

The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management in Africa

Azowue O. Emmanuel Ph.D¹, Uwoh Michael Benjamin Ph.D², Ubelejit Renner Ikuru Ph.D³

¹ Peace and Conflict Studies, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

² Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

In Africa, women's involvement in crisis management and conflict resolution is becoming more widely recognised as crucial to achieving long-term peace and prosperity. African women have continuously taken on vital responsibilities as mediators, negotiators, community mobilisers, and peace builders at both the local and national levels while being routinely left out of official peace processes throughout history. This essay examines the important contributions, inherent difficulties, and transformative potential of women's participation in crisis management and conflict resolution across the continent. Using case studies from Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Nigeria, the study highlights the importance of women's unique perspectives and approaches, often based on community cohesion, dialogue, and reconciliation in enhancing the effectiveness of peace programs. The book explores the institutional, cultural, and structural barriers to full involvement and offers policy suggestions for incorporating gender inclusion into reconciliation projects. By emphasising women's agency, this study highlights the need for a gender-sensitive approach to conflict management in Africa.

KEYWORDS

Role, Women, Conflict, Resolution, Crisis, Management, Africa

I. INTRODUCTION

Africa has seen more violent warfare than any other continent throughout the past few decades. 32 conflicts, seven million deaths, and almost nine million refugees, returnees, or displaced people occurred in Africa between 1960 and 1998. More than half of all war-related deaths globally occurred in 1996 alone, with 14 of Africa's 53 nations engaged in armed conflicts. Over 50 million people from the Great Lakes region and a dozen or more states have been impacted by the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone. The continent cannot be proud of its record. Africa's attempts to uphold long-term peace, prosperity, human rights, and gender equality for its people have been seriously hampered by the consequences of these conflicts.

The development of African economies and the pursuit of social growth have thus been hindered. For instance, the 17-year civil war in Sudan has displaced at least five million people and killed over two million. The Sudanese have experienced extreme poverty and starvation as a result. An estimated 80% of Ethiopia's and Eritrea's national budgets went

on bolstering their defences during a conflict that killed at least 400,000 people. Millions of their residents, especially the most vulnerable and impacted—women and children—are currently facing famine and destroyed livelihoods. The nature of conflicts has changed. Interstate conflicts have given way to internal civil wars, with civilian populations suffering the most. The terrible 1994 Rwandan genocide cannot be quickly forgotten. This conflict will always be regarded as one of the worst times in African history. Instead of defeating the opposing military, the new types of wars aim to inflict suffering and humiliation on people by undermining their sense of identity and community. They undermine social ideals in favour of institutionalised violence and erode institutions that are essential to the long-term survival of African societies. Women are singled out as targets. Assault, forced pregnancy, rape, and sexual enslavement have all evolved into intentional weapons of war. Human rights and gender equality are especially crucial components of conflict resolution in light of these conditions. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate women as early contributors and active participants in all levels of conflict resolution in efforts to regulate or prevent violent ethnic disputes.

In actuality, women participate in the process, and this is becoming more frequently acknowledged outside of the continent. Beginning with grassroots initiatives like humanitarian aid, demobilisation and disarmament, child and health care, hostage exchange, and the application of traditional African conflict management techniques, women's organisations have grown in strength and legitimacy in Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Sudan. Their responsibilities have grown to include a wider range of political objectives. In fact, grassroots efforts often act as catalysts, encouraging others to organise and take up the cause of peace (Kin 2001). The Beijing Declaration on Affirmative Action and Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council on Women, Peace, and Security, among other initiatives, have given women's roles in conflict resolution more prominence in recent years due to coordinated efforts by NGOs and international agencies to address gender and conflict resolution issues. According to Oluyemi-Kusa (2009) and Anthony (2005), women in Africa, like those in other regions of the world, have yet to become widely involved in political, social, and economic issues, as well as peace and conflict resolution. Because of the traditional perception of women as homemakers, they are often disregarded or neglected in conflict resolution. However, as demonstrated by a number of peacekeeping operations both inside and outside of Africa, women are also impacted by conflict resolution, in addition to men who actively take part in violent conflicts.

