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Women's Participation in Non-Kinetic Conflict Transformation in Africa

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Abstract
Conflict is an endemic social phenomenon in any given human society. Invariably, the dynamics of the approach to conflict resolution and peace maintenance are inherent in the belief systems and social practice of every socio-political formation, with human capital constituting the most invaluable driving force. Existing literature seems to have celebrated the involvement of men in the peace process without proportional emphasis on women's input as collaborative agents of change in time and space. Using mixed methods of data collection and employing human capital theory as a framework of analysis. With emphasis on African continent, this treatise seeks to put women's non-kinetic participation in conflict transformation and peace-building in perspective. Findings revealed that women's natural attributes of love, care and humane disposition have placed them at the epicentre of preventive diplomacy, peace-making and conflict transformation in any given socio-political formation. Moreover, women's sensitivity to early warning signals of conflicts and their passionate inclination for proactive responses have remained potent instruments for facilitating social bonding and pre-conflict peacebuilding. Hence, women have always remained an integral component of human capital, within which context they have significantly complemented the making of history in every facet of life. Therefore, the study concluded that the prospect for social integration and sustainable development in Africa is dependent upon maximising the non-kinetic women's potential for conflict transformation and peacebuilding as adequately captured in UN Resolution 1325. In light of the preceding, the study recommended that patriarchal stereotypes and culture-inclined discriminatory tendencies against women should be outlawed, and women's hostile dispositions against women should be downplayed with a view to reinforcing women's collaborative and joint problem-solving initiatives for peace-building at grassroots, national, regional and international levels.

Keywords: Women's participation; Conflict Transformation; patriarchal stereotypes; African Cultural Heritage; UN Resolution 1325.

Introduction

In any given human setting, conflict is invariably presumed to be a perennial phenomenon from a time perspective. In an attempt to prevent the devastating consequences of conflicts, various measures are put in place in various societies, with human resource endowment as the most essential instrument of action. The impact of men in all areas of human endeavour seems to have been given wider coverage than their women counterparts in extant scholarship. At best, most existing works on women's studies and gender development have concentrated on women's vulnerability to the consequences of war and other dimensions of violent conflicts. Hence, awareness of women's prospects in societal development began to attract scholarly attention as recently as the second half of the 20th century.

For instance, for the first time in its history, it was in the year 2000 that the World Bank applauded women as mutually collaborative agents of social transformation with men, despite their disproportional disadvantaged culturally, politically and socio-economically. Given their numerical value in society, women have always remained indispensable agents of development at both micro and macro levels. Empirical analysis has established that women constitute 50 percent of the World's population. The lowly position of women, therefore, is not on the basis of numerical weakness. Rather, it stems from the patriarchal nature of society, which ensures that women unduly look up to men for approval. A patriarchal culture is a male-dominated culture in which traditional male values are institutionalised in the family, the economy, and social and religious life. In virtually all patriarchal cultures, women are constrained from engaging fully in development activities because their primary duty is confined to looking after the home and doing all the chores. At best, in most cases, they have to support the family through subsistence farming, petty trading or a combination of both, thereby technically deprived of the required time and strength to compete evenly with their male counterparts in any socio-political engagement. Suffice it, therefore, to say that any society that undermines the potential of relatively half of its human resource endowment tends to incur a development deficit.

What the previous suggests is that women's role cannot be overemphasised in the process of peace pedagogy and practical peace actions. Given their feminist disposition to love, tenderheartedness and care, women are naturally inclined to expand the frontiers of peace knowledge and transform the problem of violence in their respective domains by ensuring justice, social cohesion and nonviolence in the pursuit of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. It is all the more desirable to fill this gap in knowledge in order to broaden and deepen the overall understanding of the centrality of human capital resources in development and social transformation without gender discrimination. Although the causation and dynamism of conflicts are not gender-inclined, there is, however, no gainsaying the fact that men are always involved in the perpetration of violence more than women. The premise upon which this discourse is anchored is not to undermine the invaluable impact of men in the process of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Rather, the treatise seeks to provoke scholarly thinking towards appreciating gender equilibrium in human capital investment into peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes in a violence-induced global community.

