kente* (local cloth) production, weaving baskets, Shea-butter production, fish mongering, and petty trading as well as food vending.

1.2.3. Women in Conflict resolution

The role women play in conflict management, resolution and prevention have received much attention in this current dispensation. This has been as a result of the success chalked through peace campaigns by women's organizations in war-torn countries such as Liberia, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and others. This gender breakthrough in conflict resolution is partly due to the persistent commitment of civil society organizations, NGOs and their international partners to help address the gender gap in conflict management and prevention. For instance, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 and the October 2000 historic Resolution 1325 passed by

the United Nations Security Council are seen as the most important commitment by international community to integrate gender perspectives in decision-making at all levels regarding issues affecting society (Ajodo-Adebanjoko,2013:3). Even though the UN is accused of paying lip service to women's organisation, and UN itself does not include women in peace negotiations it sponsors, the Council stresses the need for full involvement and impact of women at all levels of conflict resolution in the society. It further argues that, "recognizing the full participation of women in peace processes can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security" (Maoz, 2009:521; Hunt and Posa, 2001:39).

Notwithstanding these transformations, women in many parts of the world including Africa are very active in conflict preventions, and yet are not recognized with this kind of role, nor mainstreamed into the geo-political spheres of peace and conflict resolution. This according to El-Bushra, is partly due to the fact that, "[w]omen's peace initiatives often tend to be ignored by mainstreamed actors in conflict resolution, especially in the area of negotiation" (2007:139). As part of this bias is the gendered relation of power, practices and notion of femininity that the women's place is the home, which tend to marginalise and make their involvement in conflict management and resolution both invisible and insignificant (Amadiume, 1987; Oppong, 1973; Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013). However, recent developments in Africa and other parts of the globe have attested to the active involvement of women in matters of peace and conflict resolution in their respective countries. For instance, the Federation of African Women's Peace Network (FERFAP) was an umbrella organisation encompassing women

peace movements in Africa which aim among other things to create a platform for regional peace movements to get involved in decision-making at all level of conflict management and resolution. The FERFAP sought to foster the culture of peace through sensitization and research projects in war-torn zones.

At the regional level, the contribution of women's peace movements to conflict resolution in their respective countries cannot be overemphasised. The National Women Coalition (NWC) of 1992 in South Africa which defied ethnic, racial and political boundaries played a crucial role in the fight against Apartheid system through non-violent activities, mass protest and peace marches. NWC was committed to the sustenance of the Peace Accord of 1991 in post-Apartheid era which paved the way for the promulgation of the country's constitution and the Land Bill Rights in 1999. (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013:8).

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2003 by the warring factions during the Liberia civil war was also influenced by the country's Women Peace Movements such as WIPNET- Women in Peace building Network (Gbowee, 2009:51). The leadership of these movements refused to be restrained by patriarchal values and the dehumanising conditions women and children faced such as rape and killing and total destruction of families, and therefore, decided to mobilise in the capital Monrovia and other regions to engage in active campaign to say no to Liberia's 14-year civil war. Undoubtedly, the accounts of the country's civil war cannot be complete without the mention of the efforts exhibited by the women to compel leaders of

the combatants - Charles Taylor and the rebel leaders Sekou Conneh - to ratify the CPA in Ghana in 2003 to formally end the war.

On similar mission, the conflict that ensued between Eritrea and Ethiopia had to find rest because of the complementary assiduous effort of collaborative women's groups from both countries in mass protests for peace over the border contention between the two countries (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013:8; Porter, 2003: 260). In the same vein, Sudan, Burundi, Sierra Leone, among other countries, had coalitions of women groups in the resolution of conflicts in these areas (Hunt and Posa, 2001:41; El-Bushra,2007:137). In Sudan for example, women worked tirelessly through the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) to mend the broken relationship between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic group. The Wunlit Tribal Summit of 1999 was an embodiment of women peace initiatives that sought to facilitate the peace processes of the two hostile ethnic groups. The summit was instrumental in arranging use of resources, pastureland and water bodies, which was hitherto a bone of contention between the two groups (Hunt and Posa,2001:41). Likewise, Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2013:11-12) recounts influential grassroots women's groups in Sierra Leone, that advocated for peace to put stop to years of protracted conflict. The Sierra Leone Women's Movements for Peace (SLWMP) championed several peace conferences and symposiums to create public awareness on the need for peace.

Burundi had also had a prolonged civil war between ethnically dominated Tutsi Army and Hutu Rebel groups which left the nation war-torn, divided between two belligerent groups. Several attempts had been made, both local

and international, to bring the warring factions to negotiate for peace. The Arusha Accord of 1998 led by Nelson Mandela, among others was to ensure the signing of peace agreement by warring factions. Burundian non-tribal women's groups lobbied an observer's position at the negotiation table. Consequently, women civil society organizations emerged to add their voice to the peace talks. For instance, Dushirehamwe (grassroots women's interest groups) engaged women in seminars, symposium and conferences on peace building to drum home the message of peace (Ahern, 2011:36-40; Porter, 2003:260).

In the preceding discussion, it is clear women have actively participated in matters relating to conflict management and peace negotiations processes in many communities (Rambothan, et.,al., 2005).

The crisis in Yendi defied all conflict resolution processes. One reason often offered to explain this failure is the inability of the feuding factions to co-operate among themselves and with the government. The failure has also been likened to the top-down approach in the negotiation process; that is, the centralisation of the peace process over the years as against inclusiveness of various stakeholders. And finally, some have pointed out that the peace processes have been all-male affair. The only time the area experienced active informal involvement of women in the resolution process (through workshops and seminars on peace) was after 2002 following the violent encounter between the two families, thanks to efforts of Catholic Diocese of Yendi and National Commission of Civic Education and other institutions in the peace building process in the area. This indicates that

women's involvement in formal peace negotiation process in the Yendi Chieftaincy crisis has been absent for very long.

In view of the above, this study intends to examine if, when and how women have been involved in the chieftaincy conflict resolution in Yendi, and how gender – and especially ideas about femininity and motherhood - influences their presence therein. There is inadequate literature on women's involvement in peace negotiation in Ghana. But I concur with Oliver and MacGinty that, “it will be useful to integrate gender analysis into [conflict] research, not only for the obvious benefits of examining how peace and war are gendered, but also because of the enlightened and the critical research perspective that feminist studies can bring to the study of peace” (2014:184)

1.3 Women's and Peace groups engaged in Yendi peace processes

There is no unified beginning to the peace groups' initiatives in Yendi. However most of these initiatives date back to the 1990s after the 1994 Konkomba and Dagomba conflict in Northern Ghana (Brukum, 2007). It was observed that many government and non-government organizations (both within and outside Yendi) initiated a lot of projects of intervention to curtail the intermittent conflicts in the early 90s in northern Ghana. But the most pronounced engagement of various organizations came after the 2002 incident of Dagbon between Abudu and Andani royal families in Yendi. Both local collaborators (women's groups, the youth and religious groups: Catholic Diocese of Yendi and Ahmadiyyah Muslim Mission in Yendi) and regional/national collaborators such as the State (the Regional Peace council, the Committee of Eminent Chiefs), the Women in Peace building

Movement -Tamale and West Africa Network for Peace Building mobilized resources to assist in the search for peace in Dagbon.

1.3.1. The local organizations

According to his Lordship, Most Rev. Vincent Boi-Na Sowah, the newly appointed bishop of the nascent Yendi Catholic diocese, when he was appointed as a bishop in 1999,

“there were still traces of this conflict, so I thought it wise that I cannot preach the word of God to people who are fighting. So, my focus right from the beginning was to maintain peace so that when you are talking people will be able to understand what you are talking about. That is what brought about the whole issue of peace building exercise in Yendi” (Personal interview with the Bishop, 17th July, 2016).

In Bishop’s view, the intention was to form the ‘Bishop Peace Initiative’ which was to encompass the entire ecclesiastical province of the eastern corridor of Dagbon. But the inauguration of the initiative coincided with the 2002 Yendi incident, and therefore the focus was narrowed to Yendi to bring peace and tranquillity among the two warring contenders. The initiative targeted women because they were one of the important groups that were affected by the conflict as well as those engendering the conflict situation.