The Strategic Conflict Association of Nigeria (SCA) claims that women have always participated in traditional methods of resolving disputes. Iyalode (Female Political Leader), Erelu (Female Spiritual Leader), Iyaloja (Mother of the Market), Obirin Ile (Compound Wives), and other women in pre-colonial Yoruba country, for instance, resolved conflicts with men in an amicable manner. This is also true for women in Ibo and Hausa territory. A strong argument is made for mainstreaming and gender equity, especially in conflict resolution. To address the issues that have emerged in our political environment, men and women must work together. There are four sections in this study. The first section starts with an introduction, defines gender, and then looks at violence against women. The next sections address the need to mainstream gender in conflict resolution, women as peacemakers, and policy approaches for gender mainstreaming. A recommendation is made at the end of the report.

II. THE CONCEPT OF GENDER

The word "gender" comes from the Latin noun "genus," which means "kind" or "group." The expression is frequently used to describe the many and disparate attitudes, perspectives, roles and significance, incentives, and other things that society assigns to men and women through its culture. According to Wikigender, gender is a collection of characteristics associated with both femininity and masculinity. The phrase may relate to gender identity, social roles (gender roles), or sex (the general state of being male or female), depending on the context. It is described as "the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex" by the American Psychological Association (2011). Gender non-conformity behavior is defined as behavior that is thought to be incompatible with cultural standards, whereas gender-normative behavior is defined as behavior that is congruent with these expectations. A United Nations Development Programmed report (1986) defines gender as follows:

Gender refers to the characteristics associated with men and women that are socially, culturally, and physiologically established. Gender refers to how society separates appropriate behavior and access to power between men and women. Although the specifics differ from society to society and evolve over time, gender relations often contain a high degree of inequality between men and women and are heavily impacted by ideology.

Gender has also been conceptually described in the OXFAM Gender Training Manual as follows:

People are born female and male, but they learn to be girls and boys before maturing into women and men. They are taught the acceptable attitude and qualities, responsibilities and activities for them, as well as how to interact with others. This learnt behavior is what constitutes gender identity and defines gender roles. Gender is defined by Best (2009) as sex roles, characteristics, and values that are culturally allocated to one sex over the other. According to Miller (2001), it is a "sexual division of power." He continues by making a distinction between gender and sex, contending that gender is socially constructed whereas sex is fixed by biology. According to Dex (1985) and Reddock (1994), "gender defined as the sexual division of power departs from the community accepted definition of gender as the sexual division of labour, with women's work restricted to the private sphere of the household and men's work extended to the public sphere." He agreed with these definitions.

This study focuses on how women and men are handled in conflict situations, despite the fact that gender can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It focuses on the roles of women in conflict situations. Gender roles are created by culture; they are neither innate nor unchangeable. Although many members of the international community and the United Nations acknowledge equal rights and status for women as a legitimate global goal, the pace and mode of achieving this goal vary depending on the cultural environment. Every nation has its own traditions and culture, and every group views women's duties differently. The degree of exposure to Western ideas and culture, women's legal status, education, and religious and cultural norms all have an impact on this, which differs by nation or region.

Women's many roles—they can be breadwinners, fighters, peace advocates, and more—are becoming more widely acknowledged, despite the fact that their vulnerable status as victims is often emphasized during conflicts. Views on what it means to be male or female are known as masculinity and femininity. Femininity is generally associated with motherhood, care, nonviolence, and the possibility of peace, whereas masculinity is often linked to aggressiveness, militarization, domination, hierarchy, and competitiveness. Male and female behaviors, views, rationality viewpoints, and roles are shaped by the nature of the conflict.

A. *Women as Victims of Violence*

Women often suffer from violence in times of conflict. It is well recognized that gender-based violence rises in communities affected by conflict; however, the specific causes of this issue are still unclear. The rise in gender-based violence can be attributed to the overall atmosphere of violence in conflict areas; nonetheless, factors such as the absence of social order, inadequate police enforcement, and high unemployment rates can also play a significant role in exacerbating the issue. Abama and Kwaja (2009) indicate that violence against women is increasingly prevalent in armed conflict situations, where rape and other forms of sexual violence are employed to humiliate and instill fear, as well as in the context of ethnic cleansing (Amnesty International, 2004). It may also hinder women's capacity to assist their communities in times of crisis. Displacement undermines the support systems within a community, leading to increased violence among its members. In periods of conflict, the usual cultural norms governing behavior break down, leading to an increase in violence. Women in Sierra Leone and Liberia, for instance, articulated the circumstances in their countries, where rebel combatants utilized rape, torture, and amputations as strategic tactics, referring to them as "cultures of violence."

