African Women and Peace Building

Dagogo, Doctor Farah

Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, doctordagogo5@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

The role of women in peace building in Africa has inspired a lot of literature in contemporary times. Therefore, this paper examines the role of African women in peace building effort in Africa. The paper review related literature on peace building especially in African perspective. The paper was guided by the Radical Feminism theory, and historical method was used as its research design. The secondary data gathered were thoroughly subjected to content analysis. The paper revealed some of the major challenges confronting African women in peace-building as: lack of political strength and political vision, lack of experience, exposure and skills in negotiation, advocacy and lobbying techniques, lack of resources (material and financial) and lack of sustainability in political participation. The foregoing realities point to the fat that African women are largely disadvantaged when it comes to peace building in the continent. The implication of this is that woman has largely been excluded from the peace building process in most of the Africa States. This artificial barriers inhibited women from peace building effort in African continent and Nigeria in particular. Therefore, the paper recommended among other things that Peace building activities in Africa need to support women's group and local initiatives in their own capacities, by seeing women as untapped resources and dynamic elements of post-conflict societies in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in peace building in Africa has inspired lots of literature in contemporary times. In the recent past, countries in Africa have had numerous conflicts and presently many of the problems are far from being resolved. This has caused untold hardship and suffering on the people and also taken a huge toll on the development of the continent. Africa has been in the news for being one of the locations for some of the deadliest and most protracted of conflicts in the world.

In 2006 alone, there were 17 conflicts in Africa, which were at varying degrees of forms and intensity (Agbalajobi, 2019). Of all the countries in the Greater Horn of Africa only two (Djibouti and Tanzania) can be said to be relatively stable, although each has its fair share of internal skirmishes (Mpangala, 2004). Kenya was also stable until the post-election crisis erupted.

In Sudan, where conflict has existed since 1956, almost two million people have lost their lives since the early 1980's (Harermans, 2000 cited in Agbalajobi, 2019). In Somalia, the decade-long civil war has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives while there were over 800,000 refugees and over one million internally displaced persons. The ethnic conflict in Rwanda resulted in genocide in 1994 with the killing of over half a million persons from one ethnic group. Since 1960, Africa has also faced internal conflict resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives and also rendered as refugees over half a million persons.

Boko Haram and other armed groups have continued to be a security risk to Nigeria and her neighbouring countries particularly, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Adesoji, 2011). The security threat which Boko Haram poses to the Lake Chad basin comes to the fore, even more, when Nigeria's geostrategic and economic importance is put into consideration. As the largest economy in this region, a threat to Nigeria's national and economic security is construed as a threat to the entire territory. The leaky borderlines connecting the countries of the region make it easy for the effects of armed conflict and insecurity in one country to spill over to the others.

It is a truism that fighting in most armed conflicts is usually intermittent, with a wide range in intensity. It usually occurs not on well-defined battlefields but in and around communities, and is often characterized by personalised acts of violence, such as atrocities committed by former neighbours and, in extreme cases, genocide. In some cases, the fighting spills over to neighbouring countries used by one of the parties in the armed conflict as supply routes or hideouts for combatants. Home-grown weapons, such as machetes and spears, maim many in armed conflicts, but imported machine-guns, grenades, mortars and armoured vehicles kill many more. The weapons are acquired by warring parties, either through hard currency purchases or through what is known as "parallel financing", which involves the sale or barter of goods, such as diamonds, oil, timber and coffee. There is usually some level of external involvement, whether in the form of arms supply to the warring factions, provision of military advisers or direct combat support for a particular side, as was noted in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Williams, 2000).

Women and children, in particular, suffer unspeakable atrocities in armed conflicts. In the past decade, according to one estimate, up to two million of those killed in armed conflicts were children (United Nations, 1996). Three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled, many of them maimed by landmines, and millions were psychologically scarred by violence. Countless others have been forced to witness or even to take part in horrifying acts of violence. The widespread insecurity and trauma due to the atrocities and suffering of the civilian population is another terrible legacy of these conflicts. Conflicts create extensive emotional and psychosocial stress associated with

attack, loss of loved ones, separation from parents and destruction of home and community. Many children develop problems, such as flashbacks, nightmares, social isolation, heightened aggression, depression and diminished future orientation. These problems of mental health and psychosocial functioning persist long after the fighting has ceased and make it difficult for children, who may comprise half the population, to benefit fully from education or to participate in post-conflict reconstruction. The psychosocial impact of armed conflict is often an aspect poorly addressed by governments, as are their root causes, such as exclusion and polarization of groups, in their efforts to rebuild society and prevent a relapse of violence (Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 1998).

Sexual violence is another ruthless weapon of armed conflicts. Warring parties resort to rape and sexual slavery of women to humiliate, intimidate and terrorise one another, as, in the recent conflict Rwanda. Rape has been a weapon of ethnic cleansing aimed to humiliate and ostracise women and young girls for bearing the "enemy's" child and to eventually destroy communities.

