



WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

VICTORIA Nkechi Azu, PhD

**Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Public Administration, University of Port
Harcourt**

Abstract

This paper explored the intricate relationship between gender and peacebuilding and its impact on national development. The study was necessitated by the consideration that women's participation in decision-making and peace negotiations is essential for a more inclusive and durable agreements. However significant challenges such as gender norms, inequalities, and power dynamics intersect to influence peace processes, hindering full inclusion of women and the promotion of gender equality in peacebuilding efforts. Excluding women from peace effort denies the society the benefits derivable from exploring women's unique potentials in establishing social justice which is indispensable for development. The objectives of the study include among others to examine the dynamics of gendered approaches to peace building; interrogate the specific role of women in peace building, assess the challenges to gender-inclusive peacebuilding in Nigeria, as well as its impact on national development. The Feminist Peace and Conflict theory was adopted. Data was sourced basically from secondary sources through desk research; while employing qualitative method based on content analysis to interpret and analyse data. Findings showed that women are effective in grassroots mobilization, identifying early warning signs, advocate for inclusive peace agenda, psychologically restore and re-integrate victims, while implication for development include higher rate of negotiation success, effective intervention, greater political legitimacy, sustainable recovery etc. Recommendations include: peace building programmes to be planned and implemented on the basis of gender; stakeholders should prioritise conflict-sensitive gender work to enable both women and men meet their needs; provide adequate security for women peace builders and whistle blowers.

Keywords: Gender, Peace building, Development, War, Conflict

1. Introduction

Over a decade ago, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution in a landmark document, (UNSCR) 1325, (UN 2002) reaffirming the importance of women's participation and involvement at all levels of peace and security agenda. The Resolution underscored the gradual recognition among international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) that women and men have differential experiences both during and after conflict, and that women have a unique set of obstacles related to peacebuilding and security (Speake; 2013). Moreover, the informal contributions of women have been highlighted and declared very critical for conflict resolution and peace building. (Pratt and Richter-Devroe, 2011). Despite all these, formal peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives continue to downplay the issues of gender, and women's involvement in formal missions and talks remains low (Diaz, 2010). Further, even those that consider the issues of gender, tremendously fail to address structural inequalities and power dynamics which are the foundation of gender discrimination (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003)

However, different actors from diverse discipline and with varied political opinions and direction of recommendation have come up with arguments in favour of gendered approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Many of these arguments, especially those which have been brought into mainstream discourse, are instrumentalist in their approach, ie, seeing women as instrumental in bringing about sustainable peace, and focusing narrowly on 'what women can do for peace', neglecting the issue of what peace can do for women. Other peacebuilding initiatives and movements employ essentialist definitions of women, restricting them to their roles as mothers and caregivers, and thus excluding them from the broader peace building agenda. (Puechguirbal, 2010).

This paper therefore interrogates gendered approaches to the challenges of peace building in and how it impacts development in Nigeria. Gender plays a crucial role in the field of peacebuilding, with increasing recognition of its significance in promoting sustainable and inclusive peace. This article explores the intricate relationship between gender and peacebuilding, highlighting the various ways in which gender norms, inequalities, and power

dynamics influence peace processes. Gender has long been recognised as a key factor in both violent conflict and peacebuilding: men, women and gender minorities are both differently involved in and affected by the processes involved.

It has also become commonplace in peacebuilding to stress that gender does not equate women, and that gender needs to be seen in relation to other identity markers, such as age or class, and to social power dynamics (Howes, 2023). In practice, however, gender in peacebuilding often is reduced to focusing on women only or, even more narrowly, exclusively on violence against women and girls.

Gender is a critical dimension in peacebuilding processes, shaping both the causes and consequences of conflict. Recognizing and addressing gender inequalities and power imbalances are fundamental for achieving sustainable peace. Debates and interventions often have remained tied to simplistic dichotomies of men as perpetrators and women as victims, contrary to concrete evidences where issues of masculinities have seldom been addressed in peacebuilding, nor have issues of male vulnerabilities or women's agency been addressed in reproducing violence. Gendered inequalities are also often not analysed in relation to other social, economic and political inequalities, and the categories of 'men' and 'women' are often dealt with as if they were static and homogenous.