The consequences of rape extend deeply for victims, their families, and society, persisting long after the conflict has concluded. Consequently, both the victim of the assault and their families endure feelings of shame and humiliation. During the Rwandan genocide against Tutsis, it is estimated that 50% of women experienced rape. Babies born from the rapes stood as painful reminders of a dark period. Women residing in combat zones or in refugee or displaced person camps face significant risks of extreme poverty, starvation, and illness. Their situation is often worsened by the elevated levels of physical and sexual violence directed towards them, particularly from intimate partners, as indicated in these instances. In some situations, women and girls are forced to suffer sexual abuse to secure food and other essential needs such as fuel and water. Violence against women represents a serious challenge to both social and economic advancement. The Millennium Declaration of September 2000 recognized this, as the General Assembly of the United Nations resolved "to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

The civilian casualty rate in most contemporary conflicts hovers around 80%, with women and children making up the majority of those affected. Women face a variety of crimes due to their perceived lack of defense and protection compared to men. Moreover, due to their increased responsibilities in caring for children and elderly family members, they find themselves less capable of escaping both figurative and indiscriminate attacks. Forced displacements can further expose individuals to violations, and the absence of gender

awareness in refugee camps results in insufficient sanitary facilities, heightening their vulnerability to danger and abuse.

Assault against women leads to numerous consequences, including psychological issues and traumas, as well as social exclusion and ostracism for the women and children who have suffered from such sexual violence. In the aftermath of conflict, sexual assault often shifts from the public sphere into the private domain of homes. Upon returning home, male ex-combatants confide in their spouses and families about their traumas and disappointments. In Nigeria, for instance, nearly one-third of women indicate that they have faced violence, including physical and verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, marital rape, sexual exploitation, or domestic harassment. In Nigeria's Christian Southern regions, unmarried women face significant vulnerability to violence. In certain regions of Nigeria, the statistics soar to 70%.

Women represent a highly vulnerable group in times of conflict, facing challenges that extend beyond the realm of violence. Many conflicts result in significant populations of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Forced displacements can further expose individuals to violations, and the absence of gender awareness in refugee camps results in insufficient sanitary facilities, heightening their vulnerability to danger and abuse. Reports from human rights advocacy groups highlight many instances of exploitation and abuse involving women and children affected by conflict. Women in refugee and IDP camps face sexual exploitation and experience a significant absence of physical safety. This is particularly evident in homes without male protectors, where women in refugee or internally displaced persons camps often take on the role of household leaders.

Migration and mobility resulting from war heighten the risk of violence for unaccompanied women and children on the move. They often do not possess documentation to confirm their entitlement to food, health care, and shelter, and may be compelled to resort to sex for survival. A primary reason that war-affected women and girls resort to high-risk behaviors, such as exchanging sex for food, is the inadequate access to food during emergencies. Accusations have been made against UN Peacekeepers in Liberia, Burundi, Ivory Coast, East Timor, Congo, and Bosnia for engaging in sex for food with girls as young as eight years old. A study by Save the Children in Liberia revealed that the parents of these mistreated girls chose not to file complaints, as providing sex seemed to be their only option for securing food. In Northern Uganda, girls referred to as "night commuters" often engage in sex work to afford their school tuition.

Even after hostilities conclude, several health conditions related to the conflict persist, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, hunger, war-related injuries, and the lasting effects of sexual abuse. The lack of reproductive health services, especially, leads to detrimental long-term effects for women and their children. When services are unavailable, maternal and infant death rates surge dramatically. During conflict, the likelihood of contracting communicable diseases rises due to factors such as heightened population mobility, a greater military presence, loosened social behavior regulations, and pervasive poverty. These conditions contribute to high-risk behaviors and greater exposure to HIV and other illnesses. One more enduring impact of conflict on women is the effect it has on children. In instances where rape has been employed as a weapon, unwanted pregnancies often lead to

the abandonment of the children. When community social safety systems break down, gender-based violence increases, further undermining the status of women.