In a similar view, the co-ordinator of the NCCE, Alhaji Alhassan Sulemana also concurred that women, most often than not, borne the full brunt of violent conflict and at the same time were among the active instigators of some of these conflicts. So, with this double role women played in the conflicts there was no way peace building exercise could be organized without their involvement.

Other groups sprung to harness their efforts for the purpose of seeking peace in Dagbon. Peace groups such as the Youth Empowerment for Life, Yendi Youth for Peace and Dagbon Peace for Unity mobilized resources to complement the initiatives of the women's groups and other interested stakeholders in Yendi.

1.3.2 Regional and national organizations

There was also a regional/national support in the peace building in Yendi. For instance, the governmental Committee of Eminent Chiefs led by the Otunfuo Osei Tutu II was also involved in finding lasting peace to Yendi chieftainship feud. But some of the Council recommendations are yet to be operationalized because the disputants disagreed with them (Tonah, 2012).

The Regional Peace Council has also been instrumental in the search for peace in Dagbon. The Council was formed in May 2004 before the general election of Ghana. According Fr. Thaddeus, the executive secretary, the then Regional Minister on series of deliberations saw the need because the crisis in 2002 led to high political tension at the 2004 general election, and therefore the state needed a neutral body that could work towards peace before, during and after the election. Consequently, the Council became a national body that supervises and harmonizes all peace interventions in various regions in Ghana.

The Women in Peace Building Movement -Tamale and the WANEP are other partners in the Yendi peace negotiation process. The former is a women's movement that harnessed the potential of women in Northern part of Ghana to help complement effort of other interest groups in the peace

processes. In the words of the secretary Hajia Adishetu, what motivated them was the fact that during conflict women take up both male and female responsibilities, and even though they don't directly take part in war, the effects of war on them cannot be overemphasized; hence the need for their involvement at the negotiation table (Janet, 2007:237-38). The movement among other activities engaged women chiefs, princesses and other women leaders in conflict prevention, peace building and the use of non-violent strategies; mediation, arbitration, negotiation and reconciliation to solving conflicts.

The WANEP has been instrumental too in the peace missions of sub-Saharan Africa. It is geared towards creating an enabling environment where people can reach their potential in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity without fear of threat of any kind. As part of this mission WANEP design programs of activities and interventions for interest groups, such as the WIPM-Tamale, to help unearth the potentials of women in peace building process in Dagbon.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1. Research Questions and Objectives

This study is to analyse how gender is integrated in the on-going chieftaincy dispute in Yendi. Therefore, the two questions to direct the path of the study are:

- What women do or have (not) done in conflict and conflict resolution in Dagbon?
- How are gender relations in Ghanaian society and especially ideas about femininity and motherhood implicated in possibilities for women's involvement in conflict resolution processes?

My main objective is to understand how gender relations influence the Chieftaincy dispute and its resolution processes in Yendi, and to further introduce gender perspective into the analysis of the conflict and its resolution processes. These stem from the different positions men and women in traditional Dagbon occupy. The men represent every facet of the Dagbon culture whilst the feminine component remains in private domain. However, within the domestic sphere women have tremendous influence on men on issues including disputes and dispute resolution in Dagbon.

Also, the study will explore existing relevant literature that gives insight into concepts and theories about the topic and contribute to the knowledge about women's involvement in the peace process in Yendi chieftaincy dispute, in light of contemporary engagements of women in peace negotiations in different parts of the world. Finally, the study seeks to examine the dis-

tinctive role of women in peace negotiations processes in the context of Dagbon crisis. Consequently, it serves as a pilot study that will possibly bring to light the gap created in terms of policies and programs by the Ghana government and civil society organisations on women's role in mediation and reconciliatory processes at all level of society.

2.2. Methodological strategies and methods of data generation and analysis

This research was carried out using qualitative methods. The goal was to emphasize, as Zina O'leary puts it; "the value of depth over quantity and work[s] at delving into social complexities, in order to truly explore and understand the interactions, lived experiences, and belief systems that are part of individuals, [and] institutions" (2014:130). In Punch's study, the main aim of a qualitative research is to understand the social reality and worldview of the people studied (2014:144), where the researcher plays crucial role in data generation and collection (Tagoe, 2009:45).

The main method for data generation and collection was interview, through which I gained an in-depth understanding of the social realities of the women (O'leary, 2014), their activities and relationships and the social context within which they engage in peace negotiation, creating conditions where the researched and the researcher can engage together in knowledge generation (Chilisa, 2012)

Thus, in generating data and creating knowledge with participants, about 13 separate interviews were conducted, including with the women Chiefs, Assembly women, *Magazias* (women leaders) and women organizers in politi-

cal parties and the relevant institutions such as the Catholic Diocese of Yendi, NCCE and Ahmadiyyah Muslim Mission in Yendi, the Women in Peace building Movement (WIPM)-Tamale, the Regional Peace Council and West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP), Ghana.

The participants were asked open-ended question which enabled them to freely express themselves and to better tell their stories about how they engaged in, and experienced peace negotiation in Yendi, and some of the setbacks they encountered. Each interview was recorded using smart phone device and lasted for almost an hour. For the purposes of credibility and reliability of data, some of these interviews were first transcribed in Dagbani language before transcribing into English. The information was further verified from participants either through phone calls or on my second visit. The purpose was to clarify doubts on some expressions and concepts.

I had audio-video resource from the secretary of the WIPM-Tamale, where substantive data was gotten. The videos contained recordings of workshops and meetings of some women's groups, informing me how women engaged in knowledge acquisition and skills in conflict management and prevention and the use of non-violent strategies (mediation, arbitration, negotiation and reconciliation) for solving conflicts in both family and the community. Similarly, I had magazines, journal articles and brochures from WANEP-Ghana where relevant information was sorted for the study. The primary intention for consulting these secondary sources was to gain broader understanding how women engage in peace process regarding chieftaincy conflict in Yendi and what motivates them in their civic engagements.

I had field assistant and we both made field notes which contained concepts and themes that strike the mind including the observable information during meetings. For instance, the metaphors used by participants were noted down in the field notes. Field notes were used to provide clarifications on the recorded interviews, and to give directives and focus to subsequent meetings. And needless to say, that secondary data was another vital set of information employed to give directives to the research.

2.3. Relevance and Justification of this Study.

Even though violent conflict and its consequences affect the entire society, it exposes women to particular kind of danger such as sex slavery, forced migration, abduction and unwanted pregnancy, and perpetuates structural violence. It is, therefore, essential to incorporate the views of women in the attempts to resolve conflicts. In view of this standpoint, the relevance of the study cannot be overemphasized.

First, though there has been, in relative terms, some literature on Dagbon chieftaincy dispute, not much is written about the role of women in the peace negotiation processes. Therefore, this study is intended to contribute to this area of knowledge, and to provide not only academic literature but also to bring to light the defects in terms of broader policies and programs with respect to gender issues on national agenda regarding conflict resolution in Ghana. The findings of the study will hopefully bring to attention some alternative mechanisms for peace in the specific case of the chieftaincy dispute in Yendi that might result in creating space for new actors – women - at the negotiation table. I hope that this research will go beyond the

controversial debates on ‘women and peace’ (essentialized) hypothesis to a more inclusive and encompassing analysis of negotiation processes for sustainable peace in Yendi. Finally, the study hopes to stimulate other researchers to introduce gender approach into other areas in the field of peace and conflicts studies. Women’s involvement in peace negotiation as well as bringing women’s and gender standpoints into the mainstream approach of conflict management and resolution would contribute to sustainable peace (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013).

2.4. The Scope and Limitations of Research

All participants contributed to the generation of data for the research. Nonetheless, my research assistant and I encountered a lot of challenges in our bid to generate and gather substantive data for the study. First, the partisan politics regarding chieftaincy was one of the major setbacks. My presence with some of the participants created suspicion, and thus openness during interviews at first was not all that easy as most respondents wanted to know the political party or the royal divide to which I belong to, as a native. It took time and effort before some respondents could be convinced that I took no sides in the conflict and conducted research with hopes to understand and analyse it, and contribute to resolution. Second, fuelling my motorbike to move from one respondent to another was very laborious and risky, and needless to say posed financial constraints. Financial issues were also related to interviews of women chiefs and royal houses. In Dagbon tradition, one does not go to the chief’s palace with empty hands, and the inability of my sponsors to assist me with fieldwork allowance compelled me to use my

meagre saving in honouring this customary obligation. This gravely affected my social responsibilities in financial terms as a family man.

