Women's Peace Initiatives in Africa

Some of Africa priorities in the Follow up to the Ten –Year Review and Appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Prepared by
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*   The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily
       represent those of the United Nations.

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1. ARMED CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Introduction

Many countries on the continent of Africa, including; Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cameron, Togo, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda to mention but a few, have been afflicted by civil strife and armed conflict of one kind or another for many years. Some of the results of these conflicts have been the emergence of a generation of citizens who have never experienced stability, and free from violence in their lives, causing most of them to accept civil strife as a "normal" way of living and hence the perpetuation of a culture of wars.

In recent years, several scholars and peace activists have extensively discussed the conflict in Africa, relating it to four main factors that are a result of the exclusion of the majority from governance and resource sharing, and the disregard of their opinion and rights, developed from pre and post independence actions taken by different actors.

One of the highlighted factors of this instability is linked to the slave trade, which followed the trading in African ivory and natural resources. It is argued that the traders realised that the people they used to carry the loot could actually themselves be a commodity to trade in.[1] This did not only cause injustice to the African people, but it depopulated some of the regions of Africa, causing a huge destruction of the labour force. This form of trade, which was mainly carried out by non-Africans, is said to have caused incalculable losses to Africa. Worst of all, these actions resulted into a loss of identity for those traded in and left many Africans psychologically traumatised, lacked self esteem and developed a perception that they are inferior to the rest of humanity[2].

That was followed by colonialism, which is known as a period for the scramble for Africa's wealth under the pretext of civilization missions to liberate the "dark continent"[3]. During the period, foreigners once again made huge profits through the exploitation of Africa's natural resources. The outcome of the so called civilization process did not only undo the well established traditional structures of governance in order to control the resources, but used the divide and rule method to alienate some sects of the society, by creating within societies sects that were purported to be superior to others. This approach determined who would rule and the ruled. It is a well-known phenomenon all over Africa that this has been a cause of most of the instability witnessed today.

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[1] Jannie Malan (1997): Conflict Resolution Wisdom from Africa; ACCORD, South Africa
[2] Ibid, Pg 16
[3] Isis-WICCE (2000): Women Building peace from Grassroots to government, an Isis-WICCE Institute report; Kampala, Uganda.

The geographical demarcations of some countries such as Rwanda and Burundi hindered their ability to cope with their growing populations. A good example is the Habyarimana regime that in 1980's claimed that repatriation of Rwanda refugees from neighbouring countries was impossible due to scarcity of land at home. Subsequently, Rwanda refugee communities created secret political and military alliances in exile in order to topple the government. Similar scenario has happened in many other African countries, causing cycles of conflicts due to the exploitation and injustice individuals and groups continue to face.[4]

Neo colonialism has continued to manifest itself through the continued control of Africa's economies by multinational conglomerates that in most cases are fronted by the former colonial masters. This has continued to provide the global North with the opportunity to take raw materials from Africa at very low prices, and sell the end products back to Africa at and exorbitant prices, which majority of the raw material producers cannot afford. The African nations' lack of control over their own markets is yet another state of affairs that has continued to impoverish the continent leading it into perpetual debts. These debts continue to be serviced with the little revenue that would otherwise have been used to provide essential social services such as education, health and development of the infrastructure, which, would consequently reduce anxiety and improve the well being of the population, which would consequently contribute towards a more comprehensive development.

The ensuing impoverishment has also led to the inability of the governments to properly remunerate their public servants, resulting into endemic corruption that is seen all over the continent. Globalisation that is purported to provide free trade and economic opportunities for all has in the case of Africa, exacerbated poverty among the majority more than improving their conditions.

Likewise, liberalisation that is said to have "opened up" Africa's markets has mainly exposed majority of the indigenous producers to undue competition and a spate of unemployment that has resulted in the escalation of poverty. These circumstances have forces many experienced experts from Africa to migrate to other areas that offered them better livelihood, once again, denying Africa of its needed labour force.