It is therefore important to point out that Gender is increasingly understood as being relational; peacebuilding work is increasingly seeking to address issues of masculinities along with femininities; sexual and gender minorities' issues are beginning to be addressed; and there is a growing understanding that women and men are often both perpetrators and victims of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and it is on the basis of the above that this article focuses on interrogating gendered approaches to the challenges of peace building in Nigeria and its impact on development.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Women's participation in decision-making and peace negotiations is essential, as it leads to more inclusive and durable agreements. However, significant challenges hinder the full inclusion of women and the promotion of gender equality in peacebuilding efforts despite the adoption of a National Action Plan (NAP) for United Nations Security Council Resolutions

1325, to promote women's representation. This has created a gap between this policy and actual practice. Thus, formal peace initiatives in Nigeria remains heavily dominated by men due largely to entrenched patriarchal traditional and religious framework that dominate community representation; coupled with heavily militarized state-centric approach to counter insurgency. This is evidenced by exclusion of women in the Niger Delta Amnesty agreement in which only about 133 women out of 30,000 officially registered ex-militants benefitted from the program; resulting to the treatment of the conflict strictly as men's affairs despite the several peace protects organized by the Niger delta women groups (Ikelegbe, 2014). Another example is the underrepresentation of women in the counter-insurgency (Boko Haram) decision making bodies with almost 98% of membership being males. Excluding women from such formal peace decision resulted in the mismanagement of critical gender-issues such as the weaponisation of girls as suicide bombers, rehabilitation procedures for rescued female captives as well as the systemic sexual abuses within Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017). By adopting a participatory approach to peace building, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers can contribute to building a more peaceful world that upholds the principles of social justice and gender equality. This requires integrating a gender perspective at all stages of peacebuilding, from conflict prevention and resolution to post-conflict reconstruction. This study therefore serves as an avenue to explore the role of women in peace building and its impact on national development

1.2 Objectives of the study:

1. Examine gendered approaches to peace building in Nigeria
2. Analyse the roles of women in peace building initiatives
3. Highlight the factors that hinder gender-inclusive peace efforts in Nigeria
4. Assess the implication of gender-inclusive peacebuilding efforts for sustainable development in Nigeria

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the major gendered approaches in peace building?
2. What specific roles do women play in peace building?
3. What factors hinder gender-inclusive peace building in Nigeria?

4. How does gender-inclusive peace building promote sustainable development in Nigeria?

1.4 Conceptual Review

Concept of Peace and Peacebuilding

The real meaning of peacebuilding has continued to create confusion and disagreements among the different peace actors. This may imply that no generally accepted definition of peacebuilding exists. Hence, academics, professionals, organisations, and activists involved in the field of peace may use it to denote different meanings in different situation. However, the term 'peacebuilding' was originally coined by Johan Galtung in 1975, when Galtung defined peace building as a 'proactive process of creating structures and institutions that resolve conflict by address its root causes, rather than just ending violence'. He distinguished it from peacekeeping (which is mere separating warring parties) and peacemaking which refers to resolving immediate tensions, which he altogether refers to as negative peace.) to focus on long term transformation of the society towards 'positive peace' characterized by 'justice', 'equality' and 'human rights'. This approach always emphasises a bottom-top initiative and community level involvement to build a sustainable method of reconciliation and alternatives to war. This term thus intends to incorporate a wider range of activities than the earlier notions of peacemaking and peacekeeping, by acknowledging the importance of identifying and building structures which might mitigate against war, therefore addressing the root causes of conflict (Institute for economics and peace, 2020 & Barnett et al., 2007).