Furthermore, failed appointments from some respondents and intermittent rainfall did not permit smooth execution of my interview schedules. For instance, WANEP and NCCE failed me on number of times before I finally met them, and that affected my schedule and timing for other interviews. In the case of WANEP-Ghana, I had to travel 60km distance on public transport on 3 consecutive times before they finally agreed to give me their perspective on the conflict. Finally, the nature of the interview process gave rise to large amount of data, and thus transcription and fishing out major concepts and themes was not an easy task at all.

2.5. Positionality and Reflexivity of the Researcher

I was born in Northern Ghana in which intermittent ethnic conflicts abound. Most often than not, these conflicts occur over either land or chieftaincy titles. The most traumatic experience of conflict that left an indelible mark on my mind was one of the deadliest inter-ethnic conflicts between Dagombas (where I belong) and Konkomba ethnic group in 1994. I witnessed communities and farm lands burnt to ashes, which resulted in devastated hunger which led to the death of many people. A similar conflict erupted in 2002 as a chieftaincy dispute between the Abudu and the Andani which led to death of the overlord of Dagbon and many of his elders in Yendi. As a young boy growing up, I began to question some of the causes of these conflicts and possible solutions. As fate, will have it, I became more interested in conflict studies when I had the opportunity to pursue a course in conflict manage-

ment and resolution in my third year at the university, as well as participating in a week-long seminar on inter-religious dialogue in Yendi. These experiences aroused my interest and broaden my curiosity to research how one could provide way(s) of resolving the chieftaincy disputes such as those in Yendi and northern Ghana as a whole. I equally noticed that the resolution of these conflicts has been the effort of the central government, and little or no room is provided for individuals, civil society organizations and other interest groups in the peace process. More so, these resolution mechanisms either have no or little representation of women despite the impact conflicts have on them and the role they play within the socio-cultural sphere of Dagbon. Based on this thought, I feel optimistic that when there are rooms for other alternative strategies, such as gender perspectives in the conflict resolution processes, the possibility of sustainable peace will be high since women form the majority at the grassroots. This is not to launch a crusade about gender parity in the resolution processes, but to denote the fact that women are part of the society, and therefore, should not only be represented in matters that concern them directly but should be included at all level of decision-making on issues that affect them and everybody else's lives.

But one thing that is worth mentioning is the fact that, I as a researcher hold dual identity in this community: sharing the same cultural elements (nationality, language, ethnicity) with participants of this study. Therefore, I consider myself as an insider-researcher. Nonetheless, the academic rationale for this study has given me a new identity as an outsider-researcher. This will be my first time of meeting with some of the women I interviewed. I have no personal relationship with the women neither do I owe any loyalty

to the factions in the disputes. Therefore, I went to the research setting as an outsider. Even though in Blix study, “the interviewer’s identities as insider and an outsider are not easily settled. [They] are continuously negotiated, unfinished, and open-ended” (Blix, 2015:179). This implies that my double identity as researcher in this context demanded that I constantly have to negotiate these identities to ensure credibility of data. This, I consciously have in mind as I relate with the research institutions and participants.

2.6. Ethical and political choices

Presently, the kingdom of Dagbon is polarised in terms of partisan politics and chieftaincy disputes; hence conducting research into settings like this the researcher ought to prioritise among other values ethical issues. To undertake a research in order to produce trustworthy and credible results, Zita O’leary argues that ethical duty of the researcher is to protect participants at every stage of the study (2014:47). Ethical consideration, according to Punch is a central element in the field of research (2014:36). It requires that research participants should be free to engage with the researcher in matters that seem sensitive and private without fear of compromise of confidentiality. It requires also that the research setting and participants should be shielded from any possible harm of the research. In view of these ethical principles, I observed necessary tradition to engage with participants in a manner customary to their communities. I first had to visit the respondents and make known to them the mission of my visit and to arrange further meetings for interviews. Similarly, the women chiefs (who form part of the research participants) were approached formally to make known my mission

and kola nut was offered as customs demand. In Dagbon tradition, the sharing of kola nut is believed to create and foster mutual trust between the host and the guest. Therefore, kola nut is used to welcome the guest, and the host owes a guest some sort of explanation if kola nut is not readily available at the time of visit. But with the chief palace, a guest reciprocates the offer with money. And so, by considering tradition as a doorway to participants, these practices created some sort of natural setting which allowed me to engage in conversation and be accepted as researcher.

Also, the ethical principles that guide research at ISS was observed throughout the study. The absolute confidentiality and anonymity of research participants who demanded it were guaranteed, and therefore, participants' right to privacy was respected and those who were not ready to partake in the study in any way were not persuaded or coerced into doing so. I have used names of those who did not mind being mentioned by name. Finally, participants' views were presented correctly, even when I was critical and disagreed with some of them.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no gainsay that women and children are exposed to many kinds of risks during conflict times, but it's sad to observe that, "the peace negotiations held to bring an end to these conflicts failed to incorporate the needs and concerns of women, [and] signed peace agreements also failed to recognize women's role in the contributions to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction" (Gbowee, 2009:50). It is also very paradoxical that people who masterminded war and conflict strategies are the very people who propose peace mechanisms to these conflicts (Hunt and Posa, 2001:38). Therefore, the time has come in Gbowee's view for "international negotiators and policy makers [to] break that habit by including peace promoters, [women], and not just warriors, at the negotiation table" (ibid. p38).

Nonetheless, Hunt and Posa (2001:38) posit that some great men in history have led peace pacts and negotiations, and bridged gaps created by prolonged conflicts. Comparatively, some women have been combatants, and staunch associates of terrorist groups, accepting responsibilities as suicide bombers in many regions (Walker,1995:437). "Exceptions aside, however, women are often the most powerful voices for moderation in times of conflict. While most men come to the negotiation table directly from the battlefield, women usually arrive straight from activism...[y]et, traditional thinking about war and peace either ignores women [or] regards them as victims" (Hunt and Posa, 2001:38). The neglect of the feminine component in peace processes is a fatal mistake that demands an urgent correction.

3.1. Gender Essentialism: Women and Peace

Ifaz Maoz's (2009) empirical study on Israel-Palestine conflict examines the gender perspectives on the resolution process of the protracted conflict between these two nations. She believes that when women are fully represented at the negotiation table they have the tendency to calm down nerves of belligerence during negotiation. This assumption is founded on ideas about links between gender and pacifism, i.e. women and peace hypothesis, which espouses the notion that women's experience as mothers makes them more pacifist than men. According to Maoz; "the 'women and peace' hypothesis proposes that women have the tendency to hold more peaceful and compromising attitude than men" (Maoz, 2009:519-520). Therefore, recommendation by women are more easily acceptable by opposing factions than those recommendations put forward by male rival mediators (Maoz,2009:531). In critiquing this line of argument, Dianne Otto believes that seeing women as peacemakers tends to essentialize their gender identity and that puts them under perpetual subjugation by society (2006:139).

Motherhood as a symbol of peace, as reveals by El-Bushra, provides women with the opportunity to lobby and appeal to the most powerful men in peace talks, and to soothe aggrieved parties during negotiations (2007:140). To prove this in context, Ajodo-Adebanjoko succinctly posits that;

"when the MARWOPNET [Mano River Women's Peace Network, a local peace organisation that coordinated peace programs between Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia], delegation went to Guinea to convince President Conte to come and sit at a table next to Charles Taylor, the President answered to their offer: 'What man do you think

would say that to me? Only a woman could do such a thing and get by with it'. He finally accepted to participate at the summit admitting: 'Many people have tried to convince me to meet with President Taylor, [but could not succeed]. Your commitment and appeal have convinced me" (2013:11).

Hilary Charlesworth (2008) also argues that the idea about women as peace-loving predates modern times. An important narrative, historically, to this effect is portrayed in *Lysistrata*, a play by a Greek dramatist Aristophanes, in which women withheld conjugal rights from their husbands until the latter were ready to negotiate peace to end the war between Sparta and Athens. According Charlesworth, this dramatic representation of women as having “power over violence inspired the *Lysistrata* Project in 2002, [that sought] to protest the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003” (2008:348-349). Taking lessons from the story, the late President of the republic of South Africa at the Arusha peace summit challenged the women in Burundi to withhold conjugal loyalty if the men refused to let peace reign (Hunt and Posa, 2001:42).