Refugees and internally displaced persons, a huge bulk of which are usually women, form part of the symptoms of armed conflicts, communal violence motivated by ethnic or religious hatred, persecution and intolerance. Simply put, African states have had several conflicts with harsh realities as observed in countries like Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan etc.

The consequences of this conflict vary in scope, intensity, and nature. Conflict has taken immeasurable toll on human lives, leaving people dead, maimed, and displaced either internally or in other nations. In such calamitous situations, women and girls are often exposed to acts of violence that seriously undermine their human rights and deny them opportunities arising from gender inequality. Studies have shown that women are worst hit in situations of violent conflict and are also affected differently from men during these crises (Agbalajobi, 2019). It is becoming increasingly obvious that women have unique opportunities for conflict resolution and peace building due to the unique role they play in society.

The foregoing being obvious, this paper examines the role of African women in peace building and conflict resolution especially as they are often mostly affected by the conflicts that are rife on the African continent.

Women in Africa constitute a greater percentage of those impacted negatively by violent conflicts. They lose husbands, sons, properties, and suffer from unspeakable violence. Most must take on additional responsibility as the head of their households. However, during peace building processes, they are sidelined from contributing towards resolution of the conflicts and prevention of future ones. The need to increase women's involvement in peace building processes is demonstrated by the landmark United Nations Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security (UN, 2010). The principles of the resolution continue to gain support globally. By 2013, seven regional organizations had adopted 1325 national action plans or related policies, conventions and protocols (Miller, Pournik and Wsaine, 2014).

Easy implementation of the resolution will require dealing with contextual issues at the local levels, which differ from one African state to the other. Several literature have examined the importance of the resolution, but most have overlooked the realities that make it impossible to accomplish this much-needed goal. To uncover these realities will require an examination of the experiences of women from their own point of view, the challenges they encounter as well as their suggested strategies for overcoming them to give women greater threshold to contribute to peace building for the development of Africa.

Concept of Peace Building

When it comes to writing on the concept of peace building, it is proper to say that an awful lot has been done in this area by different scholars. Boutros-Ghali (1992) cited in Agbalajobi (2019) defines the term peace building as ranging from specific tasks that might derive from a comprehensive peace agreement –such as helping to disarm the parties, canton troops, and hold or destroy weapons; monitoring elections; fielding civilian police; and repatriating refuges –through far broader and less tangible objectives such as the restoration of order, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation. Kofi Anan (1997) cited in Agbalajobi (2019) defines peace building as "the various concurrent and integrated actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation".

The way in which gender is integral to peace, and violent conflict makes clear that a gendered analysis of peace building is essential to preventing and mitigating new violent conflict in societies while helping them recover from current conflicts.

This paper adopts the definition of peace building announced in the "Peace building Initiative Strategic Framework" by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (2002). The CIDA describes peace building as the effort to strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. The overarching goal of peace building is to enhance the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence. Ultimately, peace building aims at building human security, a concept which includes democratic governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equitable access to resources, and environmental security...Peace building may involve conflict prevention, conflict resolution, as well as various kinds of post-conflict activities. It focuses on the political and socio-economic context or humanitarian aspects. It seeks to...institutionalize the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Peace building and resolution are here considered to constitute simultaneous and reinforcing sets of activities with an intricate and organic relationship much as human rights principles relate to broad development goals. One cannot be done without the other. It is therefore important that all sectors of society, which are present in one way or another in all aspects of an ongoing conflict, are represented in negotiations and actions that seek to lay the foundation for peace and post-conflict resolution. This reality makes it highly necessary for women to be factored in the process of peace building in conflicts-replete Africa.

Barnett (2007) aptly explains that peace-building is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct.

Tschirgi, (2004) posits that, "The process of building peace must rely on and operate within a framework and a time frame defined by sustainable transformation... a sustainable transformative approach suggests that the key lies in the relationship of the involved parties, with all that the term encompasses at the psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and military levels". This ideally should be the case in the Niger delta, a region in which women have largely been neglected in the post-Amnesty era with attendant consequences. Richmond (2004, p.2) adds that, "Cultivating an infrastructure for peace-building" means that "we are not merely interested in 'ending' something that is not desired. We are oriented toward the building of relationships that in their totality from new patterns, processes, and structures". This is what is actually required in the Niger Delta as the status quo

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSN (electronic): 2620-6269/ ISSN (printed): 2615-4021

Vol. 4 No. 8 | Aujust 2022   **5**

in which the people, especially women, have been exploited immensely is no longer acceptable and demands a redress.

Peace-building is an activity that aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict (Laue, 1991). The other side of conflict i.e. the side that represents harmony and reflects a mutually satisfying relationship is peace. It is a product of individual, group and state interaction at the many levels of social, political and economic life. Peace is a situation generally characterized by the absence of war and violence in which human interactions are conducted in an orderly manner and disputes arising from such interactions are settled peacefully. Narrowly defined, peace is the absence of war.

