

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE IMPACT OF  
WOMEN EXCLUSION IN PEACE BUILDING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**

**Shehu HASHIMU**

Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto,  
[shehuhashimu67@gmail.com](mailto:shehuhashimu67@gmail.com)

**Kabiru LABARAN**

Aminu Kano College of Education  
[kabirulabaran081@gmail.com](mailto:kabirulabaran081@gmail.com)

**and**

**Mustapha SULEIMAN**

GDSS Kware

**ABSTRACT**

The high rate of poverty sometime tends to develop violence and conflicts due to competing interest and scarce resources. Again, the consistence cases of domestic violence over the last decades, the figures create a worrisome. This is because the daily reports of cases received at Police stations, and those that reported and settled at communities' levels is another issue of concern. Upon all the forms, causes and consequences of domestic violence physical abuse is the most common form of violence which resulted to death of the victim. Women are abandoned with nursing babies and young ones who their survival depends on their parents. But the central issue here in relation to these kinds of violence and conflict is that during the conflict resolution and peace-building women are often neglected. They are not co-opted in most committees or commissions of inquiry especially during the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. In view of this background that this paper implored methods of examined existing studies on domestic violence, conflict and peace building in relation to women and how it affects their lives. The relevant of both primary and secondary source were examined and utilized throughout the paper. The paper identified some issues concerning women participation at conflict resolution and peace building which hindered their socio-economic development. It however, concluded with comprehensive suggestions and recommendations which needs to be implemented fully so as to enhance women capacity building on conflict resolution and peacebuilding at grass root for societal development at large.

**KEYWORDS:** Domestic Violence, Conflict Resolution, Women, Peace-Building.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Women are essential instrument of growth and development of any community, state or nation at large. The fact is that women serve as the custodians of socialization, guardians of culture, norms and values, breadwinner and mothers. They, therefore, deserve respect, dignity and caring, not maltreatment against their fundamental values and right as a whole (Alokan, 2013). It is beyond reasonable doubt that women are confronting with all sorts of discrimination with no reason. There was a recent public opinion poll conducted by NOI Polls Limited in partnership with project Alert on domestic violence which revealed a consistence prevalence of domestic violence across Nigeria in recent times. Although from the report data analysis indicated that the highest percentage went to South-West geo-political zone with (86%). Furthermore, this poll indicates that 50% of Nigerians have suffered a form of domestic violence and majority of the victims are women as stated in the report. Report from world health organization (WHO) indicated the 40%-70% of violence against women are caused during the domestic violence, which sometime led to physical and mental assault by the male counterpart (WHO, 2019; CEDAW Committee, 2017).

The literary aspect of domestic violence has to do with a sustainable pattern of abusive behaviour. This pattern of behaviour indicate that one partner wants to gain, dominate and control over another (Fareo, 2015). Domestic violence is a serious issue of concern especially it violates fundamental right of the victims and socially relegated their statues. It creates aggressive behaviour on the side of female while on the part of male develop cruelty with state of abusiveness, through verbal assertion, physical attack, emotional assault and psychological imbalance (Jura, 2015). The plain fact is that domestic violence has no boundary in terms of its manifestation and consequences. It does not have a specific target because both the partners in union can be victim of physical and mental assault. There are several cases which in many occasions are not being reported to the police simply for fear of being victimized and stigmatized. In most rural communities, it is considering taboo to involve the police in family matters while in the urban settlements there is the fear of dishonour the family

prestige and respect. Sometime the victims found it very difficult to access or locate human rights organizations offices to lodge their complaint. Another logical reasons apart from being victimization, there is the pervasive role played by traditional beliefs, cultural silence, significantly attached to marriage. This silence culture asserted that beating wives and children is part of discipline acculturation. The normative society believed that domestic violence is normal, a family affair; henceforth, outsider should not intervene, interfere or reported to police. Moreover, survivors of domestic violence are usually turned back at police stations on grounds that it beyond family affairs, thereby, denying any further alternative dispute resolution at community level (CEDAW Committee, 2017).