The trade that seem to flourish is the proliferation of small arms that has led to the disgruntled groups (due to the unbearable conditions), to look for ways of getting into power to try and change the status quo. Hence, the continent remaining a breeding ground for easy recruitment of dissident forces, and a soft spot for cycles of conflicts.

The cycle of conflict in Africa, has created a history of impunity that is characterised with militarism, where many such governments believe in the power of the gun, giving birth to violent politics and governance, disrespect of constitutionalism, superficial divisions causing tensions among ethnic groupings, struggle for identity of the marginalized. Therefore, unless the issues of the underlying factors to these conflicts are addressed, Africa's attainment of its Millennium Development Goal will remain a challenge.

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[4] op.cit.

The Impact of the Instability on Women

Vast researches conducted by different stakeholders indeed confirm that during the conflicts, women have been the most vulnerable and continue to bear the brunt of conflict due to their gender, and the roles they carry out that expose them to numerous risks of all forms of violence, particularly sexual violence. Women's bodies have become a form of martyrdom, as lamented by one bitter female survivor who described herself as ... "a living-dead person".[5] Women are especially vulnerable to gender based violations, which target their sexuality. Such types of violations have left deep mental, psychological and physical wounds that have continued to undermine the capacity of women to effectively participate in the reconstruction of their communities[6].

Isis-WICCE Intervention

Isis-WICCE, a human rights organization founded in 1974 in Geneva, Switzerland, in response to the need for women to communicate ideas, create solidarity networks and share information in order to overcome gender inequalities, felt it critical to take stock of the experiences of women in conflict situations, and make the gender analysis of the causes and consequences of the instabilities to women's bodily integrity, as a way towards realising sustainable peace. In response to two international frameworks, the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, that calls for full and equal participation of women in political, civic, economic, and cultural life at all levels, emphasizing the justification of "the human rights of women and girls being, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights[7]"; and the 1995 UN fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing that highlighted the need to collect disaggregated data (section 129 a, b); and the outcomes Document of Beijing +5 conference of 2000, that urges different stakeholders to ensure full participation of women in peace processes, including conflict prevention and resolution, peace making, peace keeping and peace building (122b); Isis-WICCE, has for the past 10 years, through women human rights networks and local women groups put major emphasis on documenting the human rights violation of women in situation of armed conflict.

As an organization whose mandate is to promote justice and women's human rights, and knowing that women suffer most from the consequences of armed conflict; and realising the fact that there is still very limited information about the realities of women in situations of armed conflict (Musisi 1997:7), with technical support from different stakeholders[8], in Uganda, Isis-WICCE documented the survivors experience in most of

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[5] Africa Rights (2004): Broken Bodies, Torn Spirits: Living with Genocide, Rape and HIV/AIDS, Rwanda

[6] Olivia Bennett et al (1995): Arms to Fight Arms to Protect: Women Speak out About Conflict; Panos Publications ltd, London, UK

[7] Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna 25th June 1993

[8] Heinrich Boll Foundation, ActionAid, DANIDA, EED, Ford Foundation, Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, Kerkinactie, NORAD, NCA/FOKUS and UNIFEM

the conflict ridden districts of Gulu[9], Luwero[10], Soroti, Katakwi Kumi[11] and Kitgum[12]. The Isis-WICCE institute participants from selected human rights organisations from other parts of the world in similar situations[13] were also trained and supported by Isis-WICCE to replicated similar documentation in their countries. The aim was to provide the gender disegregated data about their plight of women as a tool to advocate for redress and seek for justice.

Further more, Isis-WICCE has facilitated women to build skills in understanding conflict, the causes of conflicts and how to manage them, an effective strategy to involve women in peace processes.

Examples of Gender specific effect of Armed Conflict from the studies

Isis-WICCE studies and those carried out by the institute networks as indicated above reveal that all forms of sexual violence like rape, forced incest, sexual slavery, forced impregnation, vaginal mutilation and coercion[14], have been inflicted to women and girls in all the affected countries in Africa and beyond. The consequence of these violations to women's physical and mental well being as very disturbing. Analysis of the collected data indicates that the target has all along been women's sexuality resulting in physical and psychological trauma, unwanted children, prolapsed uteruses, vagina fistulae and cervical cancer, to mention but a few. The magnitude of the ensuing problems to the women has also been due to lack of health services. All these have gone unabated amidst the ratification of international conventions, protocols and existence of national gender sensitive laws. Below are some of the testimonies collected from the field.

