

## **Building Women's Capacity for Peace building in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

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Since the adoption of the United Nation Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 by the UN, considerable work has been done regarding the effects of conflict on Nigerian women as well as the full inclusion of women in all peace building processes, Much of this work has been done within the academia and by other institutions concerned with women, peace and conflict. However not much has been done on building the capacity of women towards their 'full participation' in formal peace building processes in developing countries. This study established that there exists a gap between women's participation in informal peace processes and formal processes; hence the focus of this paper is to consider and highlight a range of ways in which women's capacity can be developed so that their full inclusion in all peace building processes can be achieved. The scope of the study is limited to Northern Nigeria, which has been most affected by violent conflicts in the past two decades. Through the review of related literature, the study contended that the patriarchal culture in Northern Nigeria is the foundation of women's bondage which is responsible for their lack of education, empowerment, participation in politics etc, and ultimately their exclusion from the peace table. The findings show that when these obstacles are removed in ways recommended there in, women's potentials are developed and their capacities enhanced for their full and meaningful participation in all peace building processes towards a more sustainable peace.

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### **Introduction**

Conflicts have been described as inevitable and as a matter of fact regarded as normal in any human relationship. However the management of these conflicts is where all the difference lie; conflict could actually be a channel through which positive change can be achieved or existing relationships marred. 'It could be violent or non-violent, constructive or destructive, functional or dysfunctional' Gambo (2015 P.44). While conflicts (violent conflicts) are seen as detrimental to any society, Gambo also contends that 'Conflict can also be positive, constructive and functional if only the right attitude is constructed towards it whenever it breaks out in the society' Gambo (2015 P.45). Unfortunately looking back at the history of Nigeria since the civil war, conflicts have consistently been violent with devastating effects on the Nigerian economy as well as its people particularly women and children. The boko haram insurgency, ethnic- religious clashes, and violent clashes between nomadic pastoralists and some farming communities have in the past two decades brought untold hardship and sorrow: physically, emotionally and mentally to many Nigerian women in Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Plateau, Benue, Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi etc.

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According to the African Report, the Northern "Region has experienced recurrent violent conflicts, particularly since the early 1980s" Africa Report (2010). This report, also traced the emergence of the Boko Haram group to the early 2000s in Borno State, North Eastern Nigeria. In Plateau, North Central Nigeria, 'Dysfunctional conflict in the state on a sustained basis dates back visibly to the early 1990s with the Jos riot of April 12 1994 over the naming of a Hausa-Fulani candidate as Caretaker Committee Chairman of the Jos North Local Government Authority and the subsequent rejection of the appointment by the indigenous groups of Afizere, Anagutta and Berom' Best (2008 p.10). Pockets of attacks by nomadic pastoralists on farming communities have been consistently reported in parts of Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, Nasarawa states etc. Bomb explosions by boko haram, in market places, worship centres, motor parks etc. across the northern region, have left thousands of people dead and injured.

Direct consequences and effects of these conflicts are most obvious in the lives of women and children as they are the most vulnerable. The grotesque abduction of the over 200 Chibok school girls from their dormitories in Chibok community of Borno State, North Eastern Nigeria since 2014, and to mention that it is already 2 years and they are still not found or restored back to their families is even more disturbing. Since May 2014 when these girls were abducted from their school, the attention of the Federal Government and indeed the International Community has been drawn. Several attempts from the government of Nigeria, International Community, Civil Society Groups notably the 'Bring Back Our Girls' ( with Mrs Oby Ezekwesili former Vice President of the World Bank and former Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as one of the leaders of the group), Faith-based organisations, have been made, but these girls are still not found. While the government is still battling to unravel this puzzle, the boko haram is still in its business of attacking and killing innocent Nigerians in the Northern region. According to a Vanguard, February (2016) report, 'At least 85 people were killed in a weekend attack by boko haram insurgents in a village near the restive North-East Nigerian city of Maiduguri, a state commissioner said on Monday'. This is just one recent attack, perpetrated by these insurgents, even cutting across the northern region into other boarder countries like Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The report also added that 'The boko haram insurgency has killed some 17,000 people and forced more than 2.6 million to flee their homes since 2009'. Vanguard .com (2016).