It is significant to state that the women and peace hypothesis has attracted lots of criticisms. Tessler et al argue that “an emphasis on the central experience of motherhood [as a pre-requisite for the woman’s desire for peace] fails to differentiate between women who do not have children” (1999:521), and that renders the term motherhood an ambiguous entity that needs further interrogation.

Dianne Otto (2006:139) and Charlesworth (2008:350) also argue that, if the involvement of women in peace negotiation is based on their natural propensity as mothers, then their agency as political actors is apparently reduced to feminine responsibility: nurturing and mothering. This still perpetuates patriarchal domination. Buttressing on this ideology of motherhood, Tessler et al capture it succinctly: “attributions of empathy, nurturance, caring reinforce traditional stereotypes about women and retard the goal of emancipation” (1999:521). In the same vein, if motherhood presents women with the opportunity to lure the most conservative belligerence into peace talks, Charlesworth and El-Bushra stress that, “it [also] simultaneously undermines their desire to be taken seriously as political players” (2008:358; 2007:140).

Another criticism of essentialist approach to women and peace is feminist analysis of gender, war and peace. The concept of gender is used to criticize ideas about biological, fixed attributes of women and men which neglect the socially constructed aspects of gender that seek to justify some behaviours as natural while others as imposed. This, according to Charlesworth, “affirms the ‘naturalness’ of female/male identities and bypass the performative aspects of gender. Regarding gender to be essentially about women does not capture the rational nature of gender, the role of power relations, and the way that structures of subordination are reproduced” (2008:359).

The link between compassion, tenderness, caring, peace and womanhood is socially constructed, representing the ideas about a social group that lacks

the opportunity to wield some form of power in the society. Therefore, the women and peace hypothesis, in Hartsock's study, stems from the fact that "the exercise of power has generally been masculine activity: women have rarely exercised legitimate power in the public domain" (Hartsock, 1983:210; Tessler et al, 1999:521; Tickner, 1988:434).

Finally, McKay and Mazurana (2004:92) and Coulter (2008:55) reveal also a percentage of 10 to 30 of female combatants in the Liberia civil war, which punches more holes to the women and peace hypothesis. Coulter explains that most of these women and girls were abducted and forcefully recruited into the various fighting groups, and that the motives of most of these female fighters were to survive, and not necessarily to enhance the lot of women. Nevertheless, they were active fighters in the military units. Similarly, there is also evidence from Sierra Leone to Northern Ireland conflicts that women were both fighters and 'conduits' smuggling ammunition and information from one region to another (Coulter, 2008:63-68; Mansaray, 2000:148; Aretxaga, 1997:66). Consequently, Aretxaga argues that women "turned the hegemonic discourse of gender identity that renders [them] invisible in the political world into subversive technique" (Aretxaga, 1997:66; Coulter, 2008:68). This, he believes, contests the gender and peace hypothesis arguing that women directly or indirectly participate in conflicts.

In spite of these criticisms, the women and peace hypothesis, in Maoz's findings, provide "women with the increase capacity and enthusiasm of promoting peace through their higher ability to elicit support for peace proposal" (Maoz, 2009:520).

3.2. Motherhood and conflict resolution.

The ideology that women as mothers have special stake in peace and share a collective bond which could serve as a motivation to express their political will, including conflict resolution, forms an important part in opening door to political activism to many women.

Women across the world have gathered under the banner of motherhood and protested against oppressive regimes as well as against heinous human rights abuses in their respective countries. For instance, in Sri Lanka, years 1987 to 1991 have been described as dark historical period. It was the period that the country recorded the heinous crimes against humanity as a result of a rebellion of militant group Janata Vimukhi Party and state revenge. The confrontation led to the loss of lives and several attempts to find lasting peace in the country proved abortive. Therefore, there emerged the Mothers' Front, a grass root women group to protest wars and the 'disappearance' of their relatives (de Alwis, 1998:185). The protest was carved under the banner of motherhood and "mothercraft": an ascribed status of women as life-affirming persons whose moral personality ensures continuation of life, socialising the young ones and soothing aggrieved members of the family (de Alwis, 1998:186). By accepting the patriarchal notion of women's position to give and protect life in the society (which is very much valorised by warring factions) women were able to bring to light the violation of the moral personhood of mothers by warring factions.

Even though the government discredited the Mothers' Front, tagging them as a political party and accusing them of failing in their duties to see what their children do outside home, the Mothers' Front created the medium that allowed members to publicize their story and garnered solid social capital in public and among members. In addition, a number of branches of the organization have formally networked with other civil society organisations and feminist organisations where guidance and counselling are provided to members (de Alwis, 1998:199).

One other similar account of the use of motherhood was the case of women in Argentina who protested against state brutality and heinous human rights violation. Taylor (2001:97) study gives a vivid account of the Mothers bold decision to march to Plaza de Mayo in Argentina to protest against the military junta in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the times when people could face the wrath of the state for opposing its violent practices. They demanded, just like the Sri Lankan Mother's Front, information about and redress of the 'disappearance' of their relatives whom they believed to be abducted by the state security forces. The women decision to break open the private space to make themselves visible in public and to push their agenda forward was very much ascribed to the symbol of Virgin Mary who represents an absolute motherhood and who could bridge the rift of private/public divide (Taylor, 2001:100). Consequently, they utilized the conservative icon in the Catholic Creed, the "Mater Dolorosa [our lady of sorrow or piety] and exploited a system of representations and stereotypes that had so effectively limited most forms of female visibility and expression" (Taylor, 2001: 102).

In view of the preceding, Joan W. Scott, one of the leading voices in feminist scholarship, writes that this cultural representation gives clarity to reality and carries with it gendered figurative significance that produces and perpetuates gender asymmetries between male and female in the society (Scott, 1986:1067). Others argue that by motivating mothers to participate in societal matters based on Gandhian affirmative essentialist stance of peace, presents a practical conundrum; for one, it buttresses the conventions about women's position in the society as mothers, and second, the women stand the risk of perpetual subjugation to structural inequalities, including polity as well as the economy (Fox,1996:41-47; Helms, 2003:15-16).

Nonetheless, the pragmatic nature of the women's use of motherhood in their action was deemed useful politically as well as emancipatory in the Mothers' advocacy in Argentina. First, the protest at the Plaza de Mayo and several other regions offered the women the opportunity to denounce the violent politics in Argentina at the time. Second, their action was a therapeutic means of adjusting to the loss of the sons, daughters, grandchildren and other relatives. The Argentinian Mothers' action, like their Sri Lankan counterparts, exposed the failure of the state to protect its own citizens and attracted both local and global attention. Finally, the fact that the motherhood was used to transgress confinement of women's roles as mothers within the private domain of home, and take women to the streets and into the political arena, provides further evidence that motherhood is not limited to biology. It is a socio-cultural construction of feminine experience that is used to justify structural inequality, but can also be used to fight against in-

equality and violence (Taylor, 2001:107; de Alwis, 1998:199; Scott, 1986:1067-1068).

These theoretical reflections are important for my study because motherhood and women's responsibilities within the family and the community were regularly invoked in my interviews with women who engaged in chieftaincy conflict resolution in Dagbon.

3.3. Emotional Labour

The study of collective action locates emotions as a driving force for collective identities and actions especially in women's movements. Emotions are used as a means that allow people with similar aim to come together to fight for a common cause (Bayard de Volo, 2006:461). Therefore, emotions are fundamental to our collective identity and actions, which are invoked in protest as a mobilizing tool by individuals who feel the need to respond to a specific social problem (ibid.461). Emotions have been especially relevant for the women engaged in the chieftaincy conflict in Dagbon. Women whom I interviewed talked about fear and worries for their families, anger against limiting cultural and social norms that undervalue women and their contributions to society, and women's passionate participation in inciting the conflict as well as working to transform it. Thus, the concept of "emotional labour"- a mechanism that ensures the recruitment and mobilization of members, as well as sustaining membership for a particular action – is useful for thinking about the ways women engaged in conflict resolution in Dagbon.

In the words of Taylor and Rupp, emotional labour denotes the “channeling, transforming, legitimating and managing one’s own and others’ emotions and expressions of emotions in order to cultivate and nurture the social networks that are the building blocks of social movements” (Taylor and Rupp, 2002:142; Bosco, 2006:342-343).