Using Africa as the focus of analysis, the preoccupation of this treatise is, therefore, to evaluate women's engagement in the non-kinetic approach to conflict management and peacebuilding with a view to putting their impact in social bonding and sustenance of peace culture in a typical socio-political

formation in proper perspective. The non-kinetic approach in this article is a variety of non-violent and proactive instruments for conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiatives. The whole idea is to de-emphasise gender-discriminating inclinations in evaluating human capital for conflict transformation and social bonding without undue priority on the basis of gender status, racial enclave, ideological divide, or sociological underpinnings.

The study adopts a historical research methodology, and its approach is thematic. It employs a wide variety of traditional and Western techniques epitomised in oral and material evidence derived from the increasing availability of primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary sources employed are archival materials, in-depth interviews, biographies and case studies. Secondary sources of data comprise textbooks, journals, library-based materials, and internet materials. Relevant data were gathered from the National Archives, Ibadan, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), 'Women's Research and Documentation Centre (WODORC), Library, among others. Data collected were transcribed and translated for qualitative analysis.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation is an issue-based approach that aims to recognise the needs, aspirations, and interests of all the parties involved in a conflict and facilitate movement from conflict-habituated systems to peace systems. Conflict transformation aims at preventing conflict from developing into violence, not necessarily on how to bring violent conflict quickly to an end. Citing Vayrymen, (1991); and Spencer & Spencer, (1995), Schmid (2000:30) highlights four forms of conflict transformation as follows:

(i) Actor transformation: internal changes in major conflict parties or the emergence and recognition of new actors. It is the most important form of transformation as stakeholders take positions and influence the course of the conflict based on their aspirations, backgrounds, interests, needs, and other related characteristics;

(ii) Issue transformation – a change in the political agenda of the conflict, downplaying the importance of original conflict issues and emphasising shared concern for new issues;

(iii) Rule transformation – a redefinition of norms that actors are expected to observe when dealing with each other.

(iv) Structural transformation – profound change relating to the entire structure of inter-actor relations.

Schmid (2000:30) stresses that conflict transformation can be regarded as an integrative approach to conflict resolution, involving a redefinition of the relationship between the conflict parties through which opportunities are opened, and new compensation arrangements are introduced.

Fisher et al. (2000) stress that the goals of conflict transformation practice are:

- To change structures and frameworks that cause inequality and injustice, including economic redistribution;
- To improve longer-term relationships and attitudes among the conflict parties
- To develop processes and systems which promote empowerment, justice, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation (as well as) recognition (see Fisher et al., 2000:9).

The whole essence of conflict transformation in this analysis is that the prospect for transforming conflict in any given society depends on the maximum engagement of human resources in which women's input

cannot be overemphasised. This is imperative considering the fact that women and girl children have always remained at the receiving end of violent conflicts, especially in the Post-Cold-War era, where internal implosions have aggravated the social menace of poverty, diseases and inequality.

Peacebuilding

Peace-building in the context of this discourse refers to a complex, dynamic process comprising social, economic, cultural and political engagements towards ensuring peace, stability and security in the society. Building peace in a given society is a deliberate policy option designed to identify and support structures that tend to consolidate peace by advancing a sense of confidence across factional divides, entrenching the instrumentality of political integration, and supporting initiatives for socio-economic reconstruction.

The peacebuilding process has both pre-armed conflict and post-hostility phases. At the pre-armed conflict stage, peacebuilding requires an investment in human rights protection, political democratisation and socio-economic development. Quoting Ryan, Schmid (2000) submits that peacebuilding also attempts to reduce or completely stop conflict escalation through:

- Contact and forgiveness
- Contact and the pursuit of super-ordinate goals
- Contact and confidence-building
- Contact and education for mutual understanding

At the post-hostility stage, peacebuilding involves steps taken to settle the disagreements that led to the fighting in the first place, which entails (re)building stable peace. Some of the post-conflict peacebuilding activities include the following:

- Restore social and political structures and institutions capable of preventing the renewal of the conflict;
- Restore trust between the previously warring parties;
- Provide at least a minimal guarantee that the population will survive;
- Resolve the problems of refugees and other categories of people who have suffered during the conflict (e.g. Internally Displaced Persons - IDPs) and
- Restore the economy and effective operation of civilian structures, including those responsible for law and order, health care and education.

The emphasis is that women have remained highly instrumental in accomplishing the whole gamut of peacebuilding, as enumerated above. Therefore, reconstructingwomen's engagement in the peacebuilding process in this treatise captures a broad spectrum of societal activities in which women's resourcefulness is well represented.