There is an adage where women regarded as the second-class citizens on the account of gender-based biases, therefore; all rights, privileges; freedom and liberty are not guarantee. This traditionalist assertion of women second class statues is cut across all strata of the society in northern Nigeria. Domestic violence also constitutes the act of rudeness which in most cases this inhumane act prevailed in rural areas. This is because women in the rural area experience social vices such as beating, hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, slapping, and injuries as well as throwing objects (Fareo, 2015). Although religion and tradition play side-by-side by empowering men than women because of their pivotal role in taking responsibility of the house as a whole. Domestic violence against women is not acceptable by all religions; because there are lay down rules and regulations, principles guiding the affairs of marriage in accordance to religious legal system and jurisprudence. It is a clear testimony that religion command men to be humble, kind and caring to their spouse and to be patience with them because they are weaker vessels.

There are various theories on causes of domestic violence against women. Thus, there is psychological theory which has to do with personality traits and mental characteristic of the offender. In this case personality trait is more concern with burst of anger, poor impulse control and poor self-esteem. These views suggest that men with abuse character have borderline personalities that are born, developed early in their life (Golant, 1995; Fareo, 2015). In regard

to these assertion women are regarded as behaviourally arrogant in nature while some men are partially cruelties in reaction. These Psychological theories were argued on the basis of it limitation on social factors which are important, while personality traits, mental illness or psychopath are fewer factors. Jealousy is another cause of domestic violence against Women. Jealousy in this respect is regarded as miss-trust between the two partners. One partner is suspected of being unfaithful or is planning to leave the relationship or having affairs outside matrimonial home with another person.(Goetz, 2010). This behaviour is commonly among the couples and eroding relationship and respect. Social Stress is among the causes of violence against women. Family pressure, over stress, uncertainty on some delicate and fragile issues are bound to ignite violence and when these vices chunked up surely create aggressive behaviour toward each couple. Social Learning is a process whereby violence is transmitted from generation to generation through constant violence at present of children which is cyclical manner(Jewkes, 2002). This is a bad omen to the family of such critical behaviour and also this attitude is currently developed in many families with ignorance of the repercussion.

### **The Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Resolving Domestic Violence**

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is a concept usually adopt informal dispute resolution processes in which the parties meet with third party who counsel and guide them resolve their dispute amicably. Alternative dispute resolution is very unique in its kinds and features that involve mediation, arbitration, fact finding as well as ombudsmen. In many occasions, alternative dispute resolution is applied in various dispute settlement, including the family, schools, workplace, mosque, churches, government agencies and the court. The issue of settling domestic violence is a critical subject in the sense that one side felt injustice in term of dispute settlement. Whether is arbitrary, mediation or conciliation mechanism, the process remain difficult but with cooperatives from both side a meaningful resolution could be reach. In most cases, the domestic violence ends up at the police station or court, even though

sometimes the court allow the disputants to try mediation before they take their case to court (Nicole, 2003).

The best way to settle domestic violence is through the use of ADR which an instrument for resolving family crises. Many families prepare to settle their family matters internally without the involvement of a third party. In that case less success could be achieving after the dispute settlement, otherwise the disputants could find another alternative. Although, some family implored the intervention of third party who is either a relative from the both sides. Others reported the cases to the head ward, village head or religious leader for settling of their domestic violence. In this regard, the disputants agreed with the outcome of resolution. In whatever form it may be, the policy maker at all levels should implement alternative dispute resolution mechanism in order to manage domestic violence cases.