The public space is considered a useful ground for emotional display of grief and anxiety (Irvine, 2007:9). The most practical experience is portrayed in the activism of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Mothers’ Front in Argentina and Sri Lanka respectively who used the public space to transform their grief into collective identity and action to demand justice for their missing relatives (Brown and Pickerill, 2009:26; Bosco, 2006:354; de Alwis, 1998:185). Another public display of grief was used by the Nicaraguan Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs (mothers of fallen combatants) who supported Sandinista National Liberation Front (1979-1990) to publicly expressed grief to demand justice for the fallen soldiers in Nicaragua during the President Somoza’s repressive regime (Bayard de Volo, 2006:463).

In the studies of Chinese Students Movement during the 1980s, Yang identifies some basic theoretical premise about the expression of emotions in movements (2000:607-608). He sees emotional display of any form as situational, and thus emotions are circumstantial and situational (ibid.607). The situational evidence in this regard is the case of the women’s movements in Asia, Latin America and Africa where substantial documentation is made about mothers’ responses to specific events that threatened their families. The mothers’ movements in Argentina, Sri Lanka, and Nicaragua were all

sub-cultural undertakings that sought to physically express an emotional distress to either demand justice for dead relatives or to call for a change of some dreadful policies of the state (Yang, 2000: 607).

According to Yang, emotions expressed in movements are also interactional and reciprocal, produced out of one's interaction with others and oneself. Essentially, these aspects of emotions mobilize people with common identity that gives clarity to an emotional display of anger, grief and sadness to support a cause of action (2000:595). In the context of Argentina, Sri Lanka, and Nicaragua, grief and anger were mobilized around motherhood, but in other movements emotions are mobilized around other identities (for example, around environmental justice). The expression of emotions involves also a chain of events, where one action has to trigger subsequent events and actions, thus emotions are temporal, sequential and spatial in form.

It is important to state that emotional display in protest and collective action is achieved in many ways including media production, drama, poetry and prose. Yang's study reveals that "[p]ublic narratives of emotions include poems, wall posters, handbills, news stories and the like" (2000:599). On that score, the mothers' movements found solace in engaging in literary works such as poems which provided an emotional outlet to display publicly their individual and collective experiences as mothers of the missing relatives. The literary works such as "*El dolor* (pain), *Tiempo de angustia* (a time of anguish) and *Dolor de madre* (A mothers's pain)" (Bosco, 2006:351) underscored the Spanish rendition of the traumatic experience

these mothers went through, and was also testimonial to the women's activism.

I have found similar expressions of emotions in what is called 'women's tongue' in Dagbon: women's capacities to evoke powerful emotions through the use of shaming or praising language. Equally important are the practices of invoking mothers' fears and worries about their children. These expressions of emotions in Dagbon, as in other traditional societies in Ghana and Africa, are defined by culture, and are therefore gendered (Bayard de Volvo, 2006:461-42). For instance, in Dagbon, the manner in which society endorses public expression of pain, anxiety and sadness is determined by gender expectations. The public expression of emotions by women in Dagbon would receive some level of sympathy and endorsement, unlike same emotional display by men. One major reason that explains this is that women are considered the weaker sex and emotional by nature – unlike men who are considered to be rational and thus much less emotional. Hence there is sympathy for public display of sorrow by women, but not by men.

As literature points out, and as my own research shows, motherhood holds specific place in cultural understandings of the expression of pain and sorrow, so public actions in which women act as mothers pained by suffering of their children receive understanding and justification which otherwise would not be extended to women's political engagements. However, none of those understandings are self-evident or straight-forward. Rather, they are full of ambiguities, reflecting often ambiguous position of specific groups of women within cultural, social, and political hierarchies of Dagbon, and thus

they also impact the scope of possibilities of women's engagement in conflict resolution.

CHAPTER 4. GENDERED AMBIGUITY: CULTURE AND CONFLICT IN DAGBON

Gender remains the most fundamental conceptual framework for analysing relationships and interactions among people in a society. It governs and maintains daily practices, shaping social systems and structures, and exposing the underpinning power dynamics that are embedded within institutions. Anna Snyder's study of gender relations in conflict and conflict resolution among refugees in some parts of Africa, Asia and North America finds that gender as an analytical tool unearths the plight of the masses and creates a platform for their voices to be heard at peace conferences, thereby enhancing better programs and policies for sustainable peace and development (Anderlini, 2000:32-35; Snyder,2009:47). She concludes that critical reflection on gender ideologies in conflict and conflict resolutions will "uncover weaknesses in peacebuilding strategies: little consideration for women needs; marginalization of gender analysis; and few attempts to change discriminatory practices, institutions and societies" (Snyder, 2009:46).

The idea of victimhood as synonymous to women during violent conflicts has inadvertently been challenged by women's entry into different aspects of life, confronting socio-cultural, religious and other prevailing gender norms, as women embrace leadership positions within the family and localities (Snyder, 2009:45; Manchanda, 2005:4737-38). This prevailing experience may expedite women's political involvement in their respective cultures. But sadly, in most conflicts and peace conferences the vulnerability and victimhood of women during conflicts is overwhelmingly stressed, forgetting that when the capacity of women is built towards conflict resolution,

it will enhance better the knowledge and understanding of gender relationships in conflict resolutions mechanisms (Snyder, 2009:45). Therefore, having limited knowledge on the impact of conflicts on gender norms may pose a challenge to correcting gender biases in conflict management and resolution (Snyder,2009:45).

Invariably, much research on gender relations in conflict has pointed at the contradictory and often ambiguous position of women in conflict times. In the words of Zarkov (1997), gender relations in conflict times often accord women with binary position, thus “woman is an ambiguous symbol: weak and defenceless, also potentially powerful and threatening” (Zarkov,1997:332). Women have taken part in conflicts in many areas in Africa and other places in the world, assuming roles as suicide bombers in rebel groups, as fighters and guerrillas; they have engaged in prostitution and acted as mothers and wives of combatants.

In this current study, I will use empirical data to explore how women in male-dominated cultural settings of Dagbon in Northern Ghana used their ambiguous position as agents of both conflict and conflict resolution, and at the same time as vulnerable mothers and as victims in a protracted chieftaincy conflict to engage in peace processes. This discussion will also highlight how motherhood was invoked as a useful tool to enhance the women possibilities to engage in the peace negotiation and to further subvert patriarchal norms to participate in the resolution process of chieftaincy conflict in Yendi.

4.1 Women in and against the Conflict in Dagbon

The role of women within the traditional Dagbon society is strictly defined by culture and tradition. The decision-making at all level of the society including matters of conflict and conflict resolution is the sole preserve of men. But behind the scenes women have critical role to play on matters of the society. The men get a lot of advice from the women; especially the older women who are considered ‘fountain of knowledge’ about the customs and tradition are seen a big asset to men when it comes to matters of the society. To expatiate more on the valuable place of women in Dagbon, Alhaji Sulemana narrates:

“Women are repository of knowledge, and all the histories of the families and the communities are at their fingertips. Apart from the praise singer who is customarily mandated to possess this knowledge, the woman is next to having this information of the society. The men easily forget. Most of the information I got for all my research works is through the aged women” (Interview on 17th, July, 2016).

In that regard, the women, even though they do not openly join in the discussion of matters of the society, could admonish and channel their voices on issues through their husbands, sons and other male members of the household. Consequently, they have influence over men on certain decisions made in the society. It is significant to note that women since time immemorial had also induced their men to go for war, as in case of Naa Luro and Kalugisi Dajia in Dagbon history:

“The epic conflict between Na Luro [Dagbon chief] and Kalugisi Dajia [Gonja kingdom chief] in Northern Ghana took place in 15century. According to oral tradition, it happened that Na Darizegu who ruled Dagbon before Na Luro was killed and burnt by the Gonja chief. So, Dagbon had no Paramount chief for many years and eventually Na Luro was enskinned as Chief of the Kingdom. His maternal uncles came to congratulate him. As customs demanded, he tasked Koyibga (one of the wives) to cook for the vis-

itors. The wife failed to do so and that prompted him to beat her up. Consequently, the wife remarked that food should not be his concern; he [the chief] should rather be concern about avenging the death of Ya Na Darizegu, [his predecessor] whose death gave him [Na Luro] opportunity to become chief. Angered by this remark, the chief against all odds went to battle against Kalugisi Dajia and defeated him. (Interview with Praise-singer, 13th October, 2016; see also MacGaffey, 2013).