B. Women as Peace Makers

Even in the face of sexual assault and violence, women have the capacity to contribute significantly to the peace of their communities. However, they are often left out of official peacemaking efforts unless they show remarkable resolve to participate in the peace discussions. The idea of women as peacemakers has deep historical roots. In Aristophanes' comedy *Lysistrata*, a young woman named Lysistrata orchestrated a plan for the Athenian and Spartan women to withhold intimacy from the men until they brought an end to the war. The men swiftly regained their composure and established harmony. *Sisterly Voices* was initially released in 1852 as a newsletter aimed at women's peace associations. In 1892, Bertha Von Suttner convinced Alfred Nobel to create the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1915, amidst the backdrop of World War I, Jane Addams and fellow feminists convened an international women's peace conference in The Hague, leading to the formation of the Women's Peace Party, which is now known as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

In recent decades, the involvement of women in the peace process has brought essential peace to numerous countries globally, including those in Africa. Women's peace organizations and coalitions, for instance, have significantly contributed to the achievement of peace in South Africa and beyond. In the years leading up to the 1994 elections, women in South Africa formed a robust National Women's Coalition that transcended racial, political, and social boundaries, playing a crucial role in maintaining the peace agreement and in the drafting of a democratic Constitution and Bill of Rights. This collaboration also contributed to the establishment of a 30% quota for women in all political parties within parliament. Patience Pashe headed the Alexandra Peace Accord Committee and worked in close collaboration with the United Nations Observer Mission in South Africa. Women in Eritrea organized significant demonstrations, especially in Asmara, to stop the war with Ethiopia.

In Sierra Leone, the Women's Forum, a network of women's organizations and associations, enhanced public awareness of the Lomé Peace Accord and advocated for increased participation in the efforts of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. Women in Mali significantly contributed to revitalizing the national peace process at the community level, uniting different segments of society and motivating militants from both factions to participate in meaningful discussions regarding the execution of the 1992 National Pact. The pro-femines/Twese Hamwe Collective in Rwanda, comprising 35 organizations, played a significant role in fostering dialogue between Tutsis and Hutus. It also enabled communication among government departments, women's organizations, and donor groups.

After a prolonged campaign by Somali women for peace and democratization, which showcased their ability to bring warlords to the negotiation table, the 2000 Somalia Peace and Reconciliation Conference in Arta, Djibouti, saw the inclusion of women in peace negotiations, though they were not recognized as equal partners. In July 2000, women from various factions in Burundi called for gender equality during the Arusha peace process, which was overseen by former South African President Nelson Mandela. A significant number of

the women's demands found their way into the final document. These represent only a few of the strategies that women have effectively employed. There is a significant need for additional documentation and dissemination.

In Liberia, the Women's Peace Initiative achieved notable advancements in pursuing a peaceful resolution to the 14-year conflict by promoting the disarmament of fighting factions before the signing of a peace treaty. While women's movements played a more significant role in the second Liberian civil war, they also contributed to the conclusion of the first civil war. During the two battles, they participated in multiple demonstrations against the different combat factions. The power of the Liberian women's movement is rooted in its calmness and commitment to non-violence, distinguishing it from all other participants in the civil conflict. AFELL (Association of Female Liberian Lawyers), a prominent women's movement in Liberia, was established during the first Liberian war by the Association of War and has continued to be active through both conflicts and beyond.

AFELL is an organization of female lawyers located in the capital, Monrovia, dedicated to defending women across the nation. They have a specific focus on instances of rape, a phenomenon that is prevalent among soldiers in times of war. They worked together with the Centre for Abused Girls and Women to document the experiences of Liberian women during the war. Their role was essential in helping women challenge the stigma surrounding this issue and in advocating for them in court against their rapists. In 2000, AFELL was given the authority to prosecute rape cases, a responsibility that had previously been held solely by state lawyers. It subsequently managed to impact the legislation by drafting a new measure that heightened the penalty for rape. AFELL's struggle encompasses not only rape and war crimes but also delves into inheritance rights and customary law.