Laue (1991) defined peace as a process of continuous and constructive management of differences toward: the goal of more mutually satisfying relations, the prevention of escalation of violence, and the achievement of those conditions that exemplify the universal well-being of human beings and their groups from the family to culture and the state. Efemini (2005) posited that peace is a dialectical concept that has character and therefore to understand the character of peace in the Niger Delta region, there is the need to appreciate the political economy of oil production within the context of the Nigerian state. However, positive definitions of peace transform conflict resolution into a continuous peace-building, peacemaking and peacekeeping processes to deal with social conflict and create the socio-economic and political conditions that guarantee social justice.

As human experience seems to indicate that the absence of war and violence cannot be maintained without social justice, and social justice cannot be achieved under conditions of war and violence, what is needed is realistic peace. This is described as the absence of violence under conditions and relationships that provide for the non-violent resolution of political conflict and the freedom to pursue legitimate individual and group goals without threat or coercion. Peace-building must therefore be understood and employed as a continuous process to lessen social tension, resolve political conflict and create conditions to pursue freedom and justice through a gradual evolution of human perceptions and socio-political institutions. Since human and organizational interaction is a continuous process of gradual change and transformation, neither conflict nor peace exists without the other, making them two societal and mental states in flux. Thus, conflict and peace are two interchangeable but always co-existing processes that can be enhanced or weakened, accelerated or de-escalated, maintained or abandoned, but never eliminated. And, examined from a wider perspective, either peace or conflict is all good or bad (Efemini, 2005). In fact, peace without conflict is stagnation, and conflict without peace is chaos, making peace and conflict two pre-conditions for continued human progress and organizational regeneration.

Moulton (2020) explains that peace-building is a process intended to resolve current conflicts and prevent future conflicts by addressing the causes of the problem and building a comprehensive strategy to encourage lasting peace. Successful peace-building not only stops or prevents violent conflict, it changes the way disagreement is handled in a society or between nations. It focuses on the desire to maintain peace while acknowledging problems and disagreements as a normal part of human interaction. Rather than rushing to violence, peace-building teaches the different parties how to address their problems rationally, how to find solutions cooperatively, and how to identify new problems early enough to address them before further problems arise. HoweverCall (2008) points out that, "There is no single process or strategy used in peace-building because no two situations are ever the same". It is on this score that it is necessary to carefully look at peace-building role by women in conflicts and their resolution in Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The paper was guided by the Radical Feminism theory. The proponents of this theory include Ellen Willis, Daine Bell, Mary Daly, Shulamith Firestone, Kathie Sarachild, Ti-Grace Atkinson, Carol Hanisch, Alice Echole, Anne *Koedt, Ellen Levine, Anita Rapone,* Judith Brown, Catharine MacKinnon, Melissa Farley, Gail Dines, Janice Raymond, Germaine Greer, Sheila Jeffreys, Julie Bindel etc.

Radical Feminism is a perspective within feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts (Willis, 1984). Gamble (2001) points out that the ideology of Radical Feminism in the United States developed as a component of the women's liberation movement. It grew largely due to the influence of the civil rights movement, that had gained momentum in the 1960s, and many of the women who took up the cause of radical feminism had previous experience with radical protest in the struggle against racism.

Chronologically, Radical Feminism can be seen within the context of second wave feminism that started in the early 1960s. Many local women's groups in the late sixties, such as the Women's Liberation Front (WLF), offered diplomatic statements of Radical Feminism's ideologies. WLF co-founder Devra Weber recalls, "... the radical feminists were opposed to patriarchy, but not necessarily capitalism. In our group at least, they opposed the so-called male dominated national liberation struggles" (*Linden-Ward and Green, 1993*). "Radical feminism had a 'powerful influence' on the 'women's movement' and played a tremendous role in shaping feminist politics" (Willis, 1984).

Radical feminists seek to abolish patriarchy by challenging existing social norms and institutions, rather than through a purely political process. This includes challenging the notion of traditional gender roles, opposing the sexual objectification of women, and raising public awareness about such issues as rape and violence against women.

Early Radical Feminism, arising within second-wave feminism in the 1960s, typically viewed patriarchy as a "trans-historical phenomenon" prior to or deeper than other sources of oppression, "not only the oldest and most universal form of domination but the primary form" and the model for all others. Later politics derived from Radical Feminism ranged from cultural feminism to more syncretic politics that placed issues of class, economics, etc. on a par with patriarchy as sources of oppression (Willis, 1984).

