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*Presentation to UPF Women for Peace seminar on MDGs and the Role of Women*

*United Nations Plaza, New York, March 12, 2009*

I convey special greetings to you from the Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development, and I thank you for giving me the honor of making a presentation about our work. I wish to express my gratitude to the organizers of this session, which is a medium of networking for women involved in peace-building across the world.

Women have the capability to effect change, pave way for peace, work across conflict divides, and act as agents in conflict prevention, resolution, and reconstruction.

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is acknowledged to be one of the world's largest wetlands and Africa's largest delta. The area is richly endowed with numerous resources, especially crude oil and gas both responsible for Nigeria's oil wealth, which accounts for an estimated 90 percent of the national revenue.

The problems of the Niger Delta area and its people could be traced back to when the black crude was first discovered by the Anglo-Dutch oil exploration company, Shell, in 1957 at Oloibiri. Since then the people of these areas have been left to the mercy of oil spills, soil and land degradation, and total usurpation of the people's rights and privileges to get medical treatment as host communities in the face of pollution, gas flares, and materials used for drilling.

In the subsequent years, as more oil wealth was derived, the vast wealth from the crude was pillaged by various inept and corrupt administrations, in connivance with corrupt operators who serve as conduits for fraud. This was the beginning of the institutionalized poverty and pauperization of the people.

As years rolled by, most of the indigenous people of these areas who left the villages for the township had access to education and so were able to ascertain the quantity of oil taken from their communities and the amount of dollars involved without commensurate development of their communities. Clearly, the oil-producing areas were short-changed and the aggregate awareness of this sorry discovery has led to the complex problems that have over the years bedeviled the Niger Delta, Nigeria till this date.

While the government tried to arrest this situation, various types of militia groups sprang up and the result was pipeline vandalization and kidnapping, including wives and children of the oil workers.

Women's interests have been neglected in peace-making processes, and this is a challenge for women who determined to be active decision makers. War has terrible consequences, and the result is female-headed households with limited social, economic, and educational resources leading to increased poverty and diminished educational opportunities especially for young women and girls.

The Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development took the elusive role of mainstreaming women into an early-warning network for conflict prevention. By providing time to prepare, analyze, and plan our response, this method has been very effective in the region and has reduced the rate of conflict in the area. Early-warning information is used to forestall a resurgence of conflict and violence. It is important to note that the women's poverty rate and increased economic burden placed on them during conflict forced most women into prostitution.

If we imagine a secure region, whether it is the Niger Delta or the world, what would it look like through women's eyes and how can we help to bring it about?

First and foremost, we must redefine local, national, and global security to it focused on human dimensions rather than being virtually synonymous with weapons-based security.

Women in the Niger Delta Region are insisting on a broader vision of security which puts human rights at the forefront and where people can live free from all forms of violence, including HIV/AIDS, rape, and sexual assaults. It is this vision that has inspired the Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development to mainstream gender issues into the peace enlightenment campaign in the Niger Delta Region.

Recently, when we visited the creeks of the Niger Delta where the conflict seems to be looming and talked to women and girls whose lives have been devastated by the communal clashes, they ask the government to put an end to impunity for crimes against women during conflict. Sometimes the female teachers will be sexually harassed and they will flee the area in order to seek protection, and the result is that the children do not have access to education.

Finally, women alone cannot carry the burden of finding a solution, but their participation is vital to forging the consensus necessary to a lasting peace.

<http://feministtaskforce.org/2013/02/02/landmark-victory-in-the-niger-delta-for-rural-women/>

# Landmark Victory In the Niger Delta for Rural Women

February 2, 2013 by [Feminist Task Force](#) in [climate justice](#).

The Feminist Task Force stands in solidarity with the Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development (NDWPD), its president, Caroline Usikpedo and the rural women and families of the Niger Delta, Nigeria for pursuing justice in an ongoing "David vs. Goliath" situation pitting the rural people of the Niger Delta against the global oil corporation, Shell.