### **Women and the Consequences of Conflicts in Northern Nigeria**

Women in northern Nigeria suffered a series of consequences in their life as a result of devastating conflict especially in the past two decades. They have endured unprecedented level of sexual violence, along with related HIV infection, involuntary pregnancies and health complications, increased food insecurity and internal displacement. All these circumstances occurred due to ravaging of destructive conflict in the country ranging from Terrorism, Insurgency, Kidnapping, Farmers-Herders clashes, ethnic-crisis as well as religious violence. The conflict in the North-east generate massive loss of lives and properties. The Boko-Haram's constant attacks are leading to an increase militarization in the region which continue to have a devastating impact on women and girls. It has been reported that in the North-East there are over 2.4 million internally displace persons as a result of Boko Haram insurgency activity. From available report findings by non-state actors and other coalitions (e.g. FOMWAN, WOSADLO, WRAPA, WILPF NIGERIA), revealed that women and children constituted 55% among IDP's in various camps (Shadow, 2017; Rapporteur, 2017; CEDAW Committee, 2017). Multiple clashes between Farmers and Herders (i.e. in Benue, Taraba and Jos) in last couple of years culminate the situation with high tension and deadly attacks and

reprisal from both sides. Majority of women in rural area are farmers, food producers, therefore, farmlands have been abandoned out of fear that herders would graze on them. The situation exacerbating poverty and food shortage in the Northern region (Shadow, 2017).

The Banditry and Kidnapping violently slaughtered men in a cruel manner. Houses are burnt to ashes, farmland were destroyed, economic activities have been destructed. The crisis has seriously affected the life and security of women and girls, particularly of widows who are often killed, raped and rendered homeless. Many of them faced with the uncertainty as there are unrevealing atrocities committed against them. Combatants and Kidnappers use raping as a tool of warfare and serving not only to terrorize individual victims but also to inflict collective terror on some ethnic groups. (Dayo, 2018). For assurance of safety and protection during the violence conflict, women willingly offer themselves for sex or marriage in an exchange for basic necessities such as food, shelter. (Elizabeth, 2018). This barbaric act of gang rape that remained order of the day without considering age or social status has eroded portray image of Nigeria before international communities. This social milieu has destroyed morality, customary system of an ordinary traditional African man which respects human dignity (Jibril, 2005; Rights, 2004; Murjanatu, 2020).

### **Issues of Side-lining Women During Participatory of Peace Building Process**

During the wars or conflict, women enduring trauma of several tragic of bombings, famine, epidemics, mass executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment for migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation. But when it comes to peace building, women are not engaged to reflect their needs in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. It has deeply been observed that international donor reconstruction programmes fail to meet up some certain social needs during distribution of humanitarian aid. The concern issue here is women economic activities which has been destructed as a result of war, therefore, neglected during the rehabilitation process. There is the need to explore some avenue where women active economy to be restore for speed social recovery. Ex-combatant women should be fully integrated into community with economic support so as to gradually erase personal accounts of nightmare. The policy

maker of conflict rehabilitation and negotiation should to bringing women to the round table, to render services as advisors, to prevent domestic conflict and to serve during the emergency assistance (NSRP, 2017). When women are included, they can make viable changes toward conflict mechanisms.

### **State and Non-State Actors on Women Involvement in Free Violence and Peace Building**

Usually, when a conflict or violence occurred, in order to douse the tension, or response, the Federal Government sent security operatives to quell the conflict. Followed by setting up of a panel or commission of enquiry to ascertain the degree level of destruction caused by the conflict. For instance, in order to give maximum response to devastating violent conflict bedevilling Plateau State, the government set-up four commissions of inquiry while three commissions were established by the Federal government. Thus, the commissions comprise the Abisoye panel of inquiry; the Solomon Lar Presidential Administrative Panel of Inquiry and Prince Bola Ajibola panel of inquiry, among others (Eleanor, 2013). But the irony of this commissions of inquiry is that women are largely absent from those commissions. Honourable Justice Rahila Hadea Cudjoe was only woman in the past headed the Judicial Commission of Inquiry on Zango-Kataf riots in 1992. As part of their resilient to double efforts on conflict resolution mechanism, the Northern Governors' forum Committee on Reconciliation, Healing and Security (NGFCRHS), constituted a 41-member peace committee, comprised statesmen in the core North in August 2012 and 2019 respectively. In the committee membership only six are women from both Muslim and Christian side. Mrs. Saudatu Mahdi MFR served as deputy secretary of the committee. The principal objective of the committee is response to the general and overwhelming challenges of development peaceful coexistence and security in Northern Nigeria.

