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ROLES OF WOMEN IN BUILDING PEACE, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND HAPPINESS IN NIGERIA’S CONFLICT AREAS

Abstract. United Nations Organisation outlined measures for promoting women’s participation in peace and development efforts through the forward looking strategies for advancement of women participation for conflict resolution and peace building, especially in conflict areas. The purpose of the research is to show how women in Nigeria’s conflict areas have contributed and could increase their contribution to conflict resolution and peace building .The research investigates the following, nature of conflict and insecurity challenges in Nigeria, how women and girls are affected and how they constitute asset or obstacle to peace and happiness in society. Using the content analysis research method the research found the occurrence of sexual and gender based violence in conflicts and insecurity situations in Nigeria. Parties to conflicts and insecurity benefit strategically from the subjugation of women .The research concluded and showed through its recommendations how women can continue to resolve conflicts and build peace in conflict areas in line with the third goal of the United Nations Organisations’ Forward Looking Strategies for advancement of women’s participation for conflict resolution and peace building .

Key words: conflict, happiness, women

Introduction

The United Nations declaration of year 1975, as the international year for women represents a significant milestone in the definition of important roles of women in the global society. It laid the foundation for the emergence of framework for global action plans, ratification and adoption of numerous action plans by government of countries and world institutions to integrate women interest into development programmes .The Beijing conference declaration in 1995 adopted 12 critical areas of concern . Of the 12 critical areas of concern, three are very relevant to this study. They are critical areas of concerns, (iv) Violence against women, (v) Women and armed conflict and (vii) women in power and decision making. (UN women, 2023).

Women, Conflicts And Insecurity In Nigeria

The nature of conflict related and security challenges facing Nigeria today is more complex than in the past. (ONSA Report, 2019). The terrorist activities of Boko Haram include attack on police and military facilities, churches, Mosques, public markets and schools. The attack and capture of 276 school girls from Chibok in Borno state and thereafter the capture of girls and women increased. They were used for operational duties such as acting as spies for the insurgent groups for suicide bombings and also for bearing of children as future Jihad fighters. The coercion of women also included forceful conscription. However, women are more of victims than accessories or perpetrators of

acts of conflicts and insecurity. Hundreds of women and girls in conflict and insecurity affected areas of Nigeria had been traumatized by abduction, sexual abuse, forced marriages, loss of loved ones and livelihood.

Extremist groups in particular benefit strategically and financially from the subjugation of women. Boko Haram target women and girls to generate payment through ransom among other tactical purposes such as exchange of abducted girls and women for prisoners and to lure security forces to an ambush. Also kidnapped girls are used for suicide attacks (Bigio and Vogelstein, 2019). Furthermore, Sexual violence is used to enforce population / communal compliance, displace communities from strategic locations and create general instability in society. Nigeria Demographic health survey estimates that 44.4% of girls and women aged 15-49 years in Adamawa state have experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence in their life time. Also stigmas that accompany sexual violence marginalize girls and women in many ways, including marital relationship break down and loss of marriage prospects. Off springs of girls captured by Boko Haram and children born of rape frequently experience discrimination and social exclusion.

Forward-Looking Strategies for Advancement of women Participation for Conflict Resolution and Peace Building.

Gender, conflict resolution and the building of peace is an interdisciplinary area of study that straddles gender studies, peace and conflict studies among other disciplinary perspectives whereby gender is explained as an obstacle or asset to peace and happiness in the society. The forward looking strategies highlight three goals of the United Nations decade for women (1976-1985). The three goals are equality, development and peace. The forward looking strategies are to create awareness of the ways these global issues affect the lives of women.

RECOMMENDATION

This study acknowledges ways women in conflict areas have contributed to conflict resolution and peace building and recommends how women by their activities as individuals and group can increase happiness and peace in Nigerian society and the world at large.

Women should mediate in inter communal tensions and help build early warning systems to identify and resolve potential conflicts (Bunche, 2023). Women should help ameliorate root causes of conflicts and insecurity such as poor governance, corruption, poverty, youth unemployment and environmental degradation. Furthermore, women in the family and community are strategically positioned to identify early signs of violent radicalization and conflict disposition among their family and community members. Women can use their emotional pull on their children and husbands and other affines, to dissuade them from acts of violence, conflicts and crimes. The increase in numbers of women security personnel involved in conflict and insecurity resolution would increase trust between communities and the state (Hall, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion the promotion of women rights and roles in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building is a good example of women's involvement in the security sector envisaged by the forward looking strategies. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security stressed the importance of women's role, equal participation and full involvement in this area and

urged states to increase women’s representation to all levels of the decision making process for the resolution of conflict, promotion of security and peace building.

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