We congratulate our colleague and FTF leader, Caroline, and other activists of the Niger Delta for their perseverance, tenacity and courage for speaking up for their land, their communities and their people. The ruling on Wednesday, January 30th, marks the second landmark victory against Shell, holding it responsible for the pollution of farmlands in rural Niger Delta. They have been vindicated, albeit partially, by a Dutch court ruling against a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell holding it responsible for the pollution of farmlands in the Niger Delta.

"While we congratulate the farmers for the giant step they took for taking Shell to court and encourage the Goi and Oruma to take on appeal, we the women in the Niger Delta urge the Dutch Court to review the case and use the UNEP report as a proof for non clean ups in Ogoniland and to allow justice to have its cause to set a precedent for others to follow," — *Caroline Usikpedo-Omoniye, President NDWPD and FTF Africa representative.*

## **Statement of the Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development:**

### **Landmark victory against Shell Not Enough. Niger Delta Women urge Dutch Court to Review Judgment to Set Precedent**

A Dutch Court ruled against big oil company, Shell, holding the conglomerate responsible for the pollution of farmlands at Ikot Ada Udo, Akwa Ibom State, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The judgment handed down on Wednesday, 30 January 2013, marks the second landmark victory in the struggle against the oil company that has been causing havoc in Nigeria for over 50 years.

"We are however disappointed," said Caroline Usikpedo, President of the Nigerian organization, the Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development, "that the court ruled otherwise with regard to the Goi and Oruma and that the court concluded that there was no proof that the spills at Goi in Ogoni, Rivers State and Oruma communities in Bayelsa State were not cleaned up."

The Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development (NDWPD) is a rural based women's organization in the Delta State, with its National Secretariat in Ughelli, at the Niger Delta region, miles away from Ogoniland where oil spills have occurred for over a decade without proper clean up or compensation to its citizen. NDWPD has conducted Gender and Climate Justice hearings with women's groups and communities in nearby Odi and Jesse districts in 2009 and again in 2011 as part of the Feminist Task Force GCAP series, "[Strengthening Voices: Search for Solutions: Women's Tribunals on Gender and Climate Justice](#)," in partnership with Greenpeace International and Inter Press Service.

Niger Delta women express concern on today's Judgment by the Dutch court holding Shell accountable for the spills in the Niger Delta, excluding Ogoniland and Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

There could have been no better proof than the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Report in Abuja, August 4, 2011. Bearing in mind that UNEP brought out a report that stated that the environmental restoration of Ogoniland could prove to be the world's most wide-ranging and long term oil clean-up exercise ever undertaken if contaminated drinking water, land, creeks and important ecosystems such as mangroves are to be brought back to full, productive health.



This report from major new independent scientific assessment and carried out by UNEP, shows that pollution from over 50 years of oil operations in the region has penetrated further and deeper than many may had forecasted. The assessment was unprecedented. Over a 14-month period, the UNEP team examined more than 200 locations, surveyed 122 kilometres of pipeline rights of way, reviewed more than 5,000 medical records and engaged over 23,000 people at local community meetings.

“While we congratulate the farmers for the giant step they took for taking Shell to court and encourage the Goi and Oruma to take on appeal, we the women in the Niger Delta urge the Dutch Court to review the case and use the UNEP report as a proof for non clean ups in Ogoniland and to allow justice to have its cause to set a precedent for others to follow,” said Caroline Usikpedo-Omoniye, President NDWPD.



For more information, contact [Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development](#).

### **Download Statement: Landmark victory against Shell Not Enough.**

[Landmark victory against Shell Not Enough.](#)

Read the [Gender and Climate Justice report on Niger Delta](#) by NDWPD on the [Feminist Task Force](#) gender and climate justice blog: [www.climatejusticetribunals.blogspot.com](http://www.climatejusticetribunals.blogspot.com)

Watch the [video](#) on the 2009 [Niger Delta Women's Tribunal on Climate Justice](#)

<http://climatejusticetribunals.blogspot.com/2011/10/nigeria.html>

## **Women's Tribunal: Gender and Climate Justice: NIGERIA**

Date: October 5, 2011 Location: Ughelli, Niger Delta, Nigeria  
Organizers: Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development  
Contact: (Mrs.) Caroline Usikpedo-Omoniye, National President, NDWPD  
ndwprd2005@yahoo.com