Sexual Mutilation

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[9] Isis-WICCE (2001): Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict in Uganda, Gulu District 1986-1999, Kampala, Uganda
Isis-WICCE (2001): Medical Interventional Study of War Affected Gulu District, Uganda
[10] Isis-WICCE (1998): Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict in Uganda, Luwero District 1980-1986, Kampala, Uganda
Isis-WICCE (1998): The Short Term Intervention of Psychological and Gynecological Consequences of Armed Conflict in Luwero District, Kampala,Uganda
[11] Isis-WICCE (2002): Documentation of Teso Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict 1987-2001, Kampala, Uganda (Teso region covered the districts of Katakwi, Soroti and Kumi)
Isis-WICCE (2002): Medical Interventional Study of War Affected Teso Region, Kampala, Uganda
[12] Isis-WICCE (2004): Women, Armed Conflict and Food Security in Uganda: An Exploratory Study of Four Districts, Kampala, Uganda.
[13] Albania, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Kenya, Kosova, Liberia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sudan and Togo.

[14] Aline Mukundwa: Documenting Violence Against Rwandese Women During the 1994 Genocide, Isis-WICCE 1998-99 Institute, Kampala

During May 1994, a group of militias came to our house, 8 in number. They were so furious, I didn't understand what they were saying, but I later came to learn that they were accusing me of being an RPF sympathizer. We ran into the banana plantation. When they caught us, they pushed me on the ground, 4 of them holding my limbs and two of them maintaining my chest down. One of the soldiers warned them not to rape me, that I could curse them because I am very old. They then cut a banana stem and they forced it into me, but it failed to penetrate. One of the militias proposed to enlarge my vagina using sticks and iron bars. They continued until I passed out.... My grandchild saw this and she was so humiliated... some days later the wound became rotten and smelly, my stools were passing through the vagina...people isolated me. After two months in this condition, a man at Kabgayi treated me and said I had recto-vaginal fistula... however I continue to have repeated pelvic infections[15].

Another woman narrated…. *The soldiers became very wild in our village. They raped a girl, after raping her, they cut her private parts and she later died. Another woman was also raped and her private parts pierced with a bayonet. She was taken to a health centre but she too died…*[16]

Sexual slavery

I was captured while hiding with my father under the bed. The soldier took me to the military detach as a comforter. He took me to his underground chamber (commonly referred to as andaki) where I found two other young girls. I was then 14 years old and a virgin. The man raped me in front of the other two girls. I was hurt and ended up getting an STD. After sometime, the man was transferred to another detach. As soldiers were not allowed to move with women, my then "husband" sold me to another soldier for shs.1000, (**less than a dollar**) *where I became a comforter for the second time. He also sold me for shs. 1000= to another soldier and I became a comforter for the third time.*[17]

Another survivor narrated that: *… They kept us for the whole month. Each evening the rebels would come back from their killings and pass by this office, taking women and girls to rape. During a single night, one could easily pass between three to four men. Later, they didn't have any more discretion-they gang raped us and in the same communal room. They shared us between themselves as they wished. Even the little girls were not spared. The pregnant women were the most targeted. Raping a pregnant woman was to claim two victims, and that gave them great satisfaction…*

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[17] Isis-WICCE (1998): Documenting Women's Experiences in Armed Conflict Situations 1980-1986- Luwero District, Kampala, Uganda

[17] Isis-WICCE (1998): Women's Experiences of Armed Conflict in Uganda, Luwero District 1980-1986, Kampala, Uganda