WOMEN'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING

Despite extant and emerging constitutional, conventional and legal provisions towards gender equity, the patriarchal–dominant nature of African society and other socio-cultural attributes have deprived women of the opportunity to compete in relatively equal proportion with men in the interest of societal development. Hence, women are technically deprived of the required time and commitment to compete evenly with their male counterparts in any socio-political engagement.

One of the factors that have sustained the misrepresentation of women in the peace building process over the years is attributed to the limited participation of women in the emerging field of peace research. A number of variables through which women have functioned as non-violent agents of peacebuilding are logically streamlined in this

analysis. These include female traditional institutions, women's organisations and associations, socio-cultural and political formations, and civil societies at grassroots, national, regional and international levels. The deduction from the preceding is that women's disproportional vulnerability to the consequences of violence is not necessarily a result of their purported limited ability to defend themselves simply because they are women. Rather, they become more vulnerable in violent situations because of their passionate inclination for the safety of others and inherent responsibility to protect the unprotected, including children, the aged, the physically challenged, the sick, and their property.

It is, therefore, established that gender-based role differentiation, which has always constituted part of the social reality of any given society through changing scenes, has not suggested that women's engagement in peacebuilding and conflict transformation is less significant than men's. Suffice it, therefore, to say that women and men are complementary agents of change and Peacebuilding in Africa.
The central preoccupation of this study, therefore, is to attempt a historical reconstruction of the roles of women in the society within which the context of their conflict transformation and peacebuilding engagements are demonstrated:

Women and Conflict Prevention Through Socio-Economic Engagements

Historically, women have remained dependable and indispensable human capital resources in socio-economic activities. Role differentiation is a major catalyst for economic development in various parts of Africa, providing a framework for sustainable peace and development. For instance, among the Yorubas, men engaged in such occupations as blacksmithing, carving, bricklaying, shoe-making, basketry, carpentry and cash crop farming, while women were largely preoccupied with waving, pottery, petty trade and commerce. Also, among the Fulani nomads in Northern Nigeria, men used to keep livestock while women maintained the animal shed and sold dairy products. Similarly, young Fulani teenagers practised the division of labour based on sex. Boys handled the security of cattle, the clan, and administration, while girls milked cows, prepared butter and cheese, and engaged in trade. T his depicts that women and men have participated in the socio-economic activities of their respective societies as partners in progress in the spirit of collaboration and joint problem-solving with far-reaching implications for societal peace and stability. Indeed, in the agricultural sector, women have disproportionally borne the burden of the workload in farm activities. Women and girls mostly do the planting, weeding, harvesting, transporting and storage of crops despite the fact that the household chores still rested heavily on their shoulders. Thus, women have always enhanced productivity, as well as the distribution and redistribution of resources for micro and macro development activities at the grassroots and national levels. Through this medium, women have taken active and decisive parts in the sustenance of development with the accompanying implications for conflict prevention and societal peace.

Women in Conflict Transformation Through Capacity-Building

Women have always employed various instruments to promote capacity-building in their respective societies. For instance, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a grassroots women mobiliser in her homeland of Egba, Southwest Nigeria, which has a positive influence on African women in general. Funmilayo Ransome-Kutifounded the Egba Women's Union along with Eniola Soyinka, her sister-in-law and mother of the Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka. On the platform of this organisation, which once had over 20,000 registered members, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti used to organise workshops on mass literacy for market women. She also used the organisation

to promote women's rights, including the abolition of separate tax rates for women.

A number of conventional instruments also inspired women to exert their potential for development in Africa. For instance, in 1953, Ransome-Kuti founded the Federation of Nigerian Women Societies, which subsequently allied with the Women's International Democratic Federation. Her activism in defence of 'women's rights and social justice generally earned her several appellations, including "the doyen of female rights in 'Nigeria'; "the mother of Africa", and "the Lioness of Lisabi."

In another development, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) aided domestic policy-based instruments for women's empowerment towards exploring their potential for development. For instance, in Nigeria, in response to the UN convention towards the attainment of its objectives with respect to women's development, the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo incorporated the enfranchisement of Nigerian women as a cardinal of its local government reforms in 1976. In furtherance of enhancing women's status, the Obasanjo regime also established the Women's Department in the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youths and Sports. In specific terms, this development provoked women's rights to legal equity, equal rights to peace, right to productive education and economic empowerment. Through changing scenes, women have taken advantage of the forces of change to establish cultural, socio-economic, and political organisations both at the grassroots and in the urban centres to enhance women's status. Through organised literacy programmes and systematic skill acquisition activities, elite women reinforce their fellow women in a variety of human endeavours, thereby redeeming them from poverty of intellectualism, integrating them into fashionable family planning and streamlining their influence in craftsmanship and formal economies.

