

THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN PEAC EBUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined The Roles of Women in peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Northeast Nigeria. The study employed secondary data obtained through Journals, articles, newspaper, text books etc were used to collect and present findings. Findings revealed that women played an important role in promoting conflict mitigation and resolution through a variety of different grassroots strategies in Northeast Nigeria and their contributions to the peace building were significant both as individuals and groups in the lower levels of Northeast Nigeria society. Based on these findings, 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

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society with an estimated population of over 160 million people, which is more than 50% of the entire population in West Africa (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2014). Nigeria has over 250 ethnic minorities, but the country is primarily composed of three major ethnic groups: the Igbo, the Yoruba, and the Hausa-Fulani (Gordon, 2003). The groups are also divided along religious lines. The Igbos reside in the eastern part of the country where there is a predominant Catholic community. The Yorubas reside in the western part of the country where there are Protestants and syncretic Christian communities. The Hausa Fulani reside in the northern part of the country where there is a predominant Muslim community (Mathews, 2002). A former colony of the United Kingdom, the modern-day Nigeria was created in 1914 in an attempt to consolidate British territories (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Consequently, the British authorities did not consult with the local populations during the formation of the new state, and the oversight has led to ethnic, cultural, and regional conflicts that are still proliferating in the present day. These issues include chieftaincy tussles, land disputes, and political contests between the various regions. There have been various attempts to address the issue of uneven distribution of wealth and political power—such as quota systems, to federal character and a rotational presidency amongst the different groups—but these solutions have been ineffective. The initiatives have not resolved the conflicts.

While the present-day conflicts in Nigeria relate to power, resources, and ethnic differences, women constitute a large percentage of those who are negatively impacted by the violent conflicts. Living in a highly male dominated and patriarchal society means that women have more to lose when their sons and husbands die from a violent conflict. Nigerian women are more likely to lose their properties and suffer from physical, psychological, and emotional abuses. In some cases, they must take on additional responsibilities as the head of their household following the death of their male relatives. As a result, the participation of women in post conflict peacebuilding is critical to ensure a peaceful resolution (Ezurum & Eren, 2014). Yet during the peace processes, women are severely underrepresented or sidelined from contributing to the peaceful resolution of the conflict (Women in International Security, 2012). The following question will guide this study and attempt will be made to provide answers to it within the framework of the study: What are the roles of Women in peace building and conflict resolution in Northeast Nigeria

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to determine the Role of Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Northeast of Nigeria. This study is of great importance to policy makers because it will highlight the different roles play by women in conflict resolution in the region and the numerous challenges faced by women. The study will also be important to the relevant government agencies responsible for safeguarding the national security and the integrity of Nigeria's territorial sovereignty as it will highlight the Socio-economic roles of women at a grassroots level. This study utilizes the interpretivism research paradigm. According to Collis and Hussey (2009), *"a research paradigm is a framework that guides how research should be conducted, based on people's philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge"...* *"Interpretivism is underpinned by the belief that social reality is not objective but highly subjective because it is based on human perceptions"*.

The study make use of secondary source of data. To this end, the extant literature and body of work on the subject matter of the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution in Northeast of Nigeria will be critically evaluated and evidence from these literatures reviewed and presented. The study employ the use of descriptive method of analysis because of the dearth of data in the area of study and the sources of data is secondary, the researcher employ the use of published materials i.e. textbooks, journals, newspaper, magazines, seminar papers, and extracts from the internet.

Concept of Conflict Resolution

Conflict" is term used to mean a variety of things, in an assortment of contexts under the mantle of conflict are words such as, serious disagreement, incompatibilities, fight, argue, contest, debate, combat, clash and war etc. These are the equally evocate terms to understand the term conflict or to know which description of behavior fit under the title of conflict. According to Bercovitch (1990), conflict is a situation which generates incompatible goals or values among different parties. According to Coser (1957), defines conflict as the "Clash of values and interests, the tension between what is and what some groups feel ought to be." This was all about the word conflict, now we have to understand the real connotation and meaning of resolution. The word "resolution" means, The quality of being resolute, A firm decision, An expression of opinion or intensions agreed on by a legislative body, The action of solving a problem or dispute, The process of reducing or separating something into components.