### **Women at Corridor of power and Relented Support to Peace Building**

In order to demonstrate their active commitment, the Northern Governors' Wives Forum also met in July 2016 issued a unanimous statement to *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awal-Jihad* (Known as Boko-Haram) that to lay down their arms and to embraces peace and engage in

dialogue with the Federal Government. Various women activist at individual level and group made a clarion call on Boko-Haram to urgently release all Chibok and Dabchi girls under their captivity. The first Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Aisha Muhammadu Buhari relented her support on the detrimental condition of those girls under captivity and even to those at various camps in Northern Nigeria. She has reached out to those vulnerable and displaced women and girls through her Future Assured NGO by addressing some critical economic and social conditions exclusively.

### **Theatrical Role of Women Civil Society Organisation and Faith-Based Organisation**

Women at community level work collectively, rather than individual in pursuit of peace. Working as a team create window of success. Women struggle for peace initiative and gender-based reach to a certain development. Since then, women are systematically resort to other channels of engaging themselves to humanitarian service through organisation such as mothers' groups or neighbourhood alliances to speak out on conflict, to resolve conflicts non-violently or to influence the conduct of more formal mechanisms. The famous among these organisations at the front banner during the peace advocacy include BOABOB for women's rights, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Gender Equality, Peace and Development Centre (GEPaDC), the Integrated Women and Youth Empowerment Centre (IWYEC). Religion has a powerful influence over its adherence because it connects them spiritually. Religious leaders, too have influential position within the inner circle spiritually. There are various organisation of Muslim women who's their faith-based work reflects both the demographic political divide in the country Nigeria. They propagate their mission largely at conflict zones in the north and the target persons are women. The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) organized an annual conference, theme: 'Islam Women Peace and Security' held in Owerri, Imo state in August in August 2012.

The reason for chosen Imo state is to show case the divisiveness of mutual connectivity among Muslim and Christian women across religious divide. The communique after the conference was the 'involvement of women in conflict resolution and peace building



initiatives (NSRP, 2017). In Kaduna state, the Women Interfaith Council (WIC) provides forum for dialogue between women leaders and members of Muslims and Christian faiths. It has carried out various peace advocacy, initiation including press conferences, courtesy visit to media houses and internally displaced person's camps. Also paying solidarity visit to victims of bomb blasts in various hospitals in the Northeast. They also coordinate interfaith prayers, sensitization meetings, conducting workshops, seminars and public lectures. Similarly, in Jos, the Women Without Walls Initiative (WWWI) has also presented with some recommendations to the Plateau State Government through a peace proposal. The coordinator of the group Pastor Esther Ibanga of Jos Christian Missions shows their readiness toward united with one voice and vision. The mission also aims at develop a non-violent, creative and inclusive approach for conflict resolution mechanism and women transformation in Nigeria. Other interfaith based organisations during the struggle in the Northeast include the Muslim Sisters Organisation (MSO), Women in Da'awa; Zumuntan Matan; Church Women; Kanem Women Association and WOWICAN. Women's intervention in disputes is restricted to the domestic sphere and they are not involved in mediation between the JAS and government (CEDAW Committee, 2017; NSRP, 2017; Dayo, 2018)

## **CONCLUSION**

It is beyond reasonable doubt to state that the high level of violence and devastating conflict more especially in Northwest and Northeast cause for alarm. The various degree of violent conflicts ranging from Boko-Haram saga, ancient Farmer-Herders rivalry coupled with recent social milieu of Banditry and Kidnapping, it is a clear testimony that they have largely affected socio-economic development of Nigeria as a whole.