Echols (1989) explains that Radical feminists locate the root cause of women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems (as in liberal feminism) or class conflict (as in anarchist feminism, socialist feminism, and Marxist feminism). Radical feminists assert that society is a patriarchy in which the men are the oppressors of the class of women. They posit that because of patriarchy, women have come to be viewed as the "other" to the male norm and as such have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. They furthermore assert that men as a class benefit from the oppression of women. Radical feminists seek to abolish patriarchy, and believe that the way to do this and to deal with oppression of any kind is to address the underlying causes of it through revolution.

Zerilli (2005) posits that while some radical feminists propose that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form of oppression, one that cuts across boundaries of all other forms of oppression, others acknowledge the simultaneous and intersecting effect of other independent categories of oppression. These other categories of oppression may include, but are not limited to, oppression based on race, social class, perceived attractiveness, sexual orientation, and ability.

Patriarchal theory is not generally defined as a belief that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women. Rather, patriarchal theory maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is a relationship of dominance, where one party is dominant and exploits the other party for the benefit of the former. Radical feminists believe that men (as a class) use social systems and other methods of control to keep women (and non-dominant men) suppressed (Chesler, 2005). Radical feminists also believe that eliminating patriarchy, and other systems which perpetuate the domination of one group over another, will liberate everyone from an unjust society.

Some radical feminists called for women to govern women and men, among them Phyllis Chesler, Monique Wittig (in fiction), Mary Daly, Jill Johnston, and Robin Morgan (Zerilli, 2005).Redstockings co-founder Ellen Willis wrote in 1984 that radical feminists "got sexual politics recognized as a public issue," "created the vocabulary... with which the second wave of feminism entered popular culture," "sparked the drive to legalize abortion", "were the first to demand total equality in the so-called private sphere" ("housework and child care ... emotional and sexual needs"), and "created the atmosphere of urgency" that almost led to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (Willis, 1984). The influence of Radical Feminism theory can be seen in the adoption of these issues by the National Organization for Women (NOW), a feminist group that had previously been focused almost entirely on economic issues (Willis, 1984).

It is appropriate to relate this theory to the topic of study in this research. Considering that the topic is focused on African women and peace building, it is only befitting that the Radical Feminism theory should be applied as what its scholars have said about it hold much relevance for the situation in this area of study. Giving due regard to the much that the different scholars above have said about the Radical Feminism theory, it will help us to point out the need to stop gender inequality and create the enabling environment for women empowerment programmes to function properly and thus give them the leverage to participate in peace building in Africa. Women have largely been excluded because many of them have not been empowered and the ingrained gender inequality problem in Africa. Consequently we need to radically follow the dictates of this theory to ensure that women are impressively empowered to increase their participation in peace building in Africa. This will embolden the women and help them reduce their mistreatment and exploitation as well as marginalization by the menfolk and thus contribute to the overall development of Africa.

Methodology

The paper adopted a historical method. According to Good and Scates (1954), historical composition is a synthetic and constructive process that involves the mechanical problem of documentation, the logical problem of selection and arrangement of topics and sub-topics and the philosophical problem of interpretation. Historical method being a scientific one, a historical researcher has to pass through stages similar to those of an experimental research worker, such as stating and delimiting the problem, and selecting the sources. There are three major steps in historical research. They are:

a) Collection of data through primary and secondary sources.

b) Criticism of the data, including the internal and external examination.

c) Presentation of facts in a readable form involving problems of organisation, composition, exposition and interpretation.

The pre-requisite of research is the collection of adequate, accurate, and reliable facts about the problem under investigation. The success of research depends on the, validity of the information that is

collected. Therefore the selection of suitable instruments for collecting relevant data is important.

Historical sources usually fall into two categories, namely, primary and secondary.

Primary sources are extensively used in this study. Primary sources used in this study are letters, minutes, reports, published and unpublished documents, periodicals, newspapers and books. Primary sources are the original documents or remains, the first witness to a fact. It is the only solid basis of historical work (Good and Scates, 1954). They may be of two kinds. (a) Consciously transmitted information in the form of oral or written testimony or records kept and written by actual participants or witnesses of an event. Constitutions, charters, court-decisions, official minutes or records, autobiographies, letters, diaries, genealogies, deeds, wills, permits, licenses, declarations, proclamations and reports come under this category. (b) Unconscious testimony in the form of remains or relics, e.g., human remains (fossils, tools, weapons, household articles and clothes) and language, literature, arts, and institutions of various types (Sukhia, Mehrotra and Mehrotra, 1974). Some of these were incorporated in this work.

It is not always possible to obtain primary evidence, and therefore at times the historian has to rely on secondary sources. "The sources of information transmitted by one who was neither a participant in, nor an eye witness to the original event are called secondary sources" (Sukhia, Mehrotra and Mehrotra, 1974). Secondary sources include such materials as history, encyclopedias and books. In this study also secondary sources have been used to supplement the primary sources. Therefore a number of books have been consulted.