Miller (2003) posits that conflict resolution is "a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict". For Mial and Wood House (2001), by conflict resolution, it is expected that the deep rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behavior is no longer violent, nor are attitude hostile any longer, while structure of the conflict has been changed. In the understanding of Mitchel and Banks (1996), conflict resolution refers to: an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties, self-sustaining in the long run and productive of a new, positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile adversaries; and process or procedure by which such an outcome is achieved.

In all this, one understands conflict resolution to imply that conflict is bad hence it is something that should not be encouraged. It also assumes that conflict is a short term phenomenon that can be "resolved" permanently through mediation or other intervention processes. Best (2005) putting these ideas together, concludes that: in principle, conflict resolution connotes a sense of finality, where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense of it. Some conflicts, especially those over resources, are permanently resolvable.

From the point of view of needs, a conflict is resolved when the basic needs of parties involved have been met with necessary "satisfiers", and their fears have been allayed. Others "like those over values", according to an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that

is mutually acceptable to the parties, self-sustaining in the long run and productive of a new, positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile adversaries; and process or procedure by which such an outcome is achieved. In principle, conflict resolution connotes a sense of finality, where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense of it. Some conflicts, especially those over resources, are permanently resolvable Best (2005).

Concept of Peace Building

Peacebuilding is a term, which started to attract interest in the beginning of the 1990s in circles of international organizations. The former UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, put it firmly on the UN's agenda by including it in the document "Agenda for Peace" which came out in 1992 (Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1992). In 2000, the UN's Brahimi report confirmed this definition of peacebuilding as a more profound and long-term activity than its predecessors peacekeeping and peacemaking, by stating that peacebuilding "involves activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war" (Brahimi, 2000)

peacebuilding refers to conflict prevention or resolution activities performed by either external actors such as the UN or other international organizations, or local actors on a community level, with the common aim of establishing a sustainable peace corresponding to more than just an absence of violence, incorporating a structural transformation of a conflictual society to a positive peace available for all (Frère & Wilen 2015).

According to Sambou (2017), Peace building is the Working to make the world a better place for humanity to live in. It is the daily endeavors, individually or collectively, to attain the many positive changes that we all aspire to, for ourselves and all humankind. It is building of good relationships. Peace building is a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.

Types of Conflict

Experience in human society has shown that there are degrees of variation in conflicts. Conflicts are in types. Psychology as a discipline has espoused on intra-personal conflict. Sociology identifies inter-personal as well as intra-group or intra-unit conflict, as well as inter-group conflict. Political Science and History have identified inter-ethnic or intra-state conflict as well as international conflict.

Intra-personal conflict: This refers to a state of implosion in an individual shaped by the state of mind. It is however important to know that such human state is largely dictated by circumstances around him. Such situations are anger, depression, confusion, frustration, which could lead to aggression, erratic behavior, addiction and in extreme cases, suicide (Ross, 1993). This is the kind of conflict that has been described as "man against self" (Lamb, 2008), in which man continues to contend or battle with his mind and habits. Smoking, drug use, alcoholism, as well as lying are some addictive habits that man may continually contend with; even when he desires to stop, he may find himself continuing it. This is intra-personal conflict or "man against self".

Inter-personal conflict: This is what has been described as "man against man" in the micro sense. This type of conflict may be direct opposition, as in exchange of blows, a gunfight or a robbery, or it may be a more subtle conflict between the desires of two or more persons (Nikolajeva, 2005). A boxing or 5 wrestling match is a kind of game, but the act on the mat depicts conflict. Conflict in this sense is a fight between people. However, conflict does not always translate to physical exchange of blows. Malice or 'cold attitude' to each other already underscores conflict. Conflict thus also means implicit hostility. It may not be obvious to the

third party, but the disagreeing or unfriendly parties already understand that there is a state of discontent between them.

Man against society; man against nature: This is an interesting type of conflict. Morell (2009) posits that “man against society” type of conflict arises when man stands against a man-made institution or practices. These may include slavery, human trafficking, child prostitution, human rights abuses, bullying, corruption, bad governance, et cetera. According to her, “man against man” conflict may shade into “man against society”. “Man against nature” is the type of conflict that depicts a state of contention between man and his environment (Lamb, 2008). Such forces of nature as global warming, climate change, rainstorm, hurricane, desertification, resistant malaria, killer insects, et cetera create a situation in which man battles with nature to overcome and master it.