The role of women in peacebuilding has received impedimenta from all quarters. Many factors are said to be driving forces which hindered women's involution to violence reduction and peacebuilding. There are internal factors which setback women's participatory in strategizing post conflict resolution. Discriminatory social norm is part of the major constrain because of culture, traditional or religious interferences which marginalized women

and girls from taking part in peacebuilding. Media representation has either under-report, black out or relegate women-led peace initiative to some large extent. Indeed, peace initiatives are not generally reported except where there is a sensationalist element for example women in a peace march half naked. Women have generally less access to media facilities unlike their counterpart men.

Generally speaking, women are not engaged in high level peace initiatives. However, when they are invited to such programme, they are often assigned auxiliary and subsidiary roles. Women's involvement in mainstream peace and security events is still often relegated to domestic chores rather than serving as mediators, panellists or negotiators (CEDAW Committee, 2017; NSRP, 2017).

### **Recommendations**

This paper come up with the following suggestions and recommendation as follow:

- There should be regular community sensitization on peacebuilding so as women to be aware that their active role is beyond domestic chores.
- That government at all levels should include women in various response committee, commission of inquiry and panel.
- Also, women should be co-opted during the strategic policy-making for effective decision.
- That the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development should create a department that will take care of women sensitization on conflict resolution and peacebuilding programmes far beyond distribution of reliefs and aids materials.
- That the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development should create women network at rural and urban settings to complement NAP development on women, peace and security for effectiveness. The implementation of NAP will rely on the commitment and resources of the Federal and states governments as well as the involvement of civil society.

- The Federal government should ensure that there is full implementation of United Nation Security Council on approved Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The resolution mandated the UN Secretary-General and Member States to guarantee an increase in the representation of women in all spheres of peacebuilding, including the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The council all request that states be provided with training materials for the subject of the protection of women, and that there be an increase in the provision of resources for training.
- That human right activist and civil society organisation should monitor not just sensitization programmes but ensure that women are involve in any committee set-up by governments at all level.
- That religious faiths should keep aside their religious difference and work collectively for common purpose as violence or conflict has no boundary of its operation. And they should not deter women from collective participation on peacebuilding and violence reduction events (Dayo, 2018; Villellas, 2010).

Again, some policy-making decision on Gender-based violence issue needs to be properly implemented by all the stakeholders involve. These include:

- National Gender Policy of 2006 (centered on women's empowerment and Commitments to eliminate discriminatory practice).
- The Violence against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP), 2015.
- Gender-Based violence (Prohibition) Law 2007.
- Prevention against Domestic Violence Law 2007.
- National Gender Policy, 2007 (Shadow, 2017).

Women are endowed with skills, wisdom, intelligence and gifts which are natural qualities identified in them. As the resourceful persons, women are essential tools and ingredients necessary for nation building in particular (Ajibade, 2012).