Consciously infecting women with HIV

Women and girls living in the camps are often exposed to physical violence, threats, sexual exploitation and abuse, making them vulnerable to contaminating HIV/AIDs. Either rebels or government soldiers have raped many at least once under the threat of a gun. Sometimes AIDS is transmitted consciously as narrated by one survivor… *a rapist in uniform, after raping me he said I contracted AIDS by means of money but... me- I give it to you free…. [18]*

Forced incest

"*They forced me to have sex with my daughter ...I refused.... They ordered my son.... For the fear of a cocked gun he complied ... I was then forced to have sex with a hole they had dug in the floor using a knife... They forced my private part in the hole several times...the skin was totally destroyed.... It was impossible to fight someone who is armed.... This was all done in front of my wife, son and the daughter...my wife went mad to date".*

In the documented armed conflicts many women also lost lives.

Torture and trauma inflicted on the population

In Uganda, the data that was analysed by a team of doctors who worked with Isis-WICCE in one of the camps in northern Uganda gives the following. consequences;

Variable	Total N=1018		Gender				Chi square P-Value
			Male (n=372)		Female (n=646)		
		%	Number	%	Number	%	
Experienced at least one torture event**	905	88.9	346	93.0	559	86.5	<0.00*
Physical torture							
Beating and kicking	445	43.7	216	58.1	229	35.4	<0.00*
Bayonet injuries	56	5.5	45	12.1	11	1.7	<0.00*
Forced to perform hard labour	173	17.0	104	28.0	69	10.7	<0.00*

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[18] Therese Ntahompagaze (2002); Human Rights Violation of Displaced Women Contaminated by HIV/AIDS: *A Study Case Of Carama And Kiyange Sites, SWAA Burundi*

Tying of both hands at the back	128	12.6	102	27.4	26	4.0	<0.00*
Deprivation of food, water and medicine	195	19.2	99	26.6	96	14.9	<0.00*
Gunshot injuries	60	5.9	39	10.5	21	3.3	<0.00
Burning	22	2.2	11	3.0	11	1.7	<0.19
Sexual Torture	134	13.1	24	6.4	110	17.0	<0.00*
Completed rape	49	4.8	6	1.6	43	6.7	<0.00*
Attempted rape	50	4.9	9	2.4	41	6.3	0.01*
Forced marriage	35	3.4	9	2.4	26	4.0	0.18
Relative killed in war**	612	60.1	262	70.4	35.0	54.2	
Spouse	61	6.0	15	4.0	46	7.1	
Children	144	14.1	59	15.9	85	13.2	<0.00*
Others (aunt, uncle, grandparent)	407	40.0	188	50.5	219	33.9	
Psychological torture**							
Verbal threats	472	46.4	192	51.6	280	43.3	<0.01*
Interrogations	112	11.0	76	20.4	36	5.6	<0.00*
Military detention	226	22.2	112	30.1	114	17.6	<0.00*
Sleeping in bush/swamp	629	61.8	238	64.0	391	60.5	<0.28
Abduction	339	33.3	159	42.7	180	27.9	<0.00*
Destruction/ looting of family property/livestock	528	51.9	231	62.1	297	46.0	0.00*
Forced to fight in war	50	4.9	40	10.8	10	1.5	<0.00*
Forced to kill	25	2.5	19	5.1	6	0.9	<0.00*

Key: *Statistically significant associations
  **Some respondents reported more than one torture event

Further analysis gives the following disorders as a result of the experiences of violations committed to women and a few men interviewed.

Variable	Total (N=198)		Male (n=66)		Female (n=132)		Chi square P-value
Disorder**	No.	%	No	%	No	%	
Post traumatic stress Disorder (PTSD)	79	39.9	26	39.4	53	40.2	0.92
Depression	104	52.5	35	53.0	69	52.3	0.92
Alcohol abuse Disorder	36	18.2	17	25.8	19	14.4	0.05*
Generalised anxiety Disorder	9	4.5	4	6.1	5	3.8	0.47
Panic Disorder	120	60.6	36	54.5	84	63.6	0.22
Agoraphobia	80	40.4	17	25.8	63	47.7	<0.00*
Social phobia	40	20.2	18	27.3	22	16.7	0.08
Somatoform Disorder	144	72.7	44	66.7	100	75.8	0.18
Having suicidal thoughts	45	22.7	16	24.2	29	22.0	0.75

Table: Psychiatric disorders as seen by the mental health team at Awer camp by Gender.