In contemporary times, women have induced conflict among men and the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis exemplifies this. One of the respondents noted the following:

“In the Dagbon incident in 2002, it was the women who were the rumours mongers in places such as the river side, grinding mill, and spreading all sort of lies among fellow women. Forgetting that when conflict comes, the women and children suffer more” (Madam Memunatu, 15th July, 2016).

The other stated:

“The peace mission programs targeted us the women because it was realized that the women were those using the most intemperate languages whenever the conflict erupts. And this I think is more deadly than even the use of the gun. It perpetuates distrust and disunity among us, and these are some of the causes of the crisis. So, if the women are people to drum home the peace mission I think the call is in the right direction” (Madam Zuwera, 15th July, 2016).

And yet, many of the respondents asserted that women bear the pains of the absence or death of their husbands by single-handedly taking up responsibilities of the house, care, feeding, school fees, medical mills etc. They have the ability through their utterances to instigate men to go for war, but at the end of the day the consequences of the war directly and indirectly come to them and their children. This confirms what Ajodo-Adebanjoko expresses in his study that “[b]ecause the consequences of war weigh so heavily on the lives of women they naturally show great interest in peace process” (2013:15-16). Mr. Peter Atia (secretary to the Catholic Diocese WIPB) shared his experience in his involvement with the women and the influence they have over men in conflict situations;

“In one of our workshops a woman has shared this testimony: during the 2002 incident of Dagbon when things became critical at the chief palace, her husband came home and she insulted him to go back in defence of the chief. The husband went back and was killed, and after her husband died nobody till date assisted her in the children upkeep, and she is suffering” (Interview with Peter Atia, 11th July, 2016).

The above discussion presents a conundrum with respect to the paradoxical role women play in the instigation of the conflict as well as in conflict resolution. In both cases, cultural norms and practices that create specific roles for women and men in the society are crucial for understanding possibilities of women to work on mitigating the conflict.

4.2. Calling upon culture: Women’s justifications of involvement in peace negotiation process in Yendi.

The Dagbon cultural norms bar women from open discussion and negotiation of political matters with men. This position stems from the accustomed idea that women are home-makers and thus reducing women’s status and role to mothers and caregivers. But behind the scenes women have vital role to play in matters of conflicts and conflicts resolution. According to Judy El-Bushra, many women perform “back-room role” (2007:138) by providing advice and counselling to men behind closed doors. In appreciating the value of gender-based decision, Hunt and Posa (2001) stated that any society that neutralizes chauvinistic stance in decision-making stands to benefit enormously. This is because when men meet to discuss, the ideas and views expressed are invariably one-sided, thus may project the interest of one faction of the society. In the case of chieftaincy crisis in Yendi, there are two implications this could bring. For one, it means that the majority of the pop-

ulation is denied the opportunity to air their grievances with respect to the crisis, and second, the search for lasting peace in the area will be unattainable. This is because the interest of the majority is marginalized. This position was succinctly expressed by the General secretary of WIPM-Tamale:

“Since women represent the larger percentage of the entire population of Dagbon their absence in any decision-making process of the kingdom means that the interest of the majority cannot be said to be served. It’s, therefore, imperative that they are given the chance to objectively support their male counterparts in the search for a lasting solution to Dagbon” (Hajia Adishetu, 3rd August, 2016)

This finding relates also with Ajodo-Adebanjoko’s conclusion that when the interest of the larger population is not considered in peace processes, then any intervention is but a short-lived enterprise (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013:5). Similarly, the fact that the old conflict resolution tools did not work, inspired women to explore new avenues:

“The conflict continues to persist and this means that the mechanism to resolving it have either failed or not been effective enough. In this regard, it’s important that we explore new approaches to peace building in Dagbon’s case. That is why bringing in the women, especially the queen mothers, female chiefs, princesses and Assembly women into the resolution processes is very appropriate and timely. Since they are at the grassroots, they will be able to change minds and attitudes for sustainable development” (Madam Zuwera, 15th, July 2016).

The involvement of women guarantees that some underlying issues - that might otherwise be considered less important and ignored, but affect women will be discussed. On that score, Madam Fusheina agreed with this position stating: “when a woman speaks on issues, she speaks not only to benefit her own self, but also her children and the entire community” (Interview, 27th July, 2016).

In addition, some of the respondents argued that whereas men aim at winning during peace talks, the women's intention is to moderate utterances and calm down nerves in order to persuade factions to reach a satisfactory compromise for the benefit of all (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013:16). This moderation role, while important in itself, is related to the women's role in the family:

“The women carry messages across the various facet of society, and sometimes soften and modify issues at hand to reach a favourable settlement. Again, during conflicts the women virtually provide the most basic needs of the family such as food, shelter, healthcare” (Hajia Zaratu, President of WIPM).

My respondents based many of their statements about women's engagement in conflict resolution on difference between women's and men's biological and social role, and specifically on mothering. As one of the respondents expressed:

“There is one thing about the woman: she won't speak to favour herself alone but will make sure she speaks to benefit her children and everybody. Conversely, the men are self-centred in matters of the society” (Madam Fushaina, 27th July, 2016).

Another respondent also based her reflection on the need for women to engage in peace processes by noting differences between men and women:

“When I was young my mother used to say that women are quick at recognizing problems when they start, at their initial point. But when they tell the men [about the problem], men will underrate it because of their ego. They will want the problem to become big so that when they solve it, they will know that they are men. But as women, we tend to identify the little problems as they start. That is why our role in coming out with the early warning signs is very important because we can recognize the issues even when they start. And then we help in bringing peace before it escalates” (Madam Jennifer, 3rd July, 2016).

The traditional Dagbon culture is based on similar assumptions about differences between men and women, and has, consequently, placed many limitations on women on matters of the family and society at large. The perception that the place of the woman is in the kitchen and the family conceals and limits their role on public and political issues, including conflict management and resolution. In Amedume's (1987) view, the patriarchal definition of the woman's place in the African context places much limitation on their contribution to matters that affect everybody. Consequently, in Dagbon, women's engagement in the negotiations was not without resistance from men. Here, the calls upon motherhood were strong in justifying women's presence, as one of the respondents noted:

"The men should soften their hearts and tone down their chauvinism. What do I mean here? Dominance over women! To an extent that some men can even say: 'What mind does the woman have to contribute?' But the woman has the mind to conceive you and to give birth to you, and at the time of delivery she can decide to close her legs and suffocate you to death. She has been able to survive this process of given birth to you. What sort of pay do we have for such a person than to recognize that person as a unique human being?" (Princess Balchisu, 18th July, 2016).

Other women also shared their views on culture to me as they attempted breaking the glass ceiling in their activism in the conflict resolution process of Yendi. In the words of Umar Memunatu:

"The Dagbon culture has been a big barrier to women participation to societal matters, and peace building processes is no exemption. For instance, in our traditional set up, and chieftaincy for that matter, the women have their limit and can't go beyond those limits. And this was a big challenge especially for reaching the chiefs" (Interview, 15th July, 2016).

Nevertheless, women engage in resisting and redefining cultural stereotypes, calling upon women specific perspectives and strengths, in order to overcome these challenges:

“They said two heads are better than one, and undoubtedly, the female appreciation of issues is different from that of men and putting them together will enhance better the common objective we are all looking for. That is creating a peaceful environment for development and other social intervention to take place. And I will say to the men that culture is not static, but dynamic. It is evolving. So, if you say: ‘This is how this has been in the past’ what about the current situation? Do we still hold on to what has been in the past, even if it doesn’t serve the current needs of the people?” (Asana Abudu, 14th July, 2016)

At the same time, culture – and women’s specific role in disseminating cultural norms and practices - is also used by women to strengthen their position within society. In addressing culture, motherhood remains one of the most potent – but also most ambiguous – positions of the women within Dagbon society, as it both opens and forecloses the range of women’s possibilities to act.

CHAPTER 5: MOTHERHOOD AND WOMANHOOD IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING

5.1. Motherhood, conflict and conflict resolution in Yendi.

The term motherhood defies a universally acceptable meaning and typology (Kruger, 2003). Many terms and expressions have been coined to conceptualize the archetypal representation of motherhood to explain the varied conditions under which motherhood is conceived over time and space. For example, Braverman, Price, and others have hypothesized axiomatic interpretations as “the myth of motherhood” (Braverman, 1989:244; Glenn,1994:9; Kruger,2003:198), and “the fantasy of the perfect mother” (Price,1988:17; Kruger,2003:198) to explain the inherent complexities and standards that come with motherhood across cultures.