## REFERENCES

- Abubakar, G. Y. (2015). *Poverty and Educational Development. Case Study of Sokoto State, Nigeria. A Dissertation Submitted to Angha Ruskin University in Partial fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of Master of Science in Sociology.* UK.
- Alokan, F. (2013). Domestic violence against Women: A Family Menace. *1st Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference (AIIC). Cited in Ogunkorade, O.O (2015), The Prevalence of Domestic Violence Against Women in Nigeria: Causes and Consequences: Benson Idahosa University Journal of Private and Property Law* (p. 101). Portugal: Azores.
- Bank, W. (2005). *World Development Report.* Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- Dayo, O. K. (2018). Gender, Peace and Conflict in Africa. In G. Shedrack, *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa* (pp. 213-214). Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- DODO, H. S. (46 years, April Saturday). What do you understand by Poverty? (S. Hashimu, Interviewer)
- Elizabeth, M. (2018). Gender and Peace Processes in Africa: . In G. (. Shedrack, *Introduction to Peace Conflict Studies in West Africa*, (pp. 372-373). IBADAN: Spectrum Book.
- Fareo, D. (2015). *Domestic Violence Against Women in Nigeria, European. Journal of Psychological Research.* UK: Progressive Academic Publishing.
- Fodebe, D. (2010). Effect of Gender Equity in Poverty Alleviation: Cited in Ewuim, N.C., Agbodike & Igbokwe-Ibeto, C.J. (2015) Gender Inequality, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Lessons from the RAPPT Women Empowerment Project, NEPAL. *International Journal of Accounting Research*, 7. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencepub.net/report>.
- Goetz, A. (2010). The evolutionary Psychology of Violence. *Psicothems*, 22.
- Golant, D. a. (1995). *The Batterer: A Psychological Profile.* Cited in Fareo, D.O (2015) *Domestic Violence Against Women in Nigeria. Journal of Psychological Research.* Base Book.
- Hura, I. M. (51 years, April Tuesday). What do you understand by Poverty? (S. Hashimu, Interviewer)
- Jewkes, R. (2002). *Intimate Partner Violence: causes and prevention.* Lanut.
- Jibril, A. (2005). *Gender Justice Challenges and Prospect in Darfur: African Women for Peace Advocacy.* Pretorial: UNIFEM.
- Jura, F. a. (2015). Domestic Violence: causes and Implications for the Educational System. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies and Social Studies*, 67-63.
- Mansson, K. (2005). *Integrating Human Rights in United Nation Peace Building Activities: Developing Gender Justice Best Practice in Gender Justice in Post Conflict Country's in East, Central and Sourthern Africa, Advocacy Magazine, Centre for Human Rights University of Pret.* South Africa: UNIFEM.

- nsrp. (2017). *Impact Report: Output 3. Women and Girls in Peace Building and Conflict Mngement*. Nigeria: nsrp.
- Ogwumike, F. (2012). An Aprisal of Poverty Reduction Strategies in Nigeria; cited in Umaru, S.U. (2015) *Women and Poverty in Nigeria: Agenda for Poverty Eradication. Developing Country Studies*, 36.
- Olojede, I. (2009). *Women: The Neglected force in Public Administration*,. Lagos: Lagos State University.
- Paul, T. &. (2015). Violence Against women and its Implications for Peace and Security in Nigeria. *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies (IJPC)*, 27-40.
- Rapporteur, U. S. (2017). *Human Rights of Internally Displaced Person Chaloka Bayani, On his Mission to Nigeria from 23 to Agust 2016*, UN Index: A/HRC/35/27/Add.1. 12 April. New York: UN.
- Rehn, E. a. (2002). *Women, War, Peace Assessment Report*. UNIFOM.
- Rights, A. (2004). *Broken Bodies, Torn Spirits: Living with Genocide, Rape and HIV/AIDS / Rehn, Elizabeth and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2002) Women, War, Peace (Assessment Report*. UNFEM.
- Rowntree, J. (2008). *Women and Poverty. Experiences, Enpowement and Engagemet: Women's Budget Group*. New york: York Publishing Services Ltd.
- Rukayya. (35 years, April Monday). What do you understand by Poverty. (S. Hashimu, Interviewer)
- Schftan, C. (2003). Poverty and Inequality in the era of Globalization: Our need to change and to Reconceptualize. *International Journal for Equality Health*, 7.
- Shadow, J. (2017). *Women, Peace and Security in Nigeria: CEDAW Committee, 67th Session. Submitted for the committee's review of Nigeria Combine 7th and 8th Periodic Reports on the Implementation of the convention on the Ellimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Wo. Ngeria: CEDAW*.
- Shuaibu, H. G. (60 years, March Sunday). What do you understand by Poverty? (S. Hashimu, Interviewer)
- Solemn. (2004). *Declaration on Gender Adopted by African Heads of State and Government, the Third Ordinary Session of the Assembly of AU Assemble*. Ethiopai: AU.
- Ubaida. (36 years, March Monday). what do you understand by Poverty? (S. Hashimu, Interviewer)