The main sources of the secondary sources include textbooks, journals, magazines, Internet, government publications, newspaper articles, biographies, scholarly articles, encyclopedias, materials gotten from the Internet and other relevant materials.

Given that the historical approach was applied in this study, it did not use a sampling technique. The key instrument used was the archive, which included textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines, materials culled from the Internet etc.

Empirical Review

Chitando (2020) re-centres African women scholars in the discourse on African women and peacebuilding, combining theoretical reflections with case studies in a range of African countries. The chapters outline the history of African women's engagement in peacebuilding, introducing new and neglected themes such as youth, disability, and religious peacebuilding, and laying the foundations for new theoretical insights. Providing case studies from across Africa, the contributors highlight the achievements and challenges characterising women's contributions to peace building on the continent. This book has the potential of being of interest to students and scholars of peace building, African security and gender.

Muyangwa (2020) is a work is an open access book on the state of peace building in Africa that brings together the work of distinguished scholars, practitioners, and decision makers to reflect on key experiences and lessons learned in peace building in Africa over the past half century. The core themes addressed by the contributors include conflict prevention, mediation, and management; post-conflict reconstruction, justice and Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration; the role of women, religion, humanitarianism, grassroots organizations, and early warning systems; and the impact of global, regional, and continental bodies. The book's thematic chapters are complemented by six country/region case studies: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan/South Sudan,

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSN (electronic): 2620-6269/ ISSN (printed): 2615-4021

Vol. 4 No. 8 | Aujust 2022   **9**

Mozambique and the Sahel/Mali. Eachchapter concludes with a set of key lessons learned that could be used to inform the building of a more sustainable peace in Africa.

Hendricks (2009) makes out that UNSCR 1325 affirms the importance of women in peace building and urges member states to increase representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) held a workshop on Women and Peace building in Africa 24-25 November 2008. Participants from the region gathered to reflect critically on the engagement of women in peace building initiatives and to think through ways of implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 more effectively.

Ball (2018) is a book that explores and reflects on peace building, which emerges from the experiences and realities of women's lives in East Africa, specifically, in Uganda. The author argues that often these community based peace building efforts are responses to women's struggles for survival — both individually and for their families and communities. Carefully analyzing education, women's roles, human rights, conflicts, disability and immigration, this book helps to understand African women's roles in development and peace building in the region. The work will most certainly interest development studies and African politics scholars, graduate students, researchers and policy makers.

Jobarteh, (2017) is a work that aims to examine the effects of conflict on women and their major contributions to the quest for peace in the Mano River Region, West Africa. The paper traces the strategies used by women in building peace, those conditions in women's lives which are unfavorable to its realization, and thus the need to involve them in peace-building.

Rashid and Niang (2020) used their work in a book titled *Researching Peace Building in Africa* to examine the multifaceted nature of conflict and the importance of the socio-economic and political contexts of conflict and violence and shows how to support ongoing initiatives and programmes to build sustainable peace on the African continent. Drawing on a range of conceptual framings in the study of peace and conflict, from gender perspectives to institutionalist to decolonialisation perspectives, and the contributor's show how peace building research covers a whole range of questions that go beyond concerns for post-conflict reconstruction strategies. Chapters focus on the methodological, theoretical and practical aspects of peace-building and provide a toolbox of perspectives for conceptualizing and doing peace-building research in Africa. Anchored in African-centered perspectives, the book encourages and promotes high-quality interdisciplinary research that is conflict-sensitive, historically informed, theoretically grounded and analytically sound. This book will be of benefit to scholars, policy makers and research institutions engaged in peace building in Africa.

African Women and Peace Building

During the past few years, there has been an increasing recognition by government, international organizations, and civil society of the importance of gender equality and empowerment of women in the continuing struggle for equality, democracy and human rights, as well as for poverty eradication and development (El-Bushra, 2000).In nearly every country and region of the world, there has been progress on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, although this progress has been uneven and the gains remain fragile. A great challenge facing the world today is the growing violence against women and girls in armed conflict. In today's conflict, they are not only the victims of hardship, displacement and warfare, they are directly targeted with rape, forced pregnancies, and assault as deliberate instruments of war. Women are deeply affected by conflicts, which they have had no role in

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSN (electronic): 2620-6269/ ISSN (printed): 2615-4021

Vol. 4 No. 8 | Aujust 2022   **10**

creating.

Armed conflict and its aftermath affect women's lives in ways that differ from the impact on men. Men in communities under attack tend to abandon public spaces to avoid being conscripted, attacked, or taken hostage. This increases the burden placed on women to hold communities together in the absence of men at war. On the other hand, women as symbols of community and/or ethnic identity may become the targets of extensive sexual violence. Conflict in some places has highlighted the use of rape as a tool of warfare. In Rwanda, women were raped as a means of ethnic cleansing, serving not only to terrorize individual victims but also to inflict collective terror on an ethnic group.