Women as Agents of Conflict Management and Social Bonding

In African cosmology, women are naturally considered as custodians of peace-making and conflict transformation. Perhaps it is within this broad spectrum of women's functions that mothers are considered as gold of inestimable value (iya ni wura iyebiye ti a ko le 'oworaf') in Yoruba philosophical aphorism. Women have always played significant role in peacebuilding and conflict management in Africa. At the family, group, corporate and institutional levels, women were instrumental to the sustenance of peace towards ensuring sustainable development and social transformation. As key stakeholders in marketing and business activities, women have always taken cognisance of the essence of peace and order as indispensable criteria for smooth running of legitimate activities and routines in society. Various dimensions of women's intervention in peacebuilding and conflict management include individual initiatives, good offices, corporate responsibility, institutional approaches, market women association, religious association, etc.

In a situation where conflict escalates into violent proportions, women have fallen victims of various dimensions of physical, emotional, and psychological injuries. This is not just a result of their inability to protect themselves simply because they are women, but because of their inherent passion and responsibility to ensure peace by extending safety, security and protection to others, even at the expense of their safety. Thus, during war scenarios, women consider themselves indebted to the responsibility to protect others who are victims of violence around them, even to the detriment of their safety. They would want to engage in rescue expeditions for other victims, such as children, pregnant women, nursing mothers, the aged, the sick, and the physically

challenged, among others.

Moreover, women have always employed every instrument within their reach to facilitate the de-escalation of violence. For instance, Oral tradition confirms feminist influence in the process of peace settlement in Yorubaland at the instance of Reverend J. B. Woods in 1881. In the 1893 treaty between Ibadan and the British administration in Lagos, the Iyalode Lanlatu was a witness and signatory to that peace agreement. This is one of the instances in which women were signatories to peace treaties during the colonial era.

In another development, in the Old Western State of Nigeria, Madam Humani Apanpa made a remarkable impact in the resolution of the Agbekoya (farmers reject oppression) crisis between 1968 and 1969 in her capacity as the Iyaloja of Ibadan. The conflict ensued as a result of farmers' reactions to the tax regime introduced by the Western State government, which they considered exploitative and oppressive as it had a devastating effect on livelihood. The problem became complicated in 1968 when farmers accused tax collectors and other government revenue-generating agents of official recklessness and gross indiscipline in terms of the crude approach of arresting and extorting tax defaulters among farmers. Madam Apanpa had an eyewitness account of the brutal activities of tax collectors and the police. This motivated her to mobilise market women to the Olubadan's palace to facilitate mediation towards an amicable resolution of the conflict, which has had far-reaching consequences on the security situation and economic activities in the metropolis.

Women also promote advocacy for peacebuilding and conflict management through civil society and related women organisations. Through this medium, they ensure the protection of women's rights within the context of the governance process. For instance, in 1978, Chief Pricilla Kuye, Mrs. Kofoworola Pratt and other women formed the League of Women Voters (LWV) with the motive to enlighten women about their obligations and rights in the polity through democratic education and orientation. The core objectives of LWV included teaching women to evaluate the quality of political parties within the framework of their manifestoes, determine the integrity of party candidates, and promote women's inclusion in national policy-making and development.

Women in Peacebuilding Through Political Participation

Women have made significant contributions to political development and governance process in Africa. During the colonial era, women played a significant role in the nationalism struggles. Some women emerged as leaders of activisms through which media they fought against obnoxious colonial policies, agencies and legislation.

With particular emphasis on Nigeria, in 1944, the 'Women's Party was formed in Lagos at the instance of Mrs. Oyinkan Abayomi. The party was exclusively 'women's political formation with a view to protecting the political rights and social interests of women and girls, which subsisting men-dominated political organisations and interest groups such as the Nigerian Youths Movement (NYM) had not adequately addressed. Other founding members of the party were Mrs. Tinuola Dedeke, Mrs. Oro Jones, Mrs. Ayo Manuwa, Mrs. Dorcas Macaulay, Lady Olajumoke Alakija, and Mrs. S. H. Baptist. Although membership of the party was exclusively reserved for women, its ideological underpinnings were gender-blind, including health and education, markets and local industries, and grassroots politics.