Cherryll Walker (1995) offered a detailed interrogation of the term motherhood by building his argument on Kaplan’s (2013) ideas on motherhood as a practice and a discourse, offering the third rendition which relates to the identity of mothers as a sub-cultural group within a wider social group (Walker, 1995:424). Whereas motherhood as a practice espouses the ascribed traditional status and role of the mother such as reproduction, nurturance, caring and socializing the young ones into the social group, the dominant school of thought identifies motherhood with the general belief of womanhood, gender requirements of the woman, and the desire of every woman to have children. Be it as it may, the socio-cultural identity of motherhood in Walker’s position is the “women’s own construction of an identity

as mother - informed by the discourse of motherhood, mediated by the practice of mothering, but not a simple derivative of either” (1995:426). These varied perspectives on motherhood affirm subjective experiences attached to the social practice.

Both subjective experiences and social practice are influenced by the diverse conditions and experiences under which women live across cultures. The social identities and structures such as class, ethnicity, nationality, gender, as well as culture and beliefs systems have invariably posed a challenge in universalizing and rationalizing meanings and practices of motherhood. Besides, women play identity politics by mobilizing themselves as women/mothers in peace missions in their respective countries (Snyder, 2009:47).

This study has examined how motherhood was conceptualized to allow the respondents to engage in peace negotiation of Dagbon chieftaincy crisis, and how women used various images that are attached to motherhood (like their Sri Lankan and Argentina counterparts) to enhance their political advantage as women and mothers in the peace processes in Yendi.

In Dagbon, worldview about motherhood is deeply rooted in the culture and transcends individual couples, linking it to kinship and the wider society. Dagbon culture valorises motherhood/mothering as an epitome of divinity that births life and perpetuates it as well. The idea of motherhood is embedded in both the religious and the cosmological life of Dagbon. The belief is that motherhood is the absolute foundation of individual families, clans and lineages, as well as the society at large. There is an assumption and expecta-

tion that every woman will transition from womanhood into motherhood, hence a religious and moral requirement of every woman in Dagbon to marry to have children. Therefore, infertility is deemed as a threat to the existence of society. Meyer Fortes' studies on some societies in Ghana and other areas in Africa reveals that irrespective of the conditions or causes of childlessness, the public scorn attached to childlessness is ubiquitous in African cultures (Fortes,1978:125; Hollos and Larsen,2008:162). Children fulfil the number of socio-cultural, economic and political expectations of society in varied ways. For one, they are a sense of fulfilment to parents as they perpetuate the family lineage. For second, children remain insurance scheme against old age and labour source in subsistence communities, and a source of security against external attacks.

Consequently, the use of motherhood and the role of women as mothers has been fundamental in the women's involvement in the peace negotiation processes of the Chieftaincy crisis in Dagbon. Undoubtedly, motherhood characterized the social identity and influenced the participation of the women in the polity of the Dagbon and the peace processes (Walker, 1995). The two quotes from respondents show how strongly women rest their right to participate in governance and conflict resolution on motherhood:

“Women naturally have all the attributes when it comes to peace building because of the motherly nature that comes with them. If you look at peace building as relationship building, women are more in tune with that aspect of life than their male counterparts. But culture is playing a big challenge for women to execute this aspect of their natural calling when it comes to peace building. You know we live in a patrilineal cultural heritage, where the female is not given a prominent role and that is a big challenge to our female chiefs when it comes to effective decision making in their respective areas” (Princess Balchisu,18th July, 2016).

“The women participation in both central and local government in our part of the country is very appalling. And doing so we should combine the best of African culture and that of the West, and I believe with the changing world we cannot continue to look down on the female folk who have actually given birth to us, and nurtured us. I think it will be unfair to neglect them when it comes to matters of the society” (Hajia Adishetu, 3rd August, 2016).

According to another participant, conflict in its entirety is evil and “the last thing any mother would do is to see somebody’s child die” (Interview with Alhaji Sulemana, 17th July, 2016). This stance of Alhaji implies that the mother’s love for her child is extended towards other people’s children. To my respondents, conflicts bring painful memory of childbirth and nurturing should they lose their children. They believe that the greatest loss in every mother’s life is to watch her child being buried while she is still alive. The belief is that a child is nurtured to take up the duties of taking care of the aged parents in Dagbon culture, and so the loss of children has serious implications in life. This revelation concurs with de Alwis studies on the Mothers’ Front protest in Sri Lanka where protest was woven around the experience of motherhood, where maternal moral responsibility was the driving force in protest to demand the whereabouts of their missing relatives from the state (de Alwis, 1998:187). This moral concept of motherhood is further advanced by Tessler et.al (1999:521) that maternal care for the child resonates to a larger degree with the quest of mothers to lead in the search for amicably settlements of disputes. My interaction with Hajia Folo lends credence to the preceding discussion:

“We need peace, and it is because of our children, if there is an outbreak of conflict it will be difficult to run away with your children, and even if you do, where will you seek refuge?” (Interview, 15th July, 2016).

Madam Fusheina expressed similar feeling in the following way:

“I always maintain that whenever there is conflict and the man is running away, he will not carry a child or pregnancy! He runs with a gun. But what about the woman? Woman has children, and can she run away with them? What about her aged mother, can she run with her? So, to us women, peace is very important considering the kind of status and role we occupy in the family” (Interview, 27th July,2016)

Women also claim their motherly influence on adult children, especially sons, and not only on small children. As two of my respondents noted:

“If a woman is engaged in some form of trade, she has the capacity of controlling her sons to desists from violence. This is because the youth heavily depend on their mothers and so they stand the risk of being denied financial assistance for their upkeep should they refuse to adhere to the advice of their mothers” (Madam Fusheina, 27th July,2016).

“The mother will not support any act that will jeopardize the children’s future. Even per chance that the mother’s support of violence does not jeopardize the children’s future, what about the business she runs? She may likely lose most of her investment to conflict. Therefore, with all these possibilities if a mother does not support any peaceful means of settling disputes what else will the mother supports?” (Hajia Folo,15th July,2016).

In view of this, it is self-evident that, other factors aside, the idea of maternal care and love for the children necessitate women in Yendi to get involved in the peace negotiations processes of the chieftaincy dispute, and is used to overcome men’s resistance to women’s participation in conflict resolution.

5.2 Family, Marriage, Society

Even though the cultural norms of Dagbon do not formally permit women to join the male dominated peace negotiation table, women’s contribution to the resolution processes of the chieftaincy crisis in Dagbon is of interest to many civil society organizations and other interest groups in Northern Ghana. More importantly, the lessons drawn from many areas in the

continent - Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and other places - about the important role women play in the resolution of violent conflicts (Gbowee, 2009; Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013) are also relevant for the Dagbon women's engagements in peace.

The position of women within the family remains a central axis around which women organize their claims and activities for peace, and through which they demand recognition from the wider society. This position is not only linked to motherhood. Being the wife – and through it the member of kinship and wider community - is also crucial in women's influence in the choices of war and peace. One respondent noted:

“If you want peace, then it is the women you should work with... It is the women who come out with news and they could swiftly disseminate the news again. They equally influence their husbands to go outside and commit all sort of violence. But in the end, they are the losers because should the man die the woman's responsibilities is doubled in the house” (Princess Balchisu, 18th July, 2016).

The role of women within the family – both as mothers and as wives – remain crucial in my respondents' arguments about the need of men to take women's peace engagements seriously:

“The men should demonstrate fairness in family maintenance and also consciously facilitate the process of reducing the burdens of women, because the workload and the domestic chores that women have sometimes play down their participation of some of these processes. And since women represent the larger percentage of the entire population of Dagbon their absence in any decision-making process of the kingdom means that the interest of the majority cannot be said to be served. It is therefore an imperative that women are given the chance to objectively support their male counterparts in the search for a lasting solution to Dagbon” (Hajia Adishetu, 3rd August, 2016)

In addition, women use family and kinship relationships to analyse the conflict and the ways it affects different parties involved in it. Especially, the unequal burden of families' losses of lives – as pointed out by one of the respondents – makes for a good argument against the conflict:

“The one you go to defend, have you ever seen his immediate relatives among the warriors and the casualties? Have you seen his relatives dead? None of the family relatives of chiefs will die!! One thing the men fail to realize, or pretend to fail, is that none of the blood relatives of the two royal factions has ever fallen as victims whenever the conflict erupts. It's normally the outsiders who claim to prove their loyalties that perish. So, I tell people that they should think about it: it is that what the immediate family members see and will not partake in the conflict one should also consider that and decline to go and fight” (Madam Fusheina 27th July,2016).