An intensive literature explores the interconnections between the roles of women and men in conflict situations and the politics of identity and agency. Literature on Rwanda, Mozambique, Palestine, and Sri Lanka show that women may be victims, but they also often participate actively as soldiers, informants, couriers, sympathizers, and supporters.

Conflict brings with it terrible human rights consequences for all involved –children, women and men. The impact of conflict on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women, in particular, is often devastating. In spite of the fact that conflict has a high level of impact on the lives of women, it is disheartening to note that they are not fully involved in the peace building process because of its gendered nature (Agbalajobi, 2019). Women's interests have been neglected by the peace process, which has resulted in male-centered approaches to peace and security. The intrinsic role of women in global peace and security has remained unrecognized since the creation of the United Nations. In the past decade, many countries have embarked upon the difficult transition from armed conflict towards resolution and peace building. The international community's role in this transition has shifted from narrow humanitarian and relief activities to more comprehensive efforts to foster sustainable peace. At the same time, the community has shifted from a stepped approach from relief to development to one that combines a broader package of concurrent steps. Development organizations have become increasingly engaged in activities during post-conflict, devoting time and resources to supporting this transition.

Building a lasting peace that sustains post-war economic, political, and social development requires the full participation of all citizens, women inclusive. Yet it is increasingly recognized that the role of women in peace building settings has received inadequate policy attention. According to Theo Ben Gurirab, Namibian Minister of Foreign Affairs (cited in Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2005), attempts to address the human rights consequences of conflict, including the particular impact on women, can only be comprehensive and long-lasting if women play active part in all the relevant processes and mechanisms given the gender-differentiated impact of war on women.

It is important to know that preventing a war is entirely different than resolving one once it has begun. In order to prevent conditions that give rise to violent conflict from coalescing, capable societies must be created. These societies are characterized by three components: 1) security, 2) well-being, and 3) justice for all of its citizens, including its women. According to Lute (2002), women's roles in promoting these three causes provide examples of their activities towards preventing the emergence, spread, or renewal of mass violence.

The belief that women should be at the center of peace building and resolution processes is not based on essentialist definitions of gender (Agbalajobi, 2019). The field of sociology makes a distinction between sex and gender. Human beings are not born 'men' or 'women'. Masculinity and femininity is learned, rehearsed, and performed daily (Butler, 1999).

It would be naïve to assert that all women respond in a similar manner in a given situation or that women are 'natural peace builders' (Agbalajobi, 2019).Gender identity is performed differently in different cultural contexts. Gender identity must always be viewed in relationship with an individual's other identities such as his or her ethnicity, class, age, nation, region, education, and religion. It is important to note that there are different expectations for men and women in various sector of the society and gender roles shift with social upheaval. In conflict situation, men and women face new roles and changing gender expectations. Their biological and sociological differences affect conflicts and peace building. In all, most societies value men and masculinity more than women and femininity (Agbalajobi, 2019).

Despite this existence of 'sexism' or 'patriarchy', there are some widely accepted reasons why women are important to all peace building processes. Women are important because they constitute half of every community, and the task of peace building, a task which is so great, must be done in partnership with both women and men. Secondly, women are the central caretakers of families in most cultures, and everyone is affected when women are oppressed and excluded from peace building. Therefore, it is essential that women be included in the peace building process.

Women play important roles in the process of peace building, first as activists and advocates for peace, women wage conflict nonviolently by pursuing democracy and human rights. Secondly, as peacekeepers and relief aid workers, women contribute to reducing direct violence. Thirdly, as mediators, trauma healing counselors, and policymakers, women work to 'transform relationships' and address the root of violence. Lastly, as educators and participants in the development process, women contribute to building the capacity of their communities and nations to prevent violent conflict. This is made possible as a result of socialization processes and the historical experience of unequal relations and values that women bring to the process of peace building (Agbalajobi, 2019).

Rono (2000) cited in Agbalajobi (2019) points out the following as challenges faced by women in the quest to participate in the peace building process in Africa:

1. Lack of political strength and political vision: Women suffer from "political illiteracy". They lack an ideological framework that could give teeth to a strong position adopted by a collective women's. Peace building as a political activity and therefore requires political strategy for engagement.

2. Lack of experience, exposure and skills in negotiation, advocacy and lobbying techniques: Women have always been kept secluded from the political arena and sphere of decision-making; therefore, in many situations they are unable to participate.

3. Lack of a political platform: Without a political platform, women are on the margins of action and lack confidence in participating in the peace building process.

4. Lack of visibility: Women's conflict-resolution activities are confined to the informal sector, very often at the periphery of official peace negotiation. In addition, even if women contribute to the promotion of peace, they are not invited to participate in formal negotiations.