Given her participation in the mainstream of partisan politics under the umbrella of the NCNC, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was deeply committed to campaigning for 'women's

enfranchisement in Nigeria. In the 1950s, she was one of the few women elected to the House of Chiefs in the Western Region. 'Women's movement was one of the organisations which participated in the formation of the Federation of Nigerian 'Women's Society (FNWS). The main objectives of the movement included universal suffrage; admission of women to the native authority council, nomination of women from the movement to the Western House of Assembly, and more secondary schools for girls, among others.

In contemporary times, 'women's role in leadership has continued to expand across Africa. For instance, Mrs Helen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia was the first democratically elected female president in Africa. One remarkable thing about her emergence as the Liberian president was that she assumed office after the Liberian civil war. Her post-conflict peacebuilding impact has sustained the country so much that throughout her tenure of office, Liberian conflict did not re-escalate into another round of violent proportion. In recognition of her post-conflict peacebuilding role in Liberia, Helen Johnson-Sirleaf won MO Ibrahim Award for transformative leadership after many years of the Liberian civil war. The MO Ibrahim initiative is a new framework for assessing the quality of governance in Africa. The initiative aims to promote good governance, security and development in Africa. In an attempt to promote human security through good governance in Africa, MO Ibrahim Foundation has earmarked the sum of 5 million dollars for the president adjudged the best in terms of good governance practices and measurable democratic delivery. The foundation put in place five criteria to be fulfilled before qualifying for the prize: safety and security, rule of law, transparency, participation and human rights, and sustainable economic governance.

Joyce Banda of Malawi was the second female president in Africa. Like Helen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, Banda also proved herself as a distinguished leader and a peace-builder by transforming the fortunes of her people within a short period despite the fact that she inherited a messy socio-economic and political environment in her country. Mrs Banda focused her programmes and policy options on tackling the inherent problems of poverty and infrastructural deficit in the country. Banda demonstrated a passion for good governance as a medium of building sustainable peace through social transformation when she sold the 'Presidential Jet purchased by her predecessor for $22m, and another 60 Mercedes Benz Limousines bought for executive use.This bold step in the right direction brought about steady and remarkable progress in the country, which earned Banda global applause.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This treatise has evaluated women in the context of their non-kinetic functionality in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. With a specific emphasis on Africa, women are the epitome of love, integrity, and honesty of purpose, thereby making them indispensable non-violent instruments for conflict transformation and peacebuilding in any typical socio-political formation. Thus, through various instruments ranging from the female traditional institutions, women organisations and associations, socio-cultural and political formations to professional associations, grassroots, national, regional and international agencies, corporate bodies and individual abilities, women have remained invaluable non-kinetic agents of conflict management and peace maintenance in Africa.

The study also argued that Protracted internal conflicts in various parts of the continent had made women and children victims of violence not just because they are weak to self-defence but because of their inherent passion and responsibility to ensure peace by extending safety, security and protection to others even in a situation where their safety is grossly

endangered. The foregoing validates the proposition that role differentiation between women and men in the course of peace building and conflict transformation has not translated to the superiority of men over women. Rather women and men have remained complementary agents of change and peace building in time perspective.

In the final analysis, the study posits that various countries across African societies would continue to suffer peacebuilding and conflict transformation deficits if the role of women is not accorded the rightful position in the scheme of things. On that note, the study advances the following recommendations:

1. Subsisting instruments inherent in African cultural heritage through which women have demonstrated skills for preventive diplomacy social integration should be explored and integrated in the contemporary initiatives for conflict transformation and peace-building with a view to ensuring sustainable development in the society.

2. Various independent states in Africa should domesticate international instruments, protocols, and conventions that recognise women's resourcefulness in conflict transformation and peacebuilding, including UN Resolution 1325. This would facilitate the exploration of 'women's potentials in peace and development processes.

3. The patriarchal-inclined stereotypes and culture-based discriminatory tendencies associated with women should be outlawed with a view to giving women an enabling environment to maximise their potential in the peace process.

4. Women's uncompromising dispositions against women should be discouraged, with the aim of reinforcing women's collaborative and joint problem-solving initiatives for peace-building at grassroots, national, regional, and international levels.

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