'Where women suffer from conflict, it is important that peace building processes take account of that suffering in the construction of lasting settlement' Hudson (2010 p.260). This clarion call for the increased participation of women in all peace building processes has been acknowledged by the international community as well as the Nigerian government. 'Articles 40(4) and 44(e) of the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security also reiterate the importance of women in conflict resolution" Oluwemi-Kusa (2004 p.215). The United Nations Security Council at its 4213<sup>th</sup> meeting did not only acknowledge the devastating and peculiar effects of violent conflicts on women and children but the dare need for their full inclusion in peace building and conflict resolution hence it 'Adopted there solution (S/RES/1325) on Women and Peace and Security on the 31 October 2000.'(un.org). The UN reaffirmed 'The important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'. (un.org). 'Equal participation' in this context forms an aspect of **Gender main streaming**. Heidi Hudson, defined the term gender mainstreaming when she cited the UN's description as 'A strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.' Hudson (2010 p.261).

However, beyond the inclusion or exclusion of women in the peace processes as it were, of equal or even more importance is the issue of their capacity building. Unless women have the wherewithal to engage themselves in these processes through capacity building, they are limited hence; their little contributions remain insignificant especially in the formal processes. The situation in Nigeria especially in the conflict prone areas of the North, is one where the women lack the capacity to make meaningful contributions towards achieving sustainable peace especially in formal processes. This is largely because of the patriarchal culture in the North. A culture that promotes male domination and female subordination. The women remain under the control of their fathers and husbands; from when they are girls to when they get married.

Young girls are not encouraged to go to school or learn any vocational skill rather left at home for domestic purposes such as farming, cooking, caring for the younger ones, washing, cleaning the house etc. or sent on early marriage. Hence they grow with a mentality that keeps them enslaved to this backward lifestyle. This discrimination leads women into a life of poverty, perpetual dependence, and inferiority complex. When their husbands are unfortunately maimed or killed in conflicts, they become overwhelmed and are physically, emotionally and psychologically drained because they will not only have to cater for themselves but for other members of their families, and without anything to fall back on that will empower them in the 'new life' they find themselves, the situation is better imagined. How then can they meaningfully contribute to the processes of peace building when they lack the capacity to do so effectively?

For Nigerian women to be fully emancipated and produce meaningful results in these peacebuilding processes, it is paramount that their capacity to do so is enhanced in such a way that they are not only fully involved but are equipped with all that it takes to make their involvement and participation a meaningful one, this is the focus of this paper. As correctly buttressed by Jennifer Klot, 'From management skills to infrastructure, technical expertise to resources, capacity is lacking within women's peace building institutions, and within and outside of government and the multilateral system' Klot, (2007). Nigeria portrays a classic example of a serious lack of capacity in women especially with regards formal peace building. This is not in any way to undermine the campaign for the full inclusion of women, but to add that while women are being included, their capacity to participate should also be greatly enhanced such that the 'inclusion' is not only possible, but yields visible and sustainable result.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

'The term 'peace building' was coined by Johan Galtung in 1975 with the publication of 'Three Approaches to Peace : peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building'. Galtung developed many of the core concepts that continue to be applied in peace building work and definitions today, including in the UN's 2007 definition'. Alan S. et al (2011). The focus here is peace building .The former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali introduced the concept of peace building to the UN and indeed the international domain in 1992 defining it as '*Action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict*'. The 2000 Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations (also known as the Brahimi Report) defined it as "Activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war'(un.org).

For peace building to be effective and sustained, the activities targeted towards it should focus on the people concerned; those affected by conflicts especially the women should be considered and involved. 'In simple terms, peace building is all activity aimed at improving the quality of life. Peace building prevents, reduces, transforms, and helps people to recover from violence in all forms' Schirch (2000 P. 16-17).

In light of these definitions, the UN Secretary General described peace building as

*'A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peace building strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized sequence, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives'.*

(un.org). According to Michelle Maiese (2003), 'Peace building is a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation' Maiese (2003). Elizabeth King also contended 'In general, the term peace building refers to policies and programmes to restore stability and effective social, political, and economic institutions after a war or serious upheaval. An extremely broad concept which encompasses democratisation, gender, human rights, and development, peace building can be thought of as a bridge from conflict resolution to 'positive peace' King (2005 p.37). Just like every other concept in the field of political science, peace building does not have any one generally accepted definition, rather various definitions abound.