5. Lack of resources (material and financial): Most of the time women's groups lack themeans to back up their actions. In some instances, they are unable to get across to the media network to enhance their peace campaign because they do not have a budget for multi-dimensional activities. Further, they are not part of main fund raising channels and networks. They work on a voluntary basis at the grassroots levels, pooling their own resources together to get an office, desk, and phone line.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSN (electronic): 2620-6269/ ISSN (printed): 2615-4021

Vol. 4 No. 8 | Aujust 2022   **12**

6. Lack of sustainability in political participation: Representation does not necessarily mean meaningful and recognized participation that has an impact on substantial inputs in peace agreement. In addition, once a peace process is over, women often return to more traditional activities, losing their gains and public presence. These losses make it very difficult for women to return to the public stage later when peace building and conflict resolution begin.

The foregoing realities point to the fat that African women are largely disadvantaged when it comes to peace building in this continent. Consequently, the onus falls on all well-meaning Africans to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to give women more prominent roles in peace building.

Regarding the factors that help or influence women to contribute to peace building in Africa today, we can comfortably point to the fact that many states in Africa are today creating more space for women in leadership positions. Besides, women have a population advantage that could be properly harnessed to strengthen their participation. Also, many more women are today getting an education in Africa, which has considerably limited their marginalisation. Additionally, women are held in high esteem in some African lands and cultures, which leverages them to actively participate in peace building in such lands. Also, many women associations are coming up by the day to strengthen their contribution to peace building. The foregoing realities point to the fact that the prospects of women's participation in peace building is increasing by the day in Africa.

Findings

In the course of carrying out this study the findings that have been made by the researcher are as follows:

1. It is the finding of this work that woman have largely been excluded from the peace building process in Africa.

2. Some association of cultural, social, political and economic realities in Africa tend to disadvantage women from active participation in peace building in Africa.

3. There is the inadequacy of policy reforms in support of gender equality in Africa, which is a reality that negatively impinges on their empowerment and active participation in peace building.

4. The key to achieving high standards in women's empowerment lies in women education, which will help them to develop skills and self-confidence much as it will also enable them to participate effectively in peace building in Africa. This means that women/girls should have much education just as the men.

5. It is the finding of this paper that in Africa women are more economically disadvantaged than men, which generally makes them excluded from broad-based participation peace building processes in the continent.

6. Peace building in Africa has been largely male biased.

Conclusion

It is important that women participate in peace-building processes in accordance with the United Nations Resolution 1325. Sadly, the situation in Africa shows that women have immensely been neglected in the process of peace-building. Several conclusions could have been drawn from the discourse on African women and peace building. With women being sidelined in the peace building process, it is proper to suggest that the process should be complemented by other innovative measures such as wide consultation with various stakeholders and inclusion of women in Africa. Essentially, the

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ISSN (electronic): 2620-6269/ ISSN (printed): 2615-4021

Vol. 4 No. 8 | Aujust 2022   **13**

need for sustainable peace in Africa would have been achieved if the living standards of the majority of the people in the region had drastically improved. A lasting solution to the intractable violence in Africa could be found within the contest of women empowerment, traditional logic of equity and redemption of the state.

Development is in all of its ramifications a critical factor and it must be a driving force for peace-building efforts in Africa. Active participation of Africa women in peace building is likely to motivate combatants to maintain peace and contribute towards the development of the continent. The success of peace building initiative in Africa would be guaranteed if the unequal exchange relationships that place the continent in a disadvantaged position are balanced. In this regard, the international community, African governments, non-governmental organisations, Multinational Companies etc should unanimously agree to put Africa at the center of their priorities to resolve conflicts with women being given a wide horizon of participation. Furthermore, there is a need for private-public sectors partnership to reinforce the implementation of human capital development and economic development agenda for Africa, which should largely involve women that incidentally are great agents of development.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this paper are as follows:

1. There is a need to overcome the obstacles that hinder women from participating in peace building and post-conflict resolution process in Africa. Women need to take advantage of the transformative experiences of war and the resulting weakened patriarchal order to build up a strong women's movement before it is too late --before traditions that oppress women return to take over the space that had opened momentarily. Women need to build up a strong movement before conflicts and war start and to sustain it through the war and after ceasefire.

2. The movement should help to build bridges between different groups in civil society, thus bolstering the continued struggle for respect for women's rights without waiting for the end of the hostility to be implemented. For African woman to be effective in the peace building role, they must organize themselves, strive for institutional, political and legal representation, and create solidarity and support through local, regional, and international networks.

3. The international community must also continue to facilitate the involvement of local women in peace negotiations. The community should also help to promote more gender awareness, and to review the content of laws that perpetuate discrimination against women, constitutional reforms, judicial reforms, election participation, as well as access to and control over economic resources, education, and training. This is because despite the ground breaking contributions made by women's groups, gender equity mechanisms created during peace negotiations still remain weak.