### **Tribunal Report: Nigeria**

The Niger Delta Women's movement for Peace and Development (NDWPD) is a non-governmental/Rural Women's Organization comprised of rural women in Niger Delta region of Nigeria, long known for the environmental degradation due to oil extraction in the area. The organization is based in Delta State and has been in existence since 2005 with a vision to empower the Niger Delta women, the most vulnerable people in the region. NDWPD is in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

One of the most disturbing ironies in the Niger Delta today is that pipelines are laid across farms, waterways, fishing grounds, communities and living quarters. Not enough care is given to the technical integrity of the pipes. As result they corrode, burst and cause a deluge of oil spills and fires that devastate the environment and human lives, especially that of women and children.

Adaptation to climate change is no longer a secondary or long-term solution, it is the needed next step. Rural communities in the Niger Delta like Burutu, Forcados, Foutorugbene are very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to the many years of environmental degradation affecting the soil, the waterways, livelihoods and economies of those living in the Niger Delta region.

Impact of Climate Change:

Flooding- Excessive flooding in Foutorugbene region has severely effected education and day-to-day life of people in the region. Floodwater annually cover the locals schools resulting in children being unable to attending school during the first term.

Oil Spills: Frequent oil spills are ruining the natural environment in the Niger Delta's. Seismic blasts and other chemicals are being dumped directly into the local water supply.

Water and Sanitation – As result of oil drilling we have no safe drinking water. Our children die of cholera and other water born diseases every year.

Food security: Agriculture in the Niger Delta is highly dependent on weather patterns. The drastic changes in the rainfall pattern have severely affected agricultural yields in the region.

Change in Vegetation: There is a noticeable absence of forests in the Niger Delta. Unregulated logging, agricultural activities, acid rain, oil exploration and exploitation, urbanization and mining activities all contribute to lack of vegetation.

Gas Flaring : The flaring of gas has been practiced in the Niger Delta region for over four decades. Today, there are about 123 flaring sites in the region (Energetic Solution Conference, 2004), making Nigeria one of the highest emitter of green house gases in Africa. Gas flaring is environmentally unethical and has significantly degraded the local environment.

Recommendations:

- Women need support in capacity building, sensitization, awareness-raising and understanding climate adaptation.
- Government officials need to visit the region and see first hand the outcome of the Climate Change Tribunals in the Niger Delta.
- The local governments in the Niger Delta need to develop community emergency response plans in preparation of natural disasters.
- Governments' need to give agricultural loans to women farmers so they can be self-sufficient and better the livelihood of their families
- We call that the Nigerian Government and Shell Oil Company clean up our land and stop environmental exploitation.

Solutions:

- Nigeria's response to climate change issues must address natural resource management, agriculture, energy, economic development, health, infrastructure and transportation.
- We must adequately prepare for climate change by working within the following guidelines:
- Educate: develop adaptation trainings so that women can prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- Integrate climate change adaptation plans into national, state and local government legislations. Actualize the plans with the assistance of universities, educational organizations, civil society, the private sector and media.

Opening Presentation by the National President of the Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development, (Mrs.) Princess Caroline Usikpedo-Omoniye, October 5, 2011, Ughelli, Delta

An update from Port Harcourt-Niger Delta Nigeria!

November 9, 2011

Hundreds of Ogoni people, Monday, marched round major roads in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, protesting the failure of Federal Government to take any concrete measure to address the challenges identified by the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNEP, report on Ogoniland three months after the government received the report.



MOSOP PROTEST: Members of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, MOSOP, protesting the non-implementation of the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNEP, report on Ogoniland in Port Harcourt, yesterday.

President, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, MOSOP, Mr. Ledum Mitee, who led the protesters to Rivers State Government House, presented a letter from the Ogoni body to Governor Chibuike Amaechi for onward transmission to President Goodluck Jonathan.