Key: *Statistically significant associations
         **Some respondents had more than one psychological disorder.

In Liberia, Isis-WICCE institute participants documented 1,692 different horrific cases of survivors of the conflict in two districts of Lofa and Montserrado, highlighting the sexual based violations as indicated below.

Table 6: Description of Sexual Violence experienced by the respondents.

Description	Lofa	Montserrado	Total	
Raped in front of their children	98	102	200	
Forced to watch someone being sexually assaulted	93	100	193	
Stabbed or shot at after sexual act	5	4	9	
Experienced torture during sexual act that disfigured them	38	50	88	
Vagina and anus penetrated with objects	44	55	99	

Forced to watch their husbands, children or friends physically assaulted or killed	102	137	239	
Sexually exploited	74	50	124	
Sex slave	150	90	240	
Stripped naked	68	50	118	
Experienced mouth & anus sex	52	48	100	
Forced to cook human parts and sexually abuse	5	2	7	
Force to cut off son's head and taken as sex slave	2	0	2	
Forced to drink cup of blood after raped	2	1	3	
Deserted by husbands after being sexually assaulted	47	50	97	
Watched their raped daughters bleed to death	30	25	55	
Forced to take drugs during rape	14	16	30	
Detained against their will for refusing sex in their mouths	28	60	88	

Just for emphasis of the gruesome experience, below is one of the testimonies of one of the respondent.

"They put me in the grass with one penis in my mouth while the other man's penis was in my anus, they did this to me for one month, maybe this is why I sometimes stool on myself unknown to me."

The foregoing statistics reveal that while more men lost lives, women continue to suffer the multiple violations inflicted on them and the long-term consequences of the gender-based violations. Moreover, when it comes to the resultant trauma, women were the most affected.

As a result, millions of people, most of whom are women and children, are struggling to cope with the aftermath of the raging conflicts, include displacement, trauma, gender based violence and its complications, lack of self-esteem, dependence syndrome, increased poverty, disease and migration[19]. The long-running crisis on the African continent has resulted in a huge number of deaths and widespread criminality and arbitrary violence particularly to women and children, living communities in has resulted to fear, mistrust, anger, and vengeance, conditions that have continued to affect women's participation in socio-economic, and political activities.

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[19] Mukasa Stella (2005): Evaluation Report of Isis -WICCE's Regional Exchange Institute, Kampala, Uganda

Isis--WICCE's Efforts to promote peace and co-existence

Sustaining peace can only be attained when the underlying causes of conflict and the needs of the affected communities are addressed. Isis-WICCE findings for example, enabled the organization to identify some of the salient issues that are believed to be some of the underlying causes to the persistent cycle of conflict in Africa. The findings also provided the organization with a clear picture of the immediate, medium and long-term needs of survivors. After the interviews, many women would sigh with relief saying, "at least I feel much better now", a reflection that these survivors longed for dialogue to their situations. This is an indication that documentation is in its self is a peace building strategy.

Since addressing both social and legal justice is a prerequisite to building sustainable peace within the affected communities, as well as the perpetrators, Isis-WICCE went ahead to develop various strategies to support women survivors in conflict affected areas to gain the confidence and ability to participate in reconstruction and peace process.

These include:
- In Uganda, mobilising of resources and building alliances with health professionals to carry out emergency medical interventions to address serious complications to the reproductive health of women war survivors;
- Building the capacity of women in Africa, in peace building and conflict transformation;
- Facilitation of women to women solidarity exchanges as a strategy of breaking their isolation, and encouraging the sharing of information and learning from one another;
- Building strategic advocacy campaign in an effort to influence other stakeholders to support the survivors and carry out policy reforms.