Another women's group engaged in peace building is the Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET), a women's association active in several West African countries, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. It was established as part of the broader West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP). WANEP was established in 1998 to address the urgent need for civil action against the persistent civil wars in West Africa. WIPNET was later founded to guarantee that women would not be subjected to a patriarchal society following the war. During the First Liberian Civil War, WIPNET's women initiated peace marches and participated in peace conferences in 1991 and 1993, respectively. In the course of the second Liberian civil war, the women of WIPNET effectively convinced Charles Taylor to engage in discussions with rebel forces. Due to their wide-ranging connections in neighboring countries, they successfully arranged a trip to Sierra Leone, where they met with the rebel commanders and convinced them to participate in the meeting with Taylor.

Consequently, it was the actions of the women that facilitated the occurrence of the Accra summit, or peace summit. Despite not being invited to the peace talks, they organized additional rallies, this time in Accra, Ghana, where they were joined by women from Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. Following the 2003 peace deal, WIPNET transitioned its focus from conflict resolution to peace-building efforts. During this time, an impressive example of these women's strength can be found: despite being barred from participating in the disarmament process, the women went to the fighters' camps to persuade them to leave their weapons. In 2008, a documentary called *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* showcased the

various initiatives of the WIPNET women. This film explores the events surrounding the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign. The focus is on the leadership styles of Leymah Gbowee and Asatu Ben Kenneth. Two women, one from a Christian society and the other from a Muslim society, chose to unite their efforts in the pursuit of peace. They organized sit-ins, large protests, and even a sex strike to oppose the war and encourage men to take action.

The Mano River Women's Peace Network showcased the power of women's networks by uniting women from three countries, all committed to the common objective of fostering peace in West Africa. In the year 2000, the West African Women's Association (WAWA) founded MARWOPNET in Abuja with the aim of fostering reconciliation in the Mano River Region, which encompasses Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. The organization fosters dialogue and builds confidence, coordinates women's peace initiatives, and advocates for sustainable conflict resolution processes among nations. The network emerged from the fervent aspirations of a group of determined women to bring an end to the violence and anguish resulting from conflict. MARWOPNET initiated an effort to mediate the conflict and disagreements between Guinea and Liberia, dispatching a delegation to engage with the region's warring heads of state.

MARWOPNET has issued statements urging ECOWAS and the United Nations to take action in the Liberia conflict. The UN Security Council commended MARWOPNET's efforts in Liberia in Resolution 1408. In 2000, the Women in Peace-building Network organized an event where women voiced their opposition to war. MARWOPNET has successfully involved the leaders of Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone in fostering a significant advancement among the organization's member states. The countries neighboring Liberia played a significant role in the conflict; for instance, numerous militants sought refuge in Guinea and Sierra Leone during the initial war. The significance of the region grew during the second conflict, as Liberia engaged in a regional struggle with Guinea and Sierra Leone, both of which backed LURD insurgents.

In response to the regional conflict and its effects on women, the women of the Mano River united to address the issues in these three countries. In 2002, they ultimately achieved success in this endeavor by facilitating a meeting between the three leaders of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea in Rabat.

African Renewal reports that when the MARWOPNET group visited Guinea to encourage President Conté to sit at a table next to Charles Taylor, the President responded, "What man do you think would say that to me?" Only a woman could pull off something like that. He ultimately consented to participate in the meeting, acknowledging: "Numerous people have attempted to convince me to meet with President Taylor." Your dedication and charm have won me over. In 2003, MARWOPNET received the United Nations Human Rights Prize.

In Sierra Leone, grassroots women's organizations organized public demonstrations and aired radio messages to convey their wish for an end to the conflict. International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have supported women's groups by offering meeting venues, training, and financial assistance. The Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP), in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Women's Forum, organized peace marches and raised awareness among women. Betty Bigombe has played a crucial role in bringing

the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government nearer to a peace agreement. Bigombe has tirelessly served as a mediator between rebel and government officials, playing a crucial role in advancing the nation towards peace. Even with notable progress for women in the past ten years, their contributions to peace discussions frequently go unrecognized, leaving them in the shadows without the acknowledgement they rightfully merit. Often, the contributions of women to peace remain overlooked and inadequately reported, as the data gathered on peace processes seldom distinguishes by gender.