Inter-Group conflict: This refers to the kind of disagreement or feud that takes places between two or more sectarian or religious groups, ethnic groups, communities, or interest groups. The contention between Christians and Moslems in Nigeria is a classic example of inter-faith conflict. Nigeria has been riddled with clashes between members of the two faiths since the 1980s. The Maitatsine riots in Kano, Bulumkutu crisis in Maiduguri, Sokoto university campus riots over use of Othman dan Fodio’s daughter’s name in a pageant, Cross vs. Crescent crisis at the Ibadan university, among others, are worse scenarios of this (Folarin, 1997). The Boko Haram Islamist terrorist onslaught against Christians and the Nigerian State since 2009 has however, become the worst in the annals of Nigeria’s religious conflict. In terms of ethnic conflict, there have been: Igbo-Hausa feud that began after the military coup and counter-coup of 1966, culminating in the Civil War in 1967, Efik-Ibibio conflict, Tiv-Jukun debacle, Fulani-Birom clashes, and Itsekiri-Urhobo-Ijaw conflict in the Niger Delta. Intra-ethnic or inter-community conflicts include Ife-Modakeke, UmuleriAguleri, Andoni-Ogoni, and Egba-Awori (Ota) clashes.

Intra-State conflict: This type of conflict is confined within the borders of a sovereign state. Such economic factors as land, uneven development, resource control and revenue-sharing formula could cause a conflict within a state. Social factors as value differences as had been the case in old Sudan could also cause conflict. Socio-ethnic factors such as real or perceived ethnic balancing or ethnic cleansing such as in the case of the Nigeria-Biafra episode and Rwanda genocide chapter in 1994, could also be a factor. Political factors such as power-sharing, power equation or zoning formula in public administration, lopsidedness in political appointments, quota system and the likes could cause intra-state conflict. Other examples of intra-state conflicts are the Malian crisis, Ivorian crisis, Libyan conflict, conflict in the DRC and Central African Republic.

Inter-State conflict: This type of conflict is also known as international conflict. This is a conflict between two or more states. In some cases, this type of conflict degenerates to a state of war. We must remember that all wars are described as conflict. As such, all inter-state wars are same as international conflict. Inter-state conflict can be caused by territorial encroachment by another state, breakdown of diplomatic ties, exportation of toxic or contrabands to another country, et cetera. In the 1980s, Nigeria almost cut off diplomatic ties with Italy because hundreds of tons of toxic substances dumped at Koko, a sedate village in Delta (Bendel) State, were traced to the European country. Nigeria and Cameroon have had cases of hostilities on a number of occasions, over Northern borders and lately, Bakassi Peninsula; but none ever resulted in full-scale war. The United States and Cuba have been in a perpetual state of conflict since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Examples of inter-state conflict that resulted in war include Iran-Iraq of 1980-1988, Britain-Argentina War of 1982 over the Falkland Islands, USA-Afghanistan War.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks were utilized in analyzing and understanding the experience of female peacebuilders living in northern Nigeria. Feminist standpoint theory focus on the experience of women in relation to knowledge creation and power relations within a given time and space, while structural violence

theory highlights the injustice embedded in societal make up against a specific group of people. Both theories are briefly discussed.