The term was however made popular in the international scene by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his 1992 Report 'An Agenda for Peace, and its importance was reaffirmed in his 1995 'Supplement to an Agenda for Peace'. Thus, though Boutros-Ghali noted that peacebuilding may refer to activities both pre- and post-conflict, a number of academics and organisations, including the new UN Peacebuilding commission, tend to consider peacebuilding as only applicable to post-conflict situation (Barnett et al., 2007). However, many actors working in peacebuilding adopted a much wider definition, linking it to Galtung's concept of 'positive peace' and the more recent concepts of 'human development and 'human security' as advocated by the UN (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003). In its broadest conception therefore, peacebuilding can be understood to include the promotion of sustainable economic

development, and social and political justice, in order to create a more equitable society, which can find alternatives means of resolving conflict, and where all citizens are free from both direct and structural violence (Barnett et al., 2007).

Accordingly, Lederach, (2024), views peacebuilding is "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict". The concept of peace has thus, been defined by different scholars, without a consensus on how 'peace' should accurately be conceptualised. The word 'peace' is derived from the Latin word 'pax', which means a treaty, a deal or an agreement to end the war, dispute, and conflict between or among people, groups of people or nations. Colloquially however, governments and scholars have often defined peace in its negative sense as the absence of war and physical violence (Francis, 2016).

This is considered problematic, but to define peace in a broader and more positive way, Galtung (2021) differentiated between negative and positive peace. Whereas negative peace is the absence of direct violence (e.g., direct destruction of lives and properties), positive peace includes the absence of structural violence (e.g., dying as a result of poverty), and cultural violence (e.g., factors that blur people to injustice or allow them to rationalize it). Thus, while "the negative peace and the cessation of direct violence" may not be compatible with justice, "the positive peace of reconciliation and psycho/social healing" for the most part pre-supposes it (Howard, 2022).

However, it may not be desirable to "stop" a conflict if it is at the expense of justice. Thus, the term conflict transformation has carved a niche for itself in the peace studies and conflict resolution literature. Lederach (2024) suggests that transformation involves the recognition that conflicts can progress in either constructive or destructive ways argue that with its focus on transforming unjust social relationships and addressing the root causes of conflicts, transformation is especially salient for asymmetrical conflicts. The concept is thus, in line with the peace studies tradition in which "it is (direct, structural, and/or cultural) violence, not conflict that is seen as the antithesis of peace."

Concept of Gender

Gender is a term which refers "to the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. In most societies, men and women differ

in the activities they undertake, especially in access and control of resources and in participation in decision-making" (O'Reilly, 2013). The term is also used to describe a relational concept, implying a relationship between men and women and among men and women. According to Singh, "it refers to a structural relationship between men and women which is linked to the state, the economy, and to other macro- and micro-processes and institutions."

Väyrynen, (2010) avers that gender concerns are often perceived as women's issues. Organizations may choose to disregard gender because they are not a women's organization, they feel that their activities do not concern women, or that their activities only involve men. Women are often perceived as victims of war, a vulnerable group which needs to be taken care of, or as not being capable of understanding or participating in peacebuilding at any level (community, country or international). These views inhibit women's involvement in peacebuilding. In equating gender with misconceptions of women, project organizers often see no need to understand the gender dimensions of their activities. The process of understanding and addressing gender inequities at a project level often can reveal inequities at a personal level. Addressing gender can make people insecure as power relations are questioned, and assumptions and perceptions of people and relations are drawn to the surface. The feeling of insecurity at the personal level may inhibit project planners to question gender inequity at the project level.

Gender and Peacebuilding

When gender is combined with peacebuilding, there are three uses or perceptions that emerge. These connotations are not exclusive but the emphasis of the term is put on different elements of the concepts. It can be viewed as an approach (e.g. gendering peacebuilding or a gendered approach to development in a post-conflict country), an analytical tool (e.g. gender, peace and conflict analysis of causes of war, end of war, a situation, tool, program etc.), or a goal (e.g. gender equality, improved status of women, and peace). It is argued that peacebuilding is gendered, meaning that perceptions of peace and approaches to peace differ based on one's gender. A gendered approach is guided by the process of gender equity. Men tend to dominate the formal roles in a peacebuilding process; there are mainly male peacekeepers, male peace negotiators, and male politician and formal leaders. Power is unequally distributed between men and women and the majority of women do not have a voice in local and national decision-

making processes. This inequity is heightened during conflict as power becomes centralized and the male dominated military takes more control (Väyrynen, 2010).