C. Policy Initiatives for Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Resolution

Gender mainstreaming is an organizational approach designed to integrate a gender perspective into every aspect of an institution's policies and activities, enhancing gender capability and accountability. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that governments and various stakeholders should actively and visibly advocate for gender mainstreaming across all policies and programs (Reeves and Baden 2000). Gender mainstreaming involves the participation of both men and women. Women are often left out of the core of the peace process, so it is essential to integrate the female perspective into it. The involvement of women and the integration of gender perspectives in conflict prevention efforts are essential elements for achieving lasting peace, security, and reconciliation. This entails integrating gender-sensitive indicators into early warning systems and strengthening anti-violence initiatives for women.

The issue of gender and conflicts gained public attention through the Beijing conference, "the fourth world conference on women: action for equality, development, and peace," held in Beijing, China during the year 1995. At the international level, the United Nations (UN) has taken a prominent role in advancing gender equality in conflict situations by organizing the UN World Women Conferences, starting with the first in Mexico in 1975, followed by Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995. At the end of the Beijing Conference, participants created an agenda that highlighted twelve important areas of concern for follow-up. One of the twelve areas of concern was designated as Women and Armed Conflict. Since 1995, the United Nations, development organizations, and member states have diligently observed the execution of the Beijing Platform for Action.

To evaluate the overall progress made in the five years following the Beijing Conference, the UN General Assembly resolved, in resolution 52/100, to hold a special session consisting of five sessions. During the Women 2000 session, the General Assembly released a political Declaration and Platform for Action that emphasized gender equality, development, and peace for the twenty-first century. The outcome document acknowledges that the harmful effects of armed conflict vary between men and women, emphasizing the necessity of integrating a gender perspective into the planning, design, and execution of development aid and humanitarian assistance. On October 31, 2000, the UN Security Council adopted resolution no. 1325, which reaffirmed the significant role of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peace building.

The council highlighted the significance of equal participation and comprehensive involvement in all initiatives aimed at maintaining and promoting peace and security, as well as the necessity to enhance their role in decision-making related to conflict prevention and

resolution. This resolution is widely regarded as one of the most impactful recent documents in establishing the policy framework for women and armed conflict. The adoption of 1325 represented a significant moment when the Security Council acknowledged the unequal impact of armed conflict on women and the lack of recognition for women's roles in conflict prevention. This political framework is pivotal, emphasizing the significance of women and a gender perspective in the negotiation of peace agreements, the planning of refugee camps and peacekeeping operations, as well as the reconstruction of communities affected by war. On May 31, 2000, the UN Transitional Assistance Group released the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibian Plan of Action on "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations." This, together with a publication from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' Lessons Learnt Unit, represents the most crucial resources for peace operations, especially in the field. Furthermore, the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs published a series of Briefing notes on Gender and Disarmament in 2001, which detailed the role of gender in initiatives like small arms collection, demobilization, and reintegration.

Additionally, the topic of gender and violent conflicts has historically captured the attention of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). During the 1980s, the OECD formed an Expert Group on Women in Development, which was subsequently renamed the DAC Working Group on Gender Equality in 1998. The organization has released two publications: the DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, and the DAC Resource Book on Gender Equality Concepts and Approaches. The following guidelines, derived from the Beijing Declaration and Action Platform, detail how DAC members can advance gender equality during conflicts.

In 1997, the Task Force on Conflict released the initial set of DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace, and Development Cooperation. These guidelines were subsequently revised and broadened into the document titled Security Issues and Development Cooperation: A Conceptual Framework for Enhancing Policy Coherence. This publication explores the connection between gender and conflict, emphasizing the importance of female military police. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000, acknowledges the important role of women in the peace process. In a similar vein, Articles 40(A) and 44(C) of the ECOWAS Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Settlement, Peacekeeping, and Security highlight the importance of women's involvement in conflict resolution. The Windhoek Declaration and Namibian Plan of Action on Mainstreaming Gender in Peace Support Operations emphasize the significance of women in conflict prevention and resolution. Even with extensive international and national policy frameworks in place, women globally encounter significant obstacles to their involvement in peace-building efforts and in transforming legal instruments into real rights and tangible change.