From all these definitions provided above, it is however clear that Peace building is a post- conflict initiative that tries to bring back to a very large extent, some form of normalcy and peaceful co-existence which can be sustained in conflict- torn areas over a very long period thereby avoiding the reoccurrence of violence, after violent conflict has reduced or has come to an end. This usually through intervention by military, negotiations, etc. It will also suffice to add that while some of these definitions look at the process of peace building emerging only during the post conflict situations, other definitions also include that peace building initiatives exist even during pre-conflict period for the avoidance of violent conflict erupting in the first place. Because this process involves series of transformative efforts, ranging from economic empowerment, political inclusion/participation, social and psychological transformation, which usually takes a long time to achieve, commitment from all parties involved should be evident. For peace building to be effective in Nigeria, transforming the lives of women whether victims or not, as well as building their capacity to participate in the process of providing peace must be the focus. This is because when women are included into the peace processes at any level, without having the capacity to participate meaningfully, their inclusion will be limited and remain insignificant.

'In the most general terms, capacity consists of a party's ability to solve its problems and achieve its objectives. Capacity building aims to strengthen parties' ability to work together for their mutual benefit by providing them with the skills and tools they need to define problems and issues and formulate solutions' Maiese (2005). Women in Peace building is a concept that has found popularity within the Nigerian environment only recently. In a country like Nigeria where patriarchy is entrenched, a change of attitude towards women empowerment and inclusion in these peace building processes is key and fundamental. At different levels of the processes, men and women should be seen to equally participate in the processes. This is because, men and women are affected differently by conflict, and thus their definition of protection will also differ. Therefore, considering women's perspective in peace building is very vital and provides a more holistic approach towards achieving peace. Quite a number of reasons abound as to why the capacity of Nigerian women should be enhanced towards their full participation in peace building. First, more than any group, women and children are the most affected; hence their experience becomes valuable in building peace. Secondly, from the 2006 census conducted in Nigeria, women constitute almost half of the total population.

'The country's total population of 140,431,790(2006) comprises of 71,345,488 males and 69,086,302 females' (total-facts-about-nigeria.com/population-of-nigeria.html) hence they form a significant percent even as victims. Thirdly, women have been excluded in opportunities that will enhance their inclusion in formal peace processes such as education, politics, policy making, governance, etc. finally that women have been able to show through informal means their ability to promote peace, it only shows great potentials waiting to be harnessed, hence developing these potentials increases their ability to deliver meaningfully. 'Capacity building goes well beyond the provision of basic needs. It is a matter of development at all levels of society and includes institutional development, community development, and economic development'. Maiese (2005)

Capacity building according to the United Nations Development Programme is the ability to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve objectives' at three levels: individual, institutional and societal'. The UNDP also added that capacity building 'is much more than training and includes the following: human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively'(gdr.org/uem/capacity-define.html). Clearly, this does not reflect the position of most Nigerian women in terms of their ability to participate in formal peace building processes, especially those in the conflict torn Northern Region. Hence, the obvious need for their capacity development since they form an important part of not just grass roots actors in peace building, but potential actors on peace tables. If 'development' in this definition will mean an increase in their capacity to make their inclusion in the peace processes a meaningful one, then that is the way to go. Both peace building and capacity building are deliberate attempts towards leading a safer, better and more productive life towards building peace. Joan B. Kroc outlined a number of strategic peace building principles; one of them is that 'peace building requires capacity and relationship building at multiples levels' Alliance for Peace building (2013). Therefore, conscious and consistent efforts must be made to realise these goals.

### **An Overview of the Effects of Violent Conflicts on Women in Northern Nigeria**

'Violent conflict creates new spaces, new roles, and new vulnerabilities for people according to their gender identity' Myrntinen, et al (2014). For the women in Nigeria these 'new spaces, new roles and new vulnerabilities' have in the past two decades taken their toll on them. The effects of conflicts on Nigerians particularly women and children cannot be overemphasized. Psychological/emotional effects like post-traumatic stress disorder due to sudden death of family members notably the husbands; these have left many of the women as widows struggling to cope with their new roles as breadwinners –fending for not only themselves but also other family members. Also, separations of other family members through abductions and kidnapping (such as the over 200 Chibok girls' abducted 2 years ago), loss of means of descent livelihood as well as loss of social networks.