Ledum said it was disturbing to note that three months after the Federal Government received the UNEP's report, it was yet to take any concrete step to address the life-threatening issues identified by the report.

Noting that it was the height of insensitivity on the part of government, MOSOP called on government and oil firms to tackle the problems brought about by oil exploration in the area.

Mitee said: "It has been three months since the report was submitted to the Presidency with details that demanded immediate action. Since then, we had been told of high level meetings and the formation of inter-ministerial committees. Yet Ogoni people have not heard from Federal Government on the report."

Yours

**FOR:**

Truly,  
**NDWPD**

**Princess (Mrs.) Caroline Usikpedo Omoniye,MCIA, B.Sc. National President NDWPD**

**(Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace & Development).**

*Honorary Ambassador ( Special Envoy) CCLP Worldwide - Nigeria  
African Representative GCAP - Feminist Task Force ( Nigeria)*

*Member, Delta State Committee on CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women)  
African Coordinator Ways Women Lead*

*With all sense of humility and gratitude to God Almighty, I warmly welcome you all on behalf of the **Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development** to this Global warming event. I send my appreciation to you all for finding time to grace this Occasion. Today is a very special day in the history of the Niger Delta Women especially women at grassroots and rural communities.*



**Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development (NDWPD)** has been in existence since 2005 with a vision to empower the Niger Delta Women, the most vulnerable people in the region. After being hit by rising poverty levels, environmental degradation, corporate exploitation and the debilitating impact of HIV/AIDS, our primary mission is to promote enduring peace in the Niger Delta, with a strong focus on women's empowerment, conflict mediation, peace building, gender and climate change issues, girl-child education, ecological imperatives, HIV/AIDS prevention, caring for orphans and vulnerable children, economic and social advancement of the women and people in the rural areas of the Niger Delta region.



As an organization determined to provide quality humane services that will ensure sustainable development in our rural communities, NDWPD is poised to allow people, especially women have access to safe and healthy environment and making sure that the environmental resources are managed in the most sustainable way to achieve socio-economic development. For us, we subscribe to the fact that development cannot be achieved where information about the environment and environmental resources are lacking; hence NDWPD will provide up-to date Information and strengthen women voices to search for solutions on the state of the Environment, Climate Change and Environmental resources.

Within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, policies and innovations to enhance adaptation to climate change cannot be viewed in isolation from current development priorities: indeed many key stakeholders recognize the need to focus on 'climate resilient' policies and innovations that address both current development

priorities as well as providing greater livelihood resilience in the face of future climate change.

*The aim of the Climate Justice Hearings is to up-scale local solutions and bringing the voices of those most affected – women and traditionally excluded groups – to influence negotiations and plans of action on climate change at the national as well as the international level during COP17 and Rio+ 20.*

*Using the model of the Feminist Task Force GCAP women's tribunals, in 2009, we organized two Tribunals and **PUBLIC HEARING ON WOMEN, WATER, POVERTY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE NIGER DELTA, NIGERIA** focusing on **Sustainable Adaptation: Women, climate change and poverty reduction** (Odi and Jesse ) which feed into the final results presented at the Klima Forum 2009 in Copenhagen.*

*In the Niger Delta, women and Children are generally more disadvantaged because of cultural factors, women need to be empowered economically to strengthen their resilience and with a special intervention programme in place to target women and men equally with adequate attention on the special needs of children. By having these tribunals, the women who are directly affected will be able to give live stories and these will be drafted and presented to the appropriate authorities for necessary actions to reduce poverty on women in Nigeria especially the Niger Delta region but most unfortunately, on the right of fair-hearing in respect to the environmental rights, the constitution has remained silent.*

**Food security:** *Agriculture in the Niger Delta is highly dependent on rain and irrigation is seldom practiced. The changes in the rainfall pattern have greatly affected the agriculture in the region.*



**Gas Flaring:** *The flaring of gas has been practiced in the Niger Delta region for over four decades. Today, there are about 123 flaring sites in the region making Nigeria one of the highest emitter of green house gases in Africa. Gas flaring is environmentally unethical and has contributed significantly to the degradation of the environment in the region.*



**Oil Spill:** The Niger Delta environment is continually degraded by frequent oil spills. Seismic blasts and the discharge of untreated effluents directly into water bodies, some of which serve as the only source of living for the people are common in the region.