However, women play important and largely unrecognized role in peacebuilding. The importance of gender approach to peace building can be expressed in the fact that men and women as social actors each experience violence and conflict differently, both as victims and as perpetrators; and that women and men have differential access to resources (including power and decision making) during conflict and conditions of violence.

Concept of Development

Development as a multi-dimensional concept has evolved from the narrow focus on economic growth to greater holistic idea incorporating human-wellbeing, freedom and sustainability. In its simplest form, development refers to a dynamic process of positive, desirable and progressive change aimed at enhancing the quality of lives of individuals and nations. (PublicAdmin.Institute, 2025) In this study, development literature shall be considered from different dimensions as perceived by different scholars which specifically include: economic, social, human and environmental, respectively.

Economic dimension. This dimension of development primarily focuses on structural transformation, infrastructural development and efficiency of market. The main objectives of this dimension being reduction of poverty and creating sustainable livelihoods (Rostow 1990). This dimension provides an intersection with women's agency in the economic atmosphere by shifting women's role from mere income earners to actively deciding how the income is spent, have access to resources and control physical assets. This dimension thus, create a gender balance in economic decisions, and acts as a catalyst against economic-bias-orchestrated conflict.

Social dimension. The social dimension of development focuses on equity, education, healthcare and institutional trust. The objective of social development being to achieve social cohesion and build human capital. (UNDP, 1990), thus, shifting global attention to social investment. Education in this regard empowers women to challenge discriminatory social norms, participate in formal labour market and peace building discussions, negotiate safer health practices and participate actively in community leadership as gate keepers. When women act as active agents instead of passive victims in conflict, they use their agency to seek

grassroot reconciliation, and build trust in security agencies. Thus, services and power relations are restructured leading to greater safety and more accessibility, eliminates existing power imbalance that usually generate conflict.

Human Dimension: From the angle of human development, emphasis is on agency, bodily autonomy, freedom from violence, expanded choices and empowerment, with the objectives including granting individuals and groups choice for self and collective determination (Sen A. (1999, Nussbaum, 2011)). This dimension argues that true development entails increase human freedom as the philosophical basis for gendered peacebuilding strategy. The peace building outcome of the dimension holds that women participation in political choice, such as post conflict legislative debate, guarantees more durable peace agreement; indicating that peace processes involving women usual provide more sustainable outcome.

Environmental dimension: This dimension of development addresses climate resilience, resource conservation and biodiversity with key objective to preserve the ecosystems for future generations. (Sachs, 2015). Environmental dimension recognises women with decision making capacity especially in agricultural cooperatives, as well as climate policy actions. This is underscored by the fact that women basically manage household natural resources; although they become susceptible to security risk during climate shock or environmental degradation, with their expertise in resources management however, communities are able to mitigate these pressures in a more resilient and cooperative manner. This ensures a more equitable distribution of resources and thus, prevent local ecological violence. In this respect, women's agency becomes the mechanism that converts social investment into community progress.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The **Feminist Peace and Conflict theory** was adopted in this study. Feminist and Peace conflict theory was propounded by Harriet Martineau and developed by Friedrich Engels and Max Weber in the early 19th century (Nickerson, 2023). The theory emphasises the importance of women's involvement in conflict prevention and peace building, as a matter of right and not just adding value to the outcomes. The theory argues that women inclusion in peace effort can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of security challenges and how to deal with them.

1.6 Methodology

The study adopted qualitative design, employing content analysis to analyse data. Secondary data were collected from scholarly journal articles, books, reports of international organisations such as the United Nations and policy documents on gender and peace building. The documents were purposively selected based on their relevance, credibility and dates of publication. The data were analysed by identifying recurring concepts, patterns, and themes relating to gender approaches to peacebuilding and national development.