Other effects include sexual and physical assault, in form of rape leading to unwanted pregnancies, health concerns like the Vesicoviganal Fistula, other life threatening infections like HIV/AIDS, forced marriages etc. Loss of homes leading to forced migration of victims to Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps where basic facilities are over stretched due to the over population. 'The weakening of social structures during conflict situations is also a factor in the increase of sexual violence Mutunga (2004 p.371). According to the 2015 World Report from the Human Rights Watch, 'Since 2009, Boko Haram has destroyed at least 211 schools in Borno alone, and abducted more than 500 women and girls from the northeast, of which at least over 100 either escaped, were rescued by security forces, or were released by insurgents. Some abductees suffered other abuses including sexual violence, forced marriage, and forced conversion' World Report 2015 (hrw.org)

In Plateau state, series of conflicts have been recorded since 2001 from ethno- religious clashes, boko haram attacks in churches, markets, viewing centres etc, as well as clashes between nomadic pastoralists and farming communities in its localities such as Langtang, Barkin- Ladi, Riyom, Shendam etc , however 'The 2010 Jos crisis recorded the highest casualty of women and children in comparison to the previous ones' UKEssays (2015). For those that survived this unfortunate incidence, some are living as orphans or widows either in IDP camps or with other relatives to fend for not only themselves but other family members, trying to cope with all manners of post-traumatic stress disorder. They will also have to contend with the challenges that come with lack of sufficient food, leading to malnutrition and other sicknesses, inadequate facilities exposing them to ill-health, they will also have to contend with the realities of trying to obtain a new source of livelihood in order to survive. All these and more increase their psychological trauma and pose threats to their general wellbeing as human beings.

In the North East, among the victims of this insurgency, 'Some of these girls and women reportedly became pregnant while others had given birth to children in captivity' I. O. Ajibola (academia.edu/10292762/Women\_Children\_and\_War\_Agaisnt\_Insurgency). More disturbing is the fact that even the security forces charged with the responsibility to protect women and children, have been reported to take advantage of their vulnerability through sexually abusing or even psychically assaulting them. 'Security forces, including the police, engaged in human rights abuses including torture throughout the country' World Report 2015 (hrw.org).

Indeed, women and children are often the worst hit when it comes to violent conflict everywhere and Nigeria is no exception, because of their vulnerability whether through acts of terrorism as perpetrated by the boko haram insurgents, nomadic pastoralists and farming communities' clashes, or ethno-religious conflicts.

### **Women and Peace building in Nigeria**

Ever since violent conflict became a matter of concern in Nigeria particularly in the past two decades, with the incessant bombings/attacks on innocent Nigerians in their homes, market places, worship centres, viewing centres, motor parks, offices like the UN office bombing in Abuja (Federal Capital of Nigeria), the massacre of school boys in Buni Yadi Yobe state, as well as the abduction of the over 200 Chibok girls in Borno 2 years ago; the government of Nigeria alongside the international community, civil society groups have been relentless in the pursuit of lasting peace as well as the search and safe return of these missing Chibok girls. Several initiatives have been taken by the government in collaboration with other countries such as the United States, United Kingdom etc, International Organisations, and the military both at home and abroad, Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Groups, and Faith-based Organisations. However very little progress have been seen in terms of contending with the boko haram insurgency, nomadic pastoralists and farming communities' clashes, ethno-religious clashes as well as the rescue of the Chibok girls from their boko haram abductors. Indeed for many Nigerians until these girls are found and brought back to their parents alive, the government is yet to win the war against insurgency in the country.