Feminist Standpoint theory: Feminist standpoint theory is an epistemological theory that focuses on the importance of social location in creating knowledge (Wood, 2005). The theory attempts to address the imbalance in power relations between men and women by redirecting the focus for constructing knowledge to women's experiences and insights. It was inspired by G.F. Hegel's standpoint of the proletariat and Karl Marx and Engels' Marxism theory on class relations (Bowell, 2011). Feminist standpoint theory analyzes how patriarchy naturally places women beneath men and makes it appear as a natural and right thing. Feminist standpoint theory posits that the work and activities we engage in shapes our identities, consciousness, and knowledge (Wood, 2005). Thus, the theory starts from the material conditions of women. A major claim of the theory is that women's lives and that of men are systematically and structurally different, and, as a result, they produce different knowledges. Therefore, social location significantly shapes the experiences and insights of a group of people (Wood, 2005). Though social location shapes the lives of women differently from that of men, standpoint can only be achieved by critically reflecting on power relations between both sexes and constructing a different narrative from the dominant worldview. According to Wood, "Achieving a feminist standpoint, then, does not mean one is capable of describing, explaining, predicting, increasing understanding, and/or critiquing, which are the business of theory". Feminist standpoint theory critiques the existing imbalance in power relations between men and women and develops an epistemology for generating knowledge from women's experiences. While standpoint theory focuses on the generation of knowledge starting from the perspectives of the marginalized, feminist standpoint theory focuses on starting from the experiences of women (Wood, 2005). Since women are considered part of the marginalized in the society, their experiences can constitute the starting point of both standpoint and feminist standpoint theory. The three key principles of feminist standpoint theory can be summarized as: knowledge is socially situated; the marginalized is equally socially situated which makes them aware and query the status quo; and research on power relations should start from the marginalized (Bowel, 2011). Considered as both a theory and a method, feminist standpoint was developed by feminists with sociological, political, and philosophical backgrounds. These feminists include Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Hillary Rose, Alison Jaggar, and Donna Haraway (Bowell, 2011). Feminist standpoint theory created a dichotomy of the marginalized and the dominant group and asserted that epistemic privilege lied with the marginalized that see fundamental problems in the society, while the dominant group viewed them as superficial issues. Knowledge is socially situated, and it is important to dissect the experiences of women since they are marginalized. According to Bowell (2011), a proper understanding of the experience of women due to their socio-political position will help bring about change in societies and thus should be the basis for any inquiry. Consequently, standpoint can be referred to as a specific location in time and space that determines how people view the world. Women possess dual knowledge or two standpoints; their experience being a marginalized member and the knowledge of the dominant group. Thus, a more objective and comprehensive view of the world can be seen from the less privileged position occupied by women. Sandra Harding (1993) best captured this when she stated, "Starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order". To better resolve the conflicts facing northeast Nigeria, one must understand the lived experience of northeast Nigerian female leaders in managing conflict. This will reveal the particularities of their everyday realities in dealing with conflict issues within the region informed by their social interactions, northeast Nigeria context, and their worldviews rather than the generalized perception of the situation of all women in Muslim dominated environments. As a method, feminist standpoint stresses the importance of women as research subjects and not as objects, which makes it ideal for phenomenological research. Thus, the attention of the researcher is drawn to the women's experience and the social context that has shaped their lives. This underscores the importance of focusing on the northeast Nigeria women's experience and their perspectives to inform knowledge of their efforts and desires for peace within their communities.

Structural Violence theory: Johan Galtung (1969) developed the concept of structural violence, which examines violence beyond its physical manifestation. Violence has invisible aspects weaved into the structures of the society that can encompass the institutions, ideologies, and histories that discriminate against certain groups of people. Thus, the structural violence denies certain members of the community the opportunity of attaining their maximum potential. Galtung categorized violence into personal/direct violence and structural/indirect violence. This expanded the discussion of violence beyond physical pain (direct violence) inflicted on human beings to include invisible pains on humans or inequalities in the structures of the society manifesting in the disparity between the privileged and the less privileged. This is especially relevant when the disparity is obvious for a certain group of people within a given society. Galtung states, "In a static society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us". Galtung rejected the idea of restricting violence only to bodily harm, deprivation of health, or extreme case of death. This, he argues, does not capture other conditions that signify absence of social order. Therefore, violence is the cause of the gap between the actual and the potential when this gap is avoidable. Structural violence, then, occurs when individuals are unable to attain their maximum physical and mental potential in the presence of available resources. While some can never exceed certain limits in life no matter how hard they struggle, others do not require much effort to get to the top. To adequately capture violence, Galtung proposed six dimensional definitions of structural violence. First, he distinguished the difference between physical and psychological violence to further buttress the point that violence cannot only occur in form of bodily harm but impact the soul as well. The later consists of actions that result in decrease in mental potentials such as brainwashing, social indoctrination, deceit, and, psychological threats. The second dimension is the distinction between positive and negative influences. Influences can be positive when a person is rewarded for doing what the influencer considers right, and influences can be negative when a person is punished for what is considered wrongdoing. The third-dimension focuses on the physical or biological violence, which is a form of truncated violence. This includes threat of physical, psychological, or indirect mental violence as it constrains human action. This is akin to the effect of balance of power doctrine that influencers intend to achieve. The fourth dimension of violence is considered the most important because it focuses on the subject side: whether there is a subject (person) who acts or not. Thus, violence where there is no actor is referred to as structural or indirect violence while violence with an actor is referred to as direct or personal violence with both reinforcing each other. In the case of indirect violence, the person is not directly harmed by another, but rather the violence is built upon the structure of the society, creating an unequal distribution of resources. The uneven distribution of resource includes wealth, income, education, and medical amongst certain groups or region that determine their placement within the social structure. The fifth dimension is a distinction between intended and unintended violence especially when determining guilt. Guilt is linked to intentions rather than consequences. The sixth and final dimension distinguishes between the manifest and latent levels of violence. Manifest violence is observable and can either be direct, indirect, personal, or structural. Whereas latent violence indicates a potential occurrence of violence even though there may not be violence at the time. Confortini (2006) critiqued structural violence theory with respect to its gender blindness. While Galtung's theory provided a unified framework of violence from a direct, structural, and cultural framework, Confortini argued that incorporating a feminist approach could further enrich the theory. As such, she argues that violence and peace can be constituted through gendered language that violence produces which defines gender identities and vice versa (Confortini, 2006). The northeast Nigerian women are faced with both physical and structural violence on a daily basis. Domestic violence is an aspect of direct violence in which the women suffer physical abuses in the hands of their intimate partners. This unfortunate event is common within this region, and some women have died as a result of the intense beating from their husbands. Wife battery is considered a family matter and not taken seriously by the police, so most victims avoid reporting their partners to avoid societal backlash or for fear of losing their spouse. Cultural practices and the patriarchal nature of northeast Nigeria contribute to the sidelining of women from peace processes, thus denying them the opportunity to contribute to issues that affect them. The structural conditions make it difficult for women to freely participate in public activities within this region, and their exclusion from public activities or underrepresentation denies them the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. Galtung