1.7 Gendered Approaches to peace building

Analysis of the reviewed literature identified five major gender approaches to peacebuilding: practical needs, protection, instrumentalist, participatory, and transformative approaches

Practical Needs Approaches

There are diverse reasons for a gendered analysis in peace building. Many humanitarian organisations adhere to the principle of neutrality in post-conflict relief operations, arguing that meeting the immediate practical needs of populations is their task (cited in Peake, 2013). However, in practice, these operations do not exist in a vacuum, but work within communities which have their own gendered power structures that often subordinate women. An apparently 'gender neutral' programme, therefore, can easily reinforce existing inequalities and act against women. An effective gendered approach to peace building should thus, ensure that women's basic needs (such as providing equal amount of food as men in refugee camps, providing measures for their security and reduced vulnerability, sanitary towels, safe reproductive sexual health etc) are provided. (Clifton & Gell, 2001; Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002).

Protection Approaches

It is generally agreed that a key element of a gendered approach to peacebuilding is to acknowledge gendered vulnerabilities and ensure that women and girls are protected from violence. Obviously, conflict and its aftermath impact women and girls, and men and boys, in different ways (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003; Sweetman, 2005). This stems from the fact that men and women play different roles and are targeted differently by the reason of their genders. Women are usually and specifically vulnerable and often experience multiple forms of violence during and after conflict, with brutality and frequency reaching new levels in times of conflict and societal breakdown (Alberdi, 2010) The targeting of women bodies especially in form of

sexual violence has emerged as an organised strategy used during conflict, against women in an act defined as 'gender-based violence', - violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals because of their gender. Moreover, extremely high levels of violence against women after the formal end of conflict, challenges the notion of 'peacetime' for women.

However, a sincere effort at gendered approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution must address how men and women experience conflict differently, as well as why it is so. This means investigating, for instance, the reasons for women's greater vulnerability during and after conflict. Although, Puechguirbal, (2010) pointed out that women are not more vulnerable per se in times of war; rather they are made more vulnerable because of pre-existing inequalities in so-called peaceful societies. In other words, women do not suffer in war because of any intrinsic weakness, but because of their position in society. Thus, overlooking the fundamental gendered power relations and inequalities in a society can lead to some of the fundamental causes of conflict (Anderlini, 2007), and challenge sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

Instrumentalist Approaches

For many actors in peacebuilding and conflict resolution especially at the international arena, the logic behind supporting a gendered approach is that it "enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of peacebuilding, and that women's peacebuilding efforts are a valuable resource for the development of sustainable, inclusive approaches to peace and security" (Onslow and Schoofs, 2010). This defines an 'instrumentalist' approach, which views women as instrument of positive change; it is concerned with what women can do for peacebuilding, not the reverse (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003). Instrumentalist arguments for funding education programmes for women in post-conflict situations, for example, might state that as women are primary caregivers and educating them will be beneficial because they can pass their knowledge on to the next generation. Obviously, ignoring the capacities and efforts of women who constitute about 50% (or more) of the population can be seen as a 'waste' of resources. However, these approaches are based on efficiency arguments, as opposed to considering the fundamental value of women empowerment. Instrumentalist approaches and arguments can be seen to be, in many ways, a result of NGOs and other groups in the peacebuilding community having to compete for resources in a funding context which is very much driven by the desire of donors to see concrete outcomes, and to meet specific targets.

Participatory Approach

Another dimension of a gendered approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution is the requirement that women must be involved at all levels and all stages of the peacebuilding process. The different roles that women and men play in society give them different insights and knowledge, and at present, much of women's knowledge and insight is not taken into account. From early warning systems right through to post-conflict transformation and reconstruction, women's contributions should be recognised and valued. Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) argue for a shift from a "culture of reaction" to a "culture of prevention". In terms of early warning systems, women often have information about signs of potential conflict and escalating attacks. This information is not usually gathered through "high tech surveillance and espionage", but through small signs of instability relating to day-to-day activities, such as market activity and timings, and the price of light weapons in the community (Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002).