*The critical mass theory asserts that women who serve in skewed legislatures-i.e. legislatures where they make up less than 15% of the membership- are marginalised and avoid addressing women issues. As such, therefore, and if the theory holds, women should not be content by just represented in peace talks unless the representation equals or exceeds the quantity that renders them effective in articulating women issues. This is particularly important given that women make up approximately 50% of the population' Mutunga (2004 p.366).*

This study however adds that the 'representation' should equal or exceed not only in quantity but also in quality such that renders them effective in articulating women's issues. This is the case in Nigeria, more so because the impact of these conflicts are mostly felt by the women and children.

In Nigeria, women and girls are represented in every family either as grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law, Aunts, sisters-in-law, nieces or even maids. The culture in Nigeria is such that most families are made up of more than just the immediate family members, other members of the extended families also live with them because of one reason or the other. Unfortunately this special group of people do not enjoy the same privileges that their male counterparts enjoy. The patriarchal culture in the Nigerian society and indeed Africa is largely responsible for this, which hitherto forms the foundation for their exclusion in all formal peace processes. This discrimination manifests itself across all facets of life; education, politics, decision making processes, other formal sectors, businesses, etc. hence, women with great potentials have been forced to take the back seat and remain silent. As globalisation and exchange of ideas and culture takes place between Nigeria and the developed world, it is expected that this obsolete patriarchal culture is thrown out of the window by now, unfortunately that is not the case. Very few women are seen in the realms of affairs in the country, and this is reflected in different sectors of the country especially the public sector. Because women are grossly marginalised, they are in turn not adequately represented even on the peace table, where their own definition of protection should be heard in order to achieve a more sustainable approach towards building lasting peace, being that they constitute a significant portion of the population and the most affected during conflict.

'It is becoming increasingly accepted that women have unique opportunities for conflict resolution due to the unique role they play in society' Mutunga (2004 p.369). Women are also uniquely and adversely affected by violent conflict because of their gender both during the conflict and after. It is in line with this realisation, that the United Nations, through its most important organ, the United Nation Security Council adopted the UNSCR 1325 in 2000 a 'Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security' (un.org). As a member of the UN and a country that has had to contend with violent conflict especially in the last two decades, the Nigerian government committed itself to the inclusion of women in the resolution of conflict and peace building. This, it demonstrated to the world when it domesticated the resolution by launching the National Action Plan of the UNSCR 1325 in 2013 (Ovuorie, 2013). This move for the domestication of the UNSCR1325 is very crucial, commendable and a long awaited one because Nigeria just like any other Sub Saharan country is mainly patriarchal, thus Women have been marginalised across various divides and their voices always almost not heard or represented on the peace tables. However, since the domestication of this resolution in 2013 not much has been achieved in terms of the full inclusion of women in this respect. The little progress is however not evident.

Indeed ever since the upsurge of violent conflicts in Nigeria, the participation of Nigerian women in peace building represents a very marginalised and unbalanced one, one that shows women taking the initiative for peace building only within the non- formal sphere at the grass root or community level. This is through avenues such as civic society groups, informal-female based groups etc, because that happens to be the only medium available for them; and very little or no representation in the governmental sphere. Speake (2013) further buttressed this point when he cited Diaz (2010, p.1) 'However formal peace building and conflict resolution initiatives continue to ignore or marginalise issues of gender, and women's involvement in formal missions and talks remain low'. This is a situation clearly seen in Nigeria - only few are included since very few have the capacity to participate extensively.

A study by the NSRP showed that 'The usual response to violent conflict by the Federal Government of Nigeria is to send in security forces to quell the conflict followed by the setting up of a panel or commission of inquiry' (nsrp-nigeria.org) whether this panel or commission's report is being used for effective conflict resolution and peace building is another issue altogether. The point here is that, it is expected that since women constitute almost half of the population, they should have as much representation as the men do especially in the formal processes of peace building like in the panel or commission of inquiry.

But the reality is that this marginalisation is reflected even on the peace tables, in that women are grossly excluded from these panels or commissions as it were and so many other peace processes. In Nigeria 'No woman has led a panel of enquiry for 20 years, when Honourable Justice Rahila Hadea Cudjoe headed the Zango-Kataf (market), Kaduna State Riots Judicial Commission of Inquiry in 1992' (nsrp-nigeria.org). Of equal concern is the fact that even in the boardrooms, decisions that affect these women as well as their children are taken without their full participation or in some cases completely without them hence their needs are hardly heard, understood let alone actualized. As these conflicts continue, women and children continue to suffer since the benefits of these 'governments decisions' are not taken with/ for them as utmost priority. Hence, they continue to wallow in abject poverty and depression with a very bleak hope for the future.