The Hearing will involve authentic, specific and exemplary testimonies of women who have experienced climate change related problems - and their search for innovative, inspiring or successful solutions to them. The testimonies will explore the relationship between individual experiences with the manifestations of climate change and the action taken at the local or regional level to address the climate change issues faced by women.

The Hearing and its results will connect with GCAP's broader mobilization efforts including GCAP Global Mobilization Weekend ( 15 Oct Rural Women Day, 16 Oct World Food Day and 17 Oct International Day for Eradication of Poverty). Key events will also be organized at COP 17 (GPAf) at Durban, Johannesburg (Dec 2011) and later at the Rio+20 Summit (Jun 2012) – and with scope for the participation of women whose testimonies have been recorded at this Hearing.

**Permit me to use this opportunity to request a minute of Silence in honor of Our Great Woman Environmentalist / Nobel Laureate 2007, a civil society and women's rights activist, and a former parliamentarian *Late Dr. Wangari Maathai* who was the founder of the Green Belt Movement. My encounter with her in Copenhagen 2009 gave hope to the future of the Niger Delta Women's movement and she was expected to visit the movement later this year but she died of Cancer. (Please, may I request we rise for a minute in her honour- May her gentle soul rest in perfect peace) Amen.**

However, contrary to the Reports on the Environmental state of the Niger Delta as being conclusive, I want to leave us with this consideration that the area has become an ecological wasteland.

Climate is a fundamental element of the environment and a change in climate, which has consequently caused and still causing a change in the entire environment, affecting other elements of the environment. Solution should not only be made visible, it must be seen as evident and resourceful in the lives of our women, who are undoubtedly the base of any environment that yearns for growth and development. Thank you for your time, you are all mostly appreciated!!!

**Princess (Mrs.) Caroline Usikpedo Omoniye, MCIA, B.Sc.**  
*National President NDWPD*  
[\(Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace & Development\).](#)

*Honorary Ambassador (Special Envoy) CCLP Worldwide - Nigeria*  
*African Representative GCAP - Feminist Task Force ( Nigeria)*  
*African Coordinator Ways Women Lead*



#### **Background:**

#### **Climate Change in Nigeria: Country Assessment Review by Kejekpo Omonade, Executive Director, PAFPI**

Climate change or global warming has become a new reality, with deleterious effects: seasonal cycles are disrupted, as are ecosystems; and agriculture, water needs and supply, and food production are all adversely affected. Global warming (climate change) also leads to sea-level rise with its attendant consequences, and includes fiercer weather, increased frequency and intensity of storms, floods, hurricanes, droughts, increased frequency of fires; **all of these leads to poverty**, malnutrition and series of health and socio-economic consequences. It has a cumulative effect on natural resources and the balance of nature.

The issue of climate change in Nigeria is an aspect of environmental rights which in turn is an aspect of human rights. Environmental right is said to be violated when an individual experiences an environmental quality that fall short of an expected standard.

#### **Impact of Climate Change on Nigerian Women**

Climate change affects both men and women in Nigeria; however it is believed that the impact is more felt by women than their male counterpart. This is because, in Nigeria, women constitute the larger percentage of farmers with little or no modern skill of agricultural equipments. Although the Nigerian Constitution makes it an obligation for the state to protect and improve the environment - water, air and land in Nigeria, however, the law did not envisage any environmental constraints that are likely to prejudice the enjoyment of fundamental human rights provided under the Nigerian Constitution.

It may be interesting to note that women work more than men in the field of agriculture but receive less pay. This case is not only peculiar to Nigeria but globally. Women cultivate, plough, and harvest more than half of all the food in the world.