Moreover, the capacity of women to significantly impact peace-building efforts is frequently undermined by the threat or reality of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which tends to increase during and after armed conflicts, along with persistent barriers to women's complete political involvement in numerous nations. Women often lack representation in decision-making processes, peace negotiations, and agreements, while their grassroots organizations and peace initiatives tend to be overlooked or sidelined. Moreover, gender issues are often neglected in the process of post-conflict reconstruction.

D. Reasons for Gender Mainstreaming

What makes it important for women to engage in the reconciliation process? From the standpoint of gender equity, the conclusion is that women possess equal rights and opportunities for political participation as men. Moreover, it is essential for women to engage in conflict prevention, resolution, and management efforts at every level, given that they make up the majority of the population. When half of the population is not actively participating, their views, requirements, and interests go unrepresented, leading to interventions that lack appropriateness and sustainability. Furthermore, women possess the ability to make valuable contributions to peace negotiations, conflict resolution, peace building, and conflict management. Numerous studies indicate that women often present different conflict experiences, set new priorities for peace building and rehabilitation, serve as the primary advocates for women's rights and issues, successfully form coalitions that connect diverse political, ethnic, and religious groups, and are viewed as less intimidating to the existing power structures because of their common interests, which grants them greater freedom to act.

The involvement of women in the ongoing peace talks can foster a wider public support for peace, thus improving its long-term viability. This study offers strong examples of women's participation in peace negotiations. Moreover, women often face numerous types of violence, such as rape, in times of conflict. As a result, conflict situations require individuals to organize themselves to safeguard their lives. The trauma, tension, and social disorder that arose during and after the conflict contribute to a rise in domestic violence against them, persisting even after the conflict has concluded. Women possess a natural curiosity about peace processes because of the profound effects that conflict has on their lives. In some cases, harmony may be achieved at a later time if women are not part of the process.

Moreover, women possess a natural tendency towards tranquility. Ferris (1995) conducted a Bridgit Brockton Study that showed women have an innate ability to prefer nonviolent actions in their social interactions. Babbitt and Pearson-D'Estree (1996) observed that conflict resolution seminars with only female participants led to more constructive discussions compared to those with mixed genders. According to Oluyemi-Kusa (2003), "men typically enter negotiations with the expectation that one party will emerge victorious and the other will lose, whereas women seek common ground and are less hesitant to make concessions." In many cases, women remain at the table when men exit in a deadlock, contributing a balanced tone, a more conciliatory approach, and facilitating smoother communication and collaboration among conflicting parties. This commendable characteristic of engaging in dialogue rather than resorting to conflict sets the female gender apart.

The economic repercussions of intrastate conflict are particularly harsh for women. The situation of women in Rwanda illustrates that, alongside the poverty and difficulties brought about by conflict, women face significant barriers to accessing the means of production, especially land. Some women are barred from inheriting the property of their late husbands. Involving women in the decision-making process resolves these issues.