Politics and policy making is another area where the marginalisation of women is very glaring in Nigeria. Throughout the history of democracy in Nigeria, the story of women participation in politics has been very low. At different times, the level of inclusion might differ slightly but one common thing remains that women continue to be grossly marginalised in Nigerian politics and governance. According to a study by Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed, 'Of the 7160 candidates that contested in the April 2007 elections, only 628 were women, 25 candidates vied for the office of president and only 1 was a woman, while 5 women contested for the office of vice president. Also, only 9 of the 109 senators are women. Nesbitt-Ahmed (2011). Also for the most recent 2015 presidential elections contested in Nigeria, only 1 was a woman, Prof Oluremi Sonaiya from the Kowa party who lost in the election to the APC presidential candidate, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. Records extrapolated from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) showed of all the 109 senators elected in the 2015 elections only 7 were women (inecnigeria.org) and out of the 36 ministers in the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari only 6 are women. This pattern at the national level, reflects clearly what happening at the state and local levels too.

When women are not adequately represented in the political space especially as legislators, it becomes extremely difficult to enact gender sensitive laws that will liberate women into living their full potentials. 'When women are discriminated against in the political arena, their experiences, talents and perspectives are shut out of the policy decisions of our democracies, and prospects for a better world are short-changed' Verveer(2010). Unfortunately, this discrimination was further entrenched by the recent non-passing of gender and equal opportunity bill by the legislators in the Nigerian senate. This is not surprising seeing that out of 109 senators only 7 are women. How can only 7 voices speak effectively and vote successfully for gender sensitive bills on behalf of millions of other women in Nigeria? The more women are represented, the easier it is to have their voices heard and influence the enactment of laws as well as policy decisions that will benefit Nigerian women and young girls.

When women and not only men are seen as integral participants to peace building and thus empowered to fully participate in the processes, the equation is balanced and chances for the achievement of a more sustainable peace are higher, in fact the society is better for it.

This was further buttressed by Hudson, 'African feminist approach focuses on peace building in order to argue for the importance of inclusion of gender not only in the formal processes of reconstruction and reintegration after the cease –fire has been signed, but also during the pre-settlement phase (e.g during negotiations), since inclusion or exclusion of marginalised groups here already indicates the potential success or failure of long term societal reconstruction' Hudson (2010 p.259).When women's peculiar needs in conflict and post -conflict situations are considered, they are encouraged to participate in the peace processes. She also argued that 'Because women's participation is only seen as successful in the 'non -governmental sphere', There is evidence that this marginalization of women allows the perpetuation of the violent discourses which are key to sustaining conflict, and that women's substantive and representative inclusion can lead to more sustainable peace deals' Hudson (2010 p.259).

Antonia Potter, also contended that 'The process and substance of peace negotiations and agreements would be richer, subtler, stronger, and more firmly rooted in the societies whose problems they aim to solve with increased participation of women and the issues which are important to them; but that until those that organise these processes actually make this happen, it will obviously be hard to make this case with empirical evidence' Potter (2008 p.105). That women's voices are not heard on the peace tables, is because they are marginally excluded from the peace processes due to their lack of capacity.

For sustainable peace to be realised in Nigeria, the full inclusion of women in all the peace processes should be pursued, and more importantly, the obstacles that work against the full inclusion and participation of the Nigerian women in building peace, must be removed through the development of their capacities. While the Nigerian government is making efforts towards peace building, considering building the capacity of women towards their full inclusion at all levels is very key at this time.

### **Capacity Building for Peace building: the Way Forward**

'Capacity building is the development of our individual and organizational capacities to transform conflict from violence into a positive, constructive force. Collectively, capacity building includes the development of institutions (for example, local government, judiciary etc) which allow society to handle conflict without it turning into violence" Maise (2005). This initiative must not only take place after conflict but even before, thereby preventing violent conflicts from erupting in the first place.