Women's Peace Initiatives in Africa

Given the above magnitude of the problems, and the limited achievements so far made by most governments in the region to address the needs of women survivors of the conflicts, women human rights activists mobilised into constituencies to address some of the emerging factors. Due to inadequate resources these organisations always experience, the activists have tapped on women's attributes, by mobilising women leaders in affected communities to deal with long-term intervention such as peace buildings, as a strategy to address the spoils of war. Women attributes such as nurturing life, compassion and empathy have been very instrumental in consolidating women's alternative approaches to peace building. This approach has not only built relationships among the survivors, but has made both perpetrators and survivors to connect and have feelings for one another. Both parties have gained some level of confidence and a feeling of inclusiveness in the reconstruction of their lives and their communities.

The skills provided to women leaders have enriched their effective style of communicate peace messages.

At policy level women peace activities in Africa have successfully negotiated by both warring factions to bring some relative peace in the affected communities.

It is evident that women's understanding of peace has a lot to do with the social transformation for the benefit of the common good[20]. There fore, their approach to peace focuses more on survivors' well-being, and the restoration of individuals and communities dignity. This seems to be different from men's approach which, focuses more on the fulfilment of the international agreements and protocols, therefore, relating peace mainly to cease fire and power sharing.

Some of the success stories of women building peace in Africa;

Women building relationship- the women peace centre in Burundi

The search for common ground peace centre is an initiative of Burundian women peace activists who amidst the ragging of the guns, mobilised into a group that engaged itself in promoting relationship building among the different ethnic groups in Burundi with the aim of developing a culture of co- existence. The strategies they used included;

- Developing communal programmes for the displaced communities such as construction of houses for the returning refugees from Tanzania and Congo; caring for children of a different ethnic group, having communal gardens where all the ethnic groups participated and sharing water sources. This down to earth approach to relation building managed to overcome the suspicions each group harboured for one another.

- Providing a platform for different for women of all class, of different political affiliations and from different ethnic groups to meet monthly to deliberate on different aspects of concern to them. This enabled women to isolate politics and concentrate on issues of concerns to them as women. It also opened communication to discuss more about issues that unite them rather than those that divide the.

- The centre also organised training in peace building and the use of radio to communicate peace messages. This has enabled women to have a deeper understanding of their conflict, make their analysis and plan for solutions for their problems[21]

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[20] Nurturing of Peace, Sustainers of Africa: Selected Women's peace initiatives. Isis -WICCE Report, Novembers, 2005

[21] Nurturing of Peace, Sustainers of Africa: Selected Women's peace Initiatives in Africa. Isis -WICCE Research Report, p. 10-25, September, 2005.

PROPAZ: Involvement of ex - combatant as promoters of Peace

PROPAZ in Mozambique is an organisation formed by ex-combatant, from the two fighting forces (REMANO and FLERIMO), majority women, with the objective of fostering re-conciliations and a culture of tolerance, especially between the ex-combatants and to enable the survivors of the bloody conflict to accept integration of the ex combatants. Like Search for common ground in Burundi, the main strategy is building the skills of the combatants to learn to sustain themselves economically and recognise the importance of the integration. The participatory approach to the training enabled the ex combatants work together and share experiences which, made it easier fro them to open up and strengthen relationships and strategise on how they would support their communities.

The organisation also trained groups in peace building and conflict transformation with special emphasis on mediation. The organisation has also been very instrumental in sensitizing communities on the dangers of the proliferation of small arms especially among monads communities.

The discrimination against women on both sides of the fighting forces enabled the female combatants to recognise the need to come together to address their common concerns. This likewise developed into a strong relationship among the female ex combatants[22]

Mass mobilisation for Peace in Liberia

One of the most gruesome conflict that left thousands killed, displaces, sexually violated especially women and children lest women with no option but to mobilise in numbers to call for peace. The strategies included keeping peace vigil in open spaces and along the roads, calling for fruitful dialogue for peace, unconditional ceasefire among other needs. The persistence of women in the peace vigil force the then president to sit and dialogue for cease fire, seeing the beginning of the peace process in Liberia.