III. CONCLUSION

Women make up more than half of the global population. Although conflict brings suffering to everyone, women bear the brunt of the impact. Isolation, alienation, prolonged emotional trauma, and unintended pregnancies are often the consequences of victimisation, frequently leading to abandoned children. Sexual assault and exploitation are often used as tools of conflict. The conflict has left traditional breadwinners unable to support their families, while women, who are culturally seen as professionals, are compelled to work hard to maintain the stability of their households and provide for their families. As a result of their new role as primary providers, many women face increased mistreatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 brought the issue of women and armed conflict to the attention of the international community. The Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, which focused on women, peace, and security. Women remain marginalised in the area of conflict resolution, even though the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Conflict of Europe have all issued statements and policies addressing this issue. The investigation supports the involvement of women in the conflict resolution process. In light of this, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Women should be told what an important contribution they can make to the establishment of peaceful communities and cultures. To build a culture of peace, to settle disputes and to improve the participation of women at all levels of the peace building processes, it is vital that our society promotes the development of an integrated approach to conflict resolution that incorporates young people, women and males.
- Women must be economically and politically empowered and sufficiently represented at all levels of decision making, so that they can meaningfully participate in crucial roles throughout the peace process negotiation. When women are excluded from decision making, they are denied resources. Women's marginalisation will persist as long as they are denied access to resources and the institutions that define societal norms and attitudes. The engagement of women in decision-making has been identified as an important factor in preventing conflicts in several nations. Program alternatives in this field can be cross-cutting and easily integrated with broader objectives.
- Changing these views within formal government and society, and also among men and women individually, is key to breaking the cycle of violence and discrimination against women. To sustain these efforts and to change views, women need the assistance of the international community and support networks.
- Collecting best practices in the way the role of women in the industry has been and should be addressed.
- Increasing the representation of women and gender-sensitivity of men in conflict-related interventions.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abama E. and Kwaja M. A.C. (2009) Violence Against Women in Nigeria: How the Millennium Development Goals Addresses the Challenge The Journal of Pan African Studies, Vol. 3, No. 3, September
- [2] Amnesty International (2004). Lives blown apart: crimes against women in times of conflict. London: Zed Publishers.
- [3] Anifowose R. And Enemuo F. (1999). Elements of Politics. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.
- [4] Anthony S. (2005). The Relevance of Women in Conflict Resolution: Oil & Gas Industry Issues. Paper presented at the 1st Annual Murtala Muhammed Memorial Foundation Conference, 15th Feb., 2005.
- [5] Babit E.F and D'Estree T. P (1996). An Israeli, Palestinian Women's Workshop, in Crocker, Chester A. Bouta T. and Frerks G. (2002). Women's Role in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Literature Review and Institutional Analysis, The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, Conflict Research Unit
- [6] British Council (2012). Gender in Nigeria Report 2012: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria, Issues, Policies, Action, and 2nd edition. Nigeria: British Council Definition of Terms: Sex, Gender, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation Excerpt from: The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients, adopted by the APA Council of Representatives, February 18-20, 2011. The Guidelines are available on the APA website at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx>
- [7] Dex S. (1985). The Sexual Division of Work: Conceptual Revolutions in the Social Science. Brighton: Wheat sheaf Books/harvester Press.
- [8] Ekiyor T. (2003). Women in Peace building: An Account of the Nigeria Delta Women, WANEP from the Field 3rd Edition
- [9] Ferris E. (1992). Peace-making in the Emerging World. Ecumenical Review, Vol. 44, No. 3
- [10] Ferrier P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Sea View Press.
- [11] Goldstein J. And Pevehouse C. J (2012) International Relations, United States. Pearson Britain: Oxford University Press
- [12] Hampson, F. & Pamela O (n.d.). Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict. Washington D.C, United States: Institute of Peace pp. 521-529.
- [13] Hutchful E. and Aning K. (2001) Militarization and State Reconstruction in Africa: The West African case in S. Odion-Akine (ed.) Part to Demilitarization and Democratic consolidation in West Africa. Lagos: CENCOD.
- [14] Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2003). Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria. Nigeria: IPCR
- [15] Kin A. (2001). Women and Conflict Management in Africa Keynote delivered at the Africa Leadership Forum Africa Women's Forum Third International Conference 22 January 2001
- [16] Miller E. (2001). Gender, Power and Politics: An Alternative Perspective. In S. Inger & S. Dan (eds.) Gender, Peace and Conflict. Oslo, London: International Peace Research Institute, Sage.

- [17] Obi, S. N. & Ozumba, B. C. (2007). Factors associated with domestic violence in South- East Nigeria. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 27(1), 75–78.
- [18] Oluyemi-Kusa D (2003). "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: Gender Roles in the Peace Process in Nigeria, Unpublished Paper presented at the National Peace Forum, Abuja, and May 10, 2003.
- [19] Oluyemi-Kusa D. (2009). Gender, Peace and Conflict in S. G. Best (ed.) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa: A Reader*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd Pp. 205-229.
- [20] Redlock R.E. (1994). *Women, Labour and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago: A History*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- [21] Reeves H. and Baden S. (2000). *Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions*, BRIDGE (development - gender) Report NO.55 UK: Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex. Available at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge>
- [22] Tumbo-Masabo Z. et al (eds.) (1994). *Chelewa, Chelewa: The Dilemma of Teenage Girls*. Stockholm, Nordiska Africanstitute: United Nations Development Report.
- [23] United Nations (2005). Resolution A/RES/55/2. The United Nations Millennium Declaration, New York, United Nations, 8 September.
- [24] USAID (2006). *Women and Conflict Resolution- An Introductory Guide* Wikigender.org