Women have been involved in peace building activities from time immemorial, in the home front between children and children, women and fellow women, children and fathers, etc, in the homes, market places, in the community as neighbours etc. Mutunga buttressed this when she cited the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 'Women have served as peace educators for years in family situations and in society and have proved to be instrumental in building bridges rather than walls' Mutunga (2004 p.369) This is because women are naturally inclined towards peaceful means as Simon Baron-Cohen added, 'More women than men value the development of altruistic, reciprocal relationships, which by definition require empathizing' Cohen (2006).There however exists a huge gap between women's involvement in peace building at the home/ community level and in the boardrooms on peace tables. If indeed women are expected to assume their roles as active partners in all peace building processes, then certainly mechanisms should be put in place that will enhance their participation towards meaningful contributions to give them a sense of belonging. These mechanisms must work towards the development of women's capacity for conflict resolution and management and the building of lasting and sustainable peace.

- In order for women to be able to build their capacity towards peace building, first and foremost an enabling environment is key. A democratic society provides this enabling environment, 'This is because such environments have more of the crucial social and political "space" within which to pursue goals than do authoritarian polities' Haynes, (2002 p.185). Although Nigeria's democracy is still nascent, a study done by Afro barometer shows that 'Nigerians have not yet lost faith in democracy. Indeed, they seem to regard the deliberative procedures of this form of government as possibly helpful in arriving at the peaceful resolution of disputes' Afro barometer (2002).

True Democracy also provides an environment that is not conducive for patriarchal culture to thrive, thereby giving way to a more modern way of life where women and men are equally represented in the process and practice of governance. 'One of the core features of democracy is the principle of political equality, the notion that political power should be distributed as widely and as evenly as possible' Heywood (2007 P.72). This political equality will increase women's participation in politics and invariably in decision making at all levels. This will enhance women's ability to make gender sensitive laws in Nigeria and empower themselves, this was further buttressed by Haynes thus 'And to achieve better empowerment it seems to be helpful to live in a democratizing or already democratic society' Haynes (2002 p.185). As Nigeria consolidates its nascent democracy this will pave the way for capacity building also in human rights education, which in turn will arm women with the knowledge of their rights as human beings and as women.

Democracy also promotes freedom of association, which gives women the opportunity to form social networks that will become channels through which their voices are heard, their empowerment enhanced, and their participation in political processes promoted. Also, in a democracy it is believed that the will of the people is expressed through those that rule over them. There is a continuous engagement between the rulers and the ruled. People enjoy freedom of speech, to express their opinions freely on issues that concern them without fear or favour, human rights are not abused. Even though not enough women are seen in Nigeria's political space, it is hoped that as democracy is being consolidated, more women should be given the opportunity to participate in politics at the Federal, State and Local government levels as councillors, chairpersons of Local Government Councils, deputy governors, governors, senators, members of the state and federal houses of assembly, vice president and someday president. Women should also be seen to be involved in the electoral processes in other different ways example, qualified women should be recruited as staff of the Independent Electoral Commission, as party officials, security personnel etc.

A classic example of women's active role in politics and peace promotion was the Women's Situation Room,(a concept that was initiated by the Angie Brooks International Centre)introduced in Nigeria during the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015 general elections, 'Scores of youths incident reporters are working around the clock to record complaints, observations and queries about violence against women, fielding calls from across the country received at a toll-free line'(unwomen.org). According to this report, women and youths using this platform collated information about voting complaints, gender –based violence etc which they put across to influential Nigerians for prompt and real intervention, this helped to nip any potential violent situation (during the very contested general elections) in the bud as thousands of incidents were reported through this medium.

This gave women opportunity not only to participate in the electoral processes but to take active role in promoting peaceful elections with very convincing results. It is proposed in this work that this noble initiative be extended to state and local government's elections around the country. Situations where women contest and lose elections, such women should be compensated within the party. Example was when the then president Goodluck Jonathan won the 2011 general elections, he extended an olive branch to his opponent at the primaries (Mrs Sarah Jibrin) who defied all odds, took the challenge to be the only female contestant within the then largest and strongest party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP). This he did when he appointed her to be his Senior Special Assistance on Ethics and Values. By so doing women will be encouraged to participate in politics