Thus, two reference cases support the argument for women's participation in formal peace negotiations: Firstly, women's involvement in post-conflict truth and reconciliation commissions, which deal with sexual violence is crucial. Having women-only hearings for women to discuss their experiences has been applauded as successful in many different settings (Pankhurst, 2000). Secondly, rape and sexual violence have often been perpetrated by police and security forces. A gendered approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution should therefore ensure that women are trained and employed in the police and security services, as the presence of more women in these forces has been shown to be effective in reducing the levels of sexual violence (Pankhurst, 2000) also making it more likely that women will report sexual violence.

Transformative Approaches

Numerous academics, activists and civil society groups have also put forward more radical and feminist arguments in support of a gendered approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. These authors, such as Puechguirbal, highlight structures of patriarchy as central reason why societies continue to resort to violence to resolve conflicts, and hence recommend a fundamental shift in gendered power relations referred to as 'transformative', and not reconstruction of post conflict societies. Peace scholars have accordingly argued that during the transition from war to peace, or from military dictatorship to democracy, the emphasis on

equality and rights tends to overshadow the reconstruction of patriarchal power. (Puechguirbal, 2010).

It is important to state here that non-of these approaches can act alone to guaranteed adequate gender-inclusiveness in peace building. They are rather mutually inclusive. For instance, while the practical needs approach emphasizes ensuring adequate provision of women's basic needs, it is equally important to adequately ensure protection of women from all forms of violence both during and after conflicts. Similarly, while the instrumentalist approach stresses on women being instruments of peace outcome, transformative approach argues that achieving genuine peace requires dismantling patriarchal structures. In other words, participation alone is not enough for sustainable peace outcome unless it is accompanied by structural reforms.

1.8 Results and Discussion

a. Specific roles played by women in peace building

Women play significant role in peace building using civil society groups, grassroots organisations and community survival. They adopt relational, collaborative and bottom-top approach in peace building.

i. Grassroot mobilisation

Women explore the track 3 peace building approach which leverages on grassroots, bottom-up initiative spearheaded by civil society groups, local communities and the common citizens for conflict resolution and reconstruction of social relations. In doing this, women organise peace talks, faith prayer convocations and women unions that cut across ethnic and religious lines. Due to their non-violent nature, women in their efforts are generally seen as non-threatening by the conflicting groups, can therefore cross conflict boundaries to deliver their message of peace, appeal for ceasefire, or negotiate the release of war captives.

ii. Community Early Warning systems

The role of women in markets, water and firewood gathering points as well as in household management position them strategic to spot early signs of conflict. Sudden price changes, strange movement and gathering of young men, and shifting tones in community gossips can be good indicators of impending conflicts. These

observations are reported to community leadership before the outbreak of conflicts for necessary action.

iii. Psychological Restoration and Social Reintegration

Women's emotional disposition leaves them with the burden of reconstructing the social fabrics after a conflict. Women extend care to children orphaned by war, through food supplies, clothing and shelter; support victims of conflict related sexual violence, displaced victims, and also facilitate the reintegration of returning soldiers and ex-combatant into the community. These efforts prevent a total breakdown of the community, while enabling gradual rebuilding of the broken fabrics of societies.

iv. Advocating for Inclusive Peace Agenda

Women leverage on their access to formal peace process to expand the definition of peace. Thus, while men focus on power-sharing and military structures, high level diplomacy, treaty negotiations, traditional and religious arbitration etc, focusing their role on institutional structures which aims at stopping active fighting which Galtung describes as negative peace, women advocate for sustained peace to include structural changes, incorporating human rights protection, access to education, reproductive health and justice for the victims of war. Thus, women's roles become relational and societal, focusing on restoring communities, averting daily violence and rebuilding social trust which altogether amount to positive peace. (Richmond & Pogodda, 2021; Falada & Ojo, 2026)

b. Challenges to Gender-inclusive Peacebuilding:

i. Gender Stereotypes and cultural norms

It has been found that many formal peacebuilding activities and policies are gender neutral. This means that policies and actions have been developed with little understanding or acknowledgment of the diverse communities in which they operate. Gender analysis can bring to light the experiences of men and women during conflict and peace, assess needs, and show how gender relations change during and due to conflict and peace. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of gender in peacebuilding, women continue to face numerous

structural barriers and discrimination that limit their meaningful participation in peace processes. Gender stereotypes and cultural norms often reinforce the exclusion of women from decision-making spaces (Babayeva, 2023).