refers the gap between their actual and potential as violence. He states, “The object of personal violence perceives the violence, usually, and may complain - the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this at all”.

Socio-Economic Roles of Women in Conflict Resolution in Northeast Nigeria

Here discusses the numerous ways women participated directly or indirectly in community activities that could be interpreted as peace building. The primary indications of women’s participation in conflict resolution processes were evident in various socio-economic aspects. The research highlighted a number of relevant examples outlined below:

- (i) Catherine J. 2019, there were many instances where women played primary roles in community mobilization in activities like information dissemination and other social activities within their communities. Women were actively involved in community activities such as burials and marriages. It should be noted that African burial and marriage ceremonies denote a sense of belonging, identify, and kinship. Hence it is always a social obligation to grief and share joy with the affected family, community which in effect minimizing personal social tension and stress arising from lack of social support. The strong sense social support could help mitigate conflict and increases opportunities for peace. However, the impact of their socioeconomic activities were limited to communal and domestic works like cooking and cleaning. Furthermore, women were good custodians of community resources such as boreholes, equipment ensuring that water resources were properly sustained. It is needs to be pointed out that provision of water and clean, safe water is still a scarce resource. This is even worse in conflict situations. Therefore, keeping good custody such as boreholes as sources clean water and related equipment’s could go a long way in peace building. Sometimes women and girls could fight at the water points over who should get water first or last. The ground rule was often first come, first served. When such rules are disregards by some individuals, fighting could break out and damages caused to property and injuries to persons. Furthermore, the use of borehole could be regulated by locking and opening at specific times. When communities were properly sensitized on when to go or not to go for water, only could everyone live in peace.
- (ii) Conflict deprived men of income generating opportunities. Idleness and high rates of alcohol consumption rendered them powerless. Undoubtedly, men were traditionally responsible for holding families together. Due to the conflict, provision of food, health care, shelter and other basic needs such as education were taken over by women. Whereas, women’s roles were mainly domestic in nature, and the long-established practices were based on patriarchal systems which provided for men to be heads of households and the bread winners of their families, many women increasingly assumed the role of being bread winners and hence de facto family heads. This change came about as consequence of the conflict and displacement; they not only produced children but also looked after them and the whole families. They taught children poems, songs, and told stories and sometimes discipline them. Therefore, women effectively administered their families and gave encouragement and hope better future. As women assumed new responsibilities as head of house hold, decision makers, and providers of basic needs like food, education etc, they invariable contributed to peace building at the grassroots level. Since peace building begins with the family, women contributed much to peace building while most men drank away such opportunities and despaired feeling powerless partly as a result of conflict.
- (iii) The research revealed that frequently women arranged group meetings and contributed some cash per person or other contributions in kind in order to raise money. The women’s groups operated on the basis of self-help initiatives by community. During these meetings they often incorporated issues of peace building, for example, they sang songs and acted plays that recalled the atrocities they underwent and suggested solutions to the identified challenges.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