### **Impacts of climate change on Agricultural products**

In the contemporary Nigeria, agriculture is still the mainstay of a majority of the population, many of whom work in subsistence food production. Agriculture still provides a large percentage of the GDP and employment. Agriculture and food production are generally dependent on climate. It is also a known fact that farmers in Nigeria depends on the unpredictable weather pattern to grow and harvest their crops. As a result of this, Nigerian farmers are generally facing a tremendous challenge. Agriculture is part of the climate change problem and a foremost effect of it is felt by the agricultural sector. It is therefore correct to say that climate change threatens agricultural production through higher and more variable temperatures, and increase in floods, droughts or rainfall.

### **Food Security and Climate Change**

Nigeria is reported at the last census to have an estimated population of 140 million, 70% of this population resides in rural areas and engaged in agricultural production, majority of who are women. Despite her enormous natural and human resources, Nigeria is still ranked 159 out of 177 in terms of economic indices. The reason for this is probably due to the fact that agriculture is the main stay of Nigerian populace, and agricultural production and livelihood are increasingly becoming more susceptible to climate change. Women farmers in Nigeria rely mostly on their agricultural produce as a means of livelihood. Heavy reliance on the dwindling rainfall may lead to a reduction in crop yield and other agricultural products; occurrence of this makes live unbearable for women and their family.

Gas flaring contributes to climate change, which has serious implications for both Nigeria and the rest of the world. The burning of fossil fuel, mainly coal, oil and gas - greenhouse gases - has led to warming up the world and is projected to get much, much worse during the course of the 21st century, according to The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The harmful effects of oil spill on the environment are many. Since the discovery of oil in Nigeria in the 1956, the country has been suffering the negative environmental consequences of oil development. Oil kills plants and animals in the estuarine zone.

Oil settles on beaches and kills organisms that live there; it also settles on ocean floor and kills benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms such as crabs. Oil poisons algae, disrupts major food chains and decreases the yield of edible crustaceans. It also coats birds, impairing their flight or reducing the insulative property of their feathers, thus making the birds more vulnerable to cold. Oil endangers fish hatcheries in coastal waters and as well contaminates the flesh of commercially valuable fish.

In the Nigerian coastal environment a large areas of the mangrove ecosystem have been destroyed. The mangrove was once a source of both fuel wood for the indigenous people and a habitat for the area's biodiversity, but is now unable to survive the oil toxicity of its habitat.

Oil spills in the Niger Delta have been a regular occurrence, and the resultant degradation of the surrounding environment has caused significant tension between the people living in the region and the multinational oil companies operating there. The Idoho oil spill traveled all the way from Akwa Ibom state to Lagos state dispersing oil through the coastal states, up to the Lagos coast. This culminated in the presence of sheen of oil on the coastal areas of Cross river, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Ondo and Lagos states.

In many villages near oil installations, even when there has been no recent spill, an oily sheen can be seen on the water, which in fresh water areas is usually the same water that the people living there use for drinking and washing. On several occasions, people interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that spills in their area had made people sick who drank the water, especially children.

Results from a hypothetical simulation with the model from a point around OPL 250 Located about 150km off the Nigerian coastline shows that the simulated oil spill for wet

Season reached the shore (around Penington River) after 104hours (about 4.5 days).

### **Adaptation Strategies for Nigeria**

From the climate analyses and vulnerability assessment, the need for adaptation is very obvious. Water supply from rain could reduce in many areas as evaporation losses increases and rainfall reduces. In other places, risks of floods are higher as rainfall increases. Furthermore, the vulnerability assessment shows that the country has weak adaptive capacity. For example most farmers become completely helpless if any harvests fail. The Sokoto flood of 2010 which washed away large acreages of farm crops left many local farmers economically devastated as they had no significant alternative sources of livelihood. Suggested adaptation **strategies, strengthening voices and searching for solutions** may be completely new to a community or they may simply be an improvement on what the community is already familiar with. Essentially, they are procedures that can engender or enhance socio-economic wellbeing of societies.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: CAROLINE USIKPEDO OMONIYE, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NDWPD NDWPD2005@YAHOO.COM OR ROSA LIZARDE, GLOBAL COORDINATOR, FEMINIST TASK FORCE AT ROSAENCASA@AOL.COM**