ii. Threats on Women Peace Builders

Besides, women peace builders are excessively targeted for threats, violence, and intimidation. This mounts fears and discourage women from making peace efforts. overcome these challenges, it is necessary to dismantle patriarchal structures, promote women's rights and gender equality, and ensure the provision of adequate resources and support for women-led peacebuilding initiatives. In spite of the above challenges, it is argued that the risks of not addressing gender inequalities far outweigh the potential contradictions and their effects. The key focus should be developing a Gender and Peacebuilding approach which results in limited conflict and positive transformation in the society.

c. Implications of inclusive peace-building efforts for national development

Involving women in peace building efforts comes with several benefits which include the following:

- i. Higher rate of negotiation Success:** Research conducted by Stone (2014), to empirically test how female peacemaking impacts the long-term durability of peace agreement revealed that inclusion of women and civil society organisations in peace negotiations guarantees up to 64% success in peace agreement. This result was also acknowledged by the Council on Foreign Relations (2025).
- ii. Wider Perspectives:** O'Reilly (2015) described women in peace negotiations as predictors of peace, act as moderate extremists, advocates of peace, promoters of dialogue, build trusts and focuses on issues relevant for peace. Thus, women advocate for humanitarian needs and focus peace negotiations beyond military action towards healthcare, education, and protections against gender-based violence.
- iii. Effective Intervention:** At the level of grassroots and communities, women effectively act as successful conciliators in conflict, identifying early warning signs

of conflict, and structuring alliances for sustainable reconciliation. (Rycowbord, 2024)

- iv. **Sustainable Recovery:** Women play significant role in post-conflict reconstruction by revitalising local economies and effectively managing natural resources. (Rycowbord, 2024)
- v. **Enhanced Political Legitimacy:** Societies that incorporate women and civil society organisations in politics naturally experience greater government legitimacy across the entire population. (Peace infrastructure; 2024)

The relevance of the above benefits derived from inclusive peace building is underscored by the fact that peace is a major pre-requisite for national development, and in the absence of peace and social justice, development becomes a mirage.

1.9 Conclusion

The study discovered that practical needs, protection, instrumentalist, participatory and transformative gender approaches offer greater opportunity for sustainable peace and development than gender-neutral interventions because they address structural inequalities. Inclusive gendered approaches equally have implications for national development and democratic governance which include: accelerated economic recovery in terms of mobilising a broader workforce, equitable asset distribution and higher rate of household reinvestment; strengthening governance and the rule of law in respect of implementing legislative quotas, reduction of corrupt practices, expanding legislative priorities etc; enhances trust and social cohesion focusing on legitimate peace term, reintegration, reconciliation etc. This indicates an interdependence between sustainable peace and national development. With respect to human security, inclusive peace approach ensures personal and physical security, community and political security through early warning signs and protection of marginalised groups; ensures economic and food security through prioritising daily human needs and an equitable distribution of reconstruction aids; supports health and environmental security by addressing war trauma and resolution of resource management conflicts. These implications become the precursor, creating the pathway for economic advancement and sustainable development.

1.10 Recommendations

1. Peace building programmes must be planned and implemented on the basis of gender as this will cater for the different needs and roles of men and women in conflict and improve peace efforts.
2. There is need for conflict-sensitive gender work as this will enable both women and men to meet their needs as well as supporting recognition among all gender for each other's' needs.
3. It is important for government, NGOs and other peace actors to provide adequate security for women peace builders both as whistle blowers and those directly involved.
4. Government should target the practical needs, protection, instrumentalist, participatory and transformational gender approaches to peace building stated above as gateway to realising lasting peace.
5. Governments and community leaders should enact legislations that promote cultural practices that support gender equality while discouraging discriminatory norms that hinder women's participation in peacebuilding and development.

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