Traditional Methods of Resolving Conflict and peace building

In Rwanda and in Northern Uganda many communities that have been affeacted have embraced this strategy, with a substantial success recorded.

Justice for women through the International Criminal Court (ICC)

The government of Uganda referred the case of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the case is currently under investigation. In addition to building women's skills in peace building, as a follow-up to Uganda women's

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[22] op.cit, p,26

cases, Isis-WICCE, liased with the Women's Initiative for Gender Justice (WIGJ)[23] a global women initiative based at The Hague whose objective is to monitor the International Criminal court (ICC) performance on the investigation of gender violation in conflict situations, to ensure that the court does not not sideline women's violations during its investigations. One of the strategies used was to organize a fact-finding visit for officials from WIGJ to most of the affected areas of Northern Uganda. This enabled the team to make their own observations, and interview survivors, whose evidence will be vital in guiding the court.

CHALLENGES

The various international conventions and treaties for the protection of women have not been made operational by many governments including Uganda. Examples are CEDAW, Geneva Convention Article 3, the Convention Against Torture, ICCPR Article 8, ICESR Article 11, Protocol to the Geneva Convention Article 76 (I), that clearly provide guidelines for the protection of women's rights. This has had an effect of limiting their effectiveness in addressing the issues on violence against women, given the following gaps:

♦ Lack of strong institutional mechanisms to strengthen governance and democracy in the region
♦ Cycles of conflict partly resulting from the above point
♦ Lack of prioritising research for development, leaving the planning to ad hoc approaches
♦ Lack of mechanisms to coordinate the available data for further analysis
♦ Lack of adequate skills in collection and analysis of data by women activists
♦ Data collection on violence against women is very expensive in terms of funding and time, making many donors to shy away from this area, since they are mostly interested in quick and tangible results
♦ Limited implementation by the state in addressing findings of the research
♦ HIV/AIDS is a big issue among women survivors that has hindered women's participation all development activities including the issue of peace and security
♦ Marginalisation and lack of recognition of women's efforts by other actors including the state on the issue of peace and security
♦ Sustainability of women's peace efforts is very low because they are usually looked at as part of their gender roles.
♦ Language(s) used the parties to resolve the conflict is not peaceful in most of the time and this continue to fuelling conflict
♦ Working on the Male's Ego is still a big challenge to peace building
♦ Limited resources and limited multiple effects of armed conflicts forces women to look at basic needs rather developing strategies that would sustain peace.
♦ External policies and proliferation of the small arms, and the redefining of existing conflicts to fit the terrorism concept is a big problem to building peace and reconciliation.

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[23] WIGJ is an international women's advocacy group based in the Hague

WAY FORWARD

The Role of the Global intervention

- Enforce the State parties to implement the UN Resolution 1325. This will enable women to be part of the peace process, and governments will be able to address the consequences of the conflicts, i.e trauma and reproductive health complication that women particularly suffer from.
- Encourage Africa governments to ratify the protocol to the African Charter on Human and People' rights on the rights of women, given its complimentality to the UN1325 and CEDAW.
- Re enforce the policy on the control of sell of arms particularly to African Countries.
- The UN must recognise and timely act to all conflicts in Africa. The Northern Uganda conflict is a living example where the UN has taken long to take action.

Governments' Roles

- Women play a crucial role in attitude change since they are the mothers, sisters and wives of those involved in the various conflicts. It is therefore important to build their skills in early warning, disaster preparedness, peace building and reconciliation, negotiations and disarmament, demobilisation rehabilitation and reintegration.

- For sustainable peace to be achieved, there is an urgent need for governments to invest in changing the perceptions of communities. Since policies and laws alone cannot succeed in building sustainable peace, it is important for governments to invest and budget for civic education.

- In order to sustain the gains of women peace initiatives, governments in Africa must integrate women's approach to peace building in the main stream peace building mechanisms

- Domesticate Resolution 1325 in order to engender peace building, reconciliation and effective planning for the physical and emotional needs of the victims of the conflict.
- There is need to address the root causes of conflict rather than symptoms of conflict through excising transparency and democratic governance.