4. Peace building activities in Africa need to support women's group and local initiatives building in their own capacities, by seeing women as untapped resources and dynamic elements of post-conflict societies in Africa, Africa, and beyond. Therefore, there is a need to have a discussion with women's groups and movements that would convey more details on how conflict or waging conflict affects people on the ground. There is also a need to provide information about the concerns that women have, thus empowering women as major and serious actors who should be included in conflict resolution and peace building.

References

1. Adesoji, A. O. (2011). Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram: Islamic fundamentalism and theresponse of the Nigerian state." *Africa Australia*, 57(4).

2. Agbalajobi, D. T. (2019). "The role of African women in peace building and conflict resolution:The case of Africa". Article 9. Retrieved on the 2nd of September, 2021 fromhttps://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/the-role-of-african-women-in-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution-the-case-of-Africa.pdf.

3. Ball, J. (2018). *Women development and peace building in Africa*. Springer.

4. Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

5. Call, C. T. (2008). "Building state to build peace? A critical analysis". *Journal of peace-buildingand development* 4, No. 2.

6. Canadian International Development Agency (2002). Peace building initiative strategicframework". Retrieved on the 2nd of September, 2021 from <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca>.

7. Chesler, P. (2005). *Women and madness.* Palgrave Macmillan.

8. Chitando, A. (2020). *Women and peace building in Africa*. Routledge.

9. *Echols, A. (1989).Daring to be bad: Radical feminism in America 1967-1975.University of Minnesota Press.*

10. Efemini, A. (2005). "Peace, security and sustainable development in Nigeria's Niger Delta region: Rethinking the oil companies and academic cooperation". A mimeo.

11. El-Bushra, J. (2000). "Transformation conflict: Some thoughts on a gendered understanding of conflict processes". In S. Jacobs, R. Jacobson, and J. Marchbank (Eds.), *States of conflicts: Gender violence and resistance*. Zed.

12. Good, C. V. and Scates, D. E. (1954). *METHODS OF RESEARCH: EDUCATIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND SOCIOLOGICAL*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

13. Laue, J. H. (1991). "Combinations of the emerging field of conflict resolution" in T. Scott et al (Eds.), *Approaches to peace*. United States Institute of Peace.

14. Gamble, S. (ed) (2001). *The Routledge companion to feminism and post-feminism*. Routledge.

15. Hendricks, C. (2009). *Women and peace building in Africa*. Springer.

16. Jobarteh, N. (2017). *The inclusion of women in peace building in West Africa*. Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.

17. Miller, B., Pournik, M. and Swaine, M. (2014). Women in peace and security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature review, content analysis of national action   plans, and implementation. Washington: The George Washington University.

18. Moeini. S. (2014). Approaches to identify research gaps and generate research questions. Retrieved on the 1st of September, 2021 from   https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140912150946-275561203-6-very-useful-approaches   to-identify-research-gaps-and-generate-research-questions.

19. Moulton, S. (2020). "Peace-building: Definitions and strategies". Retrieved on the 2nd of September, 2021 from https://study.com/academy/lesson/peace-building-definition strategies.html.

20. Mpangala, G.P. (2004). Origin of political conflict and peace building in the Great Lakes region. Paper presented at the symposium "Ramifications of Instability in the Great Lakes Zones", organized by the Command and Staff College, Arusha, Africa, February 23.

21. Muyangwa, T. M. M. (2020). *The state and peace building in Africa*. Springer Nature.

22. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2005). Report from the expert seminar: Women in conflict prevention and crisis management. Vienna: Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE in co-operation with Folke Bernadotte Academy.

23. Rashid, I. and Niang, A. (2020). *Researching peace building in Africa*. Routledge.

24. Sukhia, S. P., Mehrotra, P. V. and Mehrotra, R. N. (1974). *Elements of Educational Research.* New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

25. Tschirgi, N. (2004). "*Post-conflict peace-building revisited: Achievements, limitations, and challenges*". WSP International/IPA Policy Report, 9.

26. United Nations, Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996). "Report of Graça Machel, Expert of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (Selected Highlights)". p. 7. Retrieved on the 1st of September, 2021 from (DPI/1834-96-22765-October 1996-5M).

27. United Nations Secretary General. (2010). "Women's participation in peace building". United Nations. Retrieved on the 3rd of September, 2021 from http://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2010/9/women-in-peacebuilding-report-2010.

28. Wallensteen, P. and Sollenberg, M. (1998). "Armed conflict and regional conflict complexes, 1989 97". *Journal of peace research*, vol. 35, no. 5, pp.621-634.

29. Williams, A. A. (2000). "World flying apart? Violent nationalist conflict and the end of the Cold War". *Journal of peace research*, Vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 105-11.

30. Willis, E. (1984). "Radical feminism and feminist radicalism." Collected in *No more nice girls: Counter-cultural essays.*Wesleyan University Press.

31. Zerilli, L. M. G. (2005). *Feminism and the abyss of freedom*. University of Chicago Press.