There has been some recent worldwide recognition of the potential impact of women in the peace making process. On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325. This resolution is significant because it is the first resolution passed by the Security Council that specifically addresses the distinct and disproportionate effects of war on women and their often under-valued and underutilized contributions to both the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of peace and security. Specifically, the Security Council called for the “adoption of a gender perspective in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements; active participation of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security; and the support of local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution.” This resolution reaffirms the need to increase women’s role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. In passing Resolution 1325, the Security Council recognized that including women in conflict and peace-building processes is not important merely because it is fair, but rather because including women is necessary in order to attain lasting peace and security. A United Nations Department of Public Information report on facts and figures relevant to the adoption of Resolution 1325 states that: Security Council Resolution 1325 has served as a catalyst for women all over the world to mobilize their efforts to achieve equal participation. Women at the grassroots level in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq and Sudan have used this resolution to lobby for their voices to be heard in peace-building processes, in post-conflict elections, and in the rebuilding of their societies. Resolution 1325 has been a catalyst for change in these countries because it provides women with a tangible and philosophical basis for demanding their inclusion. Resolution 1325 frames the need for women’s inclusion as a security issue rather than a rights-based issue. It does so by acknowledging that involving women in peace processes brings a more inclusive view, which is more likely to achieve sustainable peace and ensure agreements hold. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that the promotion of women’s participation in peace-keeping and peace-building is necessary because “women know the price of peace well, and are therefore better equipped to prevent and resolve conflict.” However, women are still significantly underrepresented in or entirely absent from peace negotiations. There appears to be a complete disconnect between the pledges made by states to increase women’s participation and their translation of this pledge into practice. Although the idea of increasing women’s participation in conflict-related decision-making has received considerable formal endorsement, there is no evidence that this endorsement has led to any change in the practice of their exclusion. While the significance of the unanimous approval of Resolution 1325 cannot be downplayed, failure to build on Resolution 1325 in future resolutions (by not referring to it or affirming its importance, as well as failing to emphasize commitment to its full implementation) may render Resolution 1325 obsolete. The Security Council has demonstrated inconsistencies in their commitment to the issues embodied in Resolution 1325. Failure to implement the provisions of Resolution 1325 in a systematic or ongoing manner cripples the effectiveness of the Resolution. Although Resolution 1325 is a step in the right direction, much more needs to be done to achieve women’s involvement in sustainable international peace processes.

Challenges Faced by Women in the Quest to Participate in Conflict Resolution in Northeast Nigeria

- **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 (Rono, 2000)
- **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.
- **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.

- **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.
- **Lack of resources (material and financial):** Most of the time women's groups lack the means 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.
- **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 resolution begins.

Conclusion

Therefore, the research concluded that the roles women play in society especially in pacification of conflict ravaged areas, can no longer be ignored, discounted or undermined. In Northeast Nigeria, women played an important role in promoting conflict mitigation and resolution through a variety of different grassroots strategies. Although women were conspicuously absent at the national level (formal) peace processes, their contributions to the peace building were significant both as individuals and groups in the lower levels of Northeast Nigeria society. In as far as the potential roles of women in conflict are not duly recognized and appreciated, their skills, knowledge and contributions shall continue to be underutilized. As the findings revealed women and children particularly bore the brunt of the conflict and were exhausted with warfare. The best option for promoting this need in the future should be to consult women in order that they participate directly at both national and grassroots levels.

Recommendations

In relation to the research findings, recommendations were made to the protagonists in the conflict on critical issues conflict mitigation, prevention and peace building in context of the UN Resolution 1325. 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

There is a general need to develop women's leadership skills. More women need to be encouraged to train to acquire leadership skills so that they can effectively represent their constituencies. Specifically local women leaders, like their male counterparts, need a forum in which to discuss pertinent issues arising from the nature, state, and magnitude and spiral build of the conflict in northeast Nigeria.

There is a great need for more research that documents and publishes the numerous roles of women in conflict and post conflict situations in northeast Nigeria, the rest of Africa and elsewhere in the world

The research encourages the international community to recognize that people in the Northeast Nigeria are deeply concerned about the need for long term reconciliation and national healing. Therefore, any reconstruction programme within the region and indeed the wider strategy must of necessity include promotion of reconciliation within the region and indeed, the whole country. This can be done in part through supporting civil society groups on the ground and encouraging links between reconstruction and reconciliation activities

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