- Address the problem of land mines to avoid survivors falling into another crisis.
- Dealing with perception of communities; civic education must be part of government's plan and budgets, and must have a multi sectoral approach to its implementation.
- Government must mobilise resources for the rehabilitation of victims of violations. Physical and mental healing is the prerequisite to sustainable peace building, and the achievements of governments MDGs.

- Government must draw a road map for peace transformation, which should be discussed nationally. In order

The role of Civil Society

Responding to the survivors need

Coalition building is key to effective advocacy for redress especially for survivors of human rights abuse. It is important for the civil society to build strategic alliances that will influence technocrats to get involved in the redress process. For example, in conflict situations the sexual violations women experience result into a lot of reproductive complications, which only technical medical expertise can address. The CSO therefore should lobby technocrats with such expertise to get interested in dealing with the magnitude of the post-conflict sexual and reproductive problems. The success of such linkages is instrumental to effective planning for long-term interventions by institutions with adequate capacity and capability.

Building of the Capacity of Women War Survivors for Peace and Reconciliation

The civil society should be engaged in a broad range of strategies as a long-term measure to address the root causes and consequences of armed conflict, and to promote a culture of peace among the population. These could be done through;

- Training of women, and providing skills in their understanding of how to use international and regional human rights instruments in their advocacy work; analysing conflict, and being able to manage trauma, peace processes and conflict resolution, as a way of creating a critical mass of women advocates for peace building, and preparing women for engagement in formal peace negotiation processes and DDRR.

- Mobilising and organising women to women solidarity and exchange visits as a strategy that help women share, learn and help in healing, process. It also promotes solidarity among survivors of different nations and ethnicity. The exchanges visits facilitate the breaking of isolation that women survivors often suffer from, and make them know that there are others who have equally suffered, thus providing them with inspiration and new/alternative ways of coping with the situation they are in.

- The CSO should be actively engaged in monitoring and evaluating the performance of government in the implementation of the international instruments they ratify and e.g the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) .

- The Civil society should mobilise communities to rally behind issues that affect their livelihood. This will help communities particularly women to build confidence and demand for their rights. The critical mass is vital in forcing policy makers to address the women's plight, as well as in demanding for justice and accountability for violations committed against them.

- The civil society worldwide must engage the UN to recognise the northern Uganda conflict is one of the crises of the Great lake region.

2. WOMEN'S RIGHT TO INFROAMTION MAMAGEMENT AND ACCESS

In order for women to effectively carry out their peace work and advocate for end of all injustices and discrimination against them, they must have timely and effective way of generating, managing and communicating their concerns to platforms that will address their concerns. This is crucial if women are to break their isolations and visibilise their potential and concerns. Access to information and communication is a vital right that enables individuals and groups to reason and make informed decisions. In Africa, this is one of the rights that many women still lack. Even after the ratification of UDHR, article 17 that calls the right to access information from all frontiers, and the recent WSIS global strategic objective of building a people centred, inclusive and development oriented information society where every one can create access and utilise information for her/his empowerment, women in Africa still have numerous handles to achieve this. As a result, their concerns continue fail to reach the platforms where plans for implementation are carried out. Nevertheless, women activists have worked tirelessly to use every available communication tool (radio, drama to using new electronic communication), to generate, process and share women's concerns, in an effort to push women's agenda to the global agenda. However, the digital gap is still wide and calls for urgent intervention.

WAY FORWARD

National Level

- Improve women's capacity in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for management of their generated information, dissemination and advocacy.
- Facilitate women organizations to build an effective communication networks in the region for better flow of feminist information.
- ICT projects developed by all stakeholders must have a strong training component so as to increase the local knowledge base capable of exposing the women's potential and opportunity in the area of ICTs. This would provide along term sustainability and replication of the project.
- Development of community radios in Africa is apriority for accelerating the opportunity for women to communicate.

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