These losses of lives have certainly inspired women in this part of the nation to get involved in peace negotiation processes. But, the Women in Peace Building Movement (WIPM) which was borne out of West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP)-Ghana and other interest groups, incorporated women in their agenda to see women not only as victims or instigators of conflicts, but as partners in the resolution of violent conflicts in northern Ghana. Several bodies and institutions are also dedicated to this cause. The Regional Peace Council has been instrumental in organizing programs for women in Yendi, Bimbila, Gushegu, Bawku and other conflict prone areas to raise awareness and consciousness for the need for peace in these areas.

The Catholic Diocese of Yendi, the NCCE, and other interest groups in Yendi such as Youth Empowerment for life, Yendi Youth for peace, Development in Unity Foundation-Ghana are all part of this crusade by devoting programs to mobilizing women through workshops and symposium for the purpose of disseminating peace messages in the Dagbon

society. In the words of the secretary; “the WIPM engages women in conflict prevention, peace building and how to use non-violent strategies (mediation, arbitration, negotiation, and reconciliation) to resolve conflict” (Interview, Hajia Adishetu, 3rd August, 2016). This is done by engaging the various women leaders, the queen mothers and the women chiefs, princesses as speakers and a means of reaching out to the whole Dagbon community.

As one of the respondents noted:

“There should be active involvement of the female chiefs at the various levels of the house of chiefs - regional and divisional level. This is very serious because I do not see the reason why in this part of the country when you witness house of chiefs’ meetings you do not see the feminine component seated there. I know that there are some underground consultations with the women chiefs by some of their male counterparts before they come to the meetings. But invariably when they come for meetings what happens: men often table the ideas as their own initiatives, and ignore contribution of women.” (Hajia Adishetu, 3rd August, 2016).

The female chiefs, queen mothers and other women community leaders play multiple roles here - both symbolic - as mothers of the communities, and social – as female representatives of recognized governance structures. Demanding respect for the female leaders, women demand respect from their male leaders and men of the community for the female contribution to the society at large.

CONCLUSIONS

It is observed from this study that in Ghanaian society and Dagbon specifically, efforts about peace building processes are there, including for the resolution of the Dagbon chieftaincy feud, but invariably, these efforts are limited to the men, both at the local and the national level (Tonah, 2012). However, women have struggled to join the peace building process in Yendi. My research explored women's involvement in the conflict and its resolution. The focus was on what the Dagbon women have or have not done in the conflict resolution processes, and how ideas of about gender – especially femininity (and to some extent masculinity) – have impacted women's possibilities to engage in this peace negotiation process in Yendi.

The ideas of women's involvement in the Dagbon conflict and its peace building mission became more pronounced after the 2002 crisis. Tempers were high following the death of the chief and efforts to bring factions together for negotiation and to see peace return to the area failed. Consequently, for a number of reasons the women of the area were targeted to bring into the resolutions process. First, it was observed that the crisis defied all resolution attempts, including those of government, civil society organizations and other interest groups in Dagbon, as all conflict resolution approaches had either failed or not been effective enough. In this regard, there was the need to explore new approaches to peace building. Therefore, through the programs and activities of government and civil society organizations - such as the Regional Peace Council, WANEP, WIPM-Tamale, NCCE and Catholic Diocese of Yendi - women of the area, especially the

queen mothers, female chiefs, princesses and Assembly women were brought into the peace negotiations and conflict resolution processes. They were trained in conflict management, mediation, arbitration and other forms of conflict resolutions mechanisms. The purpose was to use them to touch the masses at the grassroots to change minds and attitudes for sustainable peace and development.

Second, the women were targeted because they were the rumours mongers during the conflict, spreading all sort of lies among fellow women and instigating men to engage in the conflict, as testified by some of my respondents. In addition, women were seen as vulnerable whenever the conflict erupts. So, this paradoxical position women assumed – as conflict instigators and victims of conflict - made their involvement in the resolution process crucial.

Nonetheless, in spite of the leadership position some women assumed (Odotei, 2006), in Dagbon tradition (unlike in some other areas in Ghana) women are barred from decision making on critical community issues. The patriarchal assumption attached to femininity hinder women's involvement in most crucial issues including the conflict resolution process of the chieftaincy crisis in the area. Ironically, the shift in gender positions and roles where women take up duties as family and community heads during conflict times allowed them some public space. That allowed them to challenge gender norms that prohibited them from participating in official the peace negotiation missions.

Ideas of vulnerability and victimhood through images of motherhood were invoked by women to subvert patriarchal barriers in the peace processes of the chieftaincy crisis and create space for women's engagements. The women mobilized and identified themselves as mothers who desire peace for the safety of their own, and other women's children, as wives who can advise their husbands wisely, and as community leaders who have important contribution to the common good. In so doing they have accepted motherhood not just as a crucial role in family and community, but also as a crucial justification for engagement in local and national politics.

On a whole, women are not at the top-level decision-making in terms of politics and interventions regarding peace negotiation in Dagbon. They are at the base of the pyramid where we have the masses of the people, and that is where they are making their contribution, changing minds, attitudes and behaviours. This change, I believe, is the crux of sustainable peace building. This, I believe places a big task on the women as primary agents of socialization within the Dagbon society. It behoves therefore both government and civil society organizations to recognize those contributions of women. The transformation both women and the society undergo will go a long way to affect the younger generations. In the long-run, we can collectively build a long-lasting and sustainable society in terms of peace building if women's contributions are recognized. This relates much to Fr. Thaddeus experience of the difference between men's and women's engagements in family that, he believes, (and so do many other respondents in my research), contribute to the respect of women's roles in the wider society:

“The women are those who instil values into the children. The men don’t have time. Most of the values we acquire as children are taken from our mothers. So, we need to train the women, change their mentality, so that the children they’ll nurture will grow up to be peace-loving citizens. I can’t remember my father sitting me down to talk to me about what is right or wrong. It’s always been my mother who tells me what to do and what not” (Personal interview, Fr. Thaddeus, 3rd August, 2016).

The challenge, therefore is that peace activists and practitioners should go beyond limited, official, programmes and activities that focus only on warring parties, but should situate peace building within the social mores of the society. This again places value on women as mothers to lead in the peace building processes in Dagbon. My respondents believe in peaceful and nurturing potentials of women as wives and especially as mothers, stressing that, when children are taught to understand the values of peace it will lead to the sustainable peace in the long round. The women see the need for peace in Yendi, and want to engage in the peace processes because of their position as mothers, to ensure the security of their children that is undermined by the conflict. Here, there is a contradiction because – from the perspective of patrilineal society - emphasis is placed on women as weak vessels of culture defined in terms of motherhood. But this same cultural construction of motherhood grants women power to engage in peace missions, as both women and the society they live in believe that mothers have special duty towards their children and families. Thus, women both escape from, and remain within, some of the patriarchal notions of femininity.

At the same time, believing in power of motherhood does not mean agreeing with patriarchal norms that keep women locked in home and bar them from

participating in public matters. The women have loudly called on men to embrace the inevitable force of social change and soften their chauvinistic tendencies to make room for changes in the traditional gender set-ups. This would create, they believed, other avenues to be explored and would provide opportunities for fresh ideas to be utilized in the on-going resolution mechanisms of the conflict, and in society in general.

While literature on women and conflict mostly focuses either on women as victims or as fighters, it is important to see that women contribute to conflicts as well as to conflict resolutions in many different ways. Women who chose to work for peace – as many women in Dagbon did - proved their usefulness in peace missions. They are more sensitive to relationship disruptions, be it in family or in community. They are likely to empathize more with the victims of conflict and as culturally-assigned caregivers, can take up leading roles in child education process. When we educate woman, we indeed educate a society. Because women can play multiple roles in society and work towards correction of gender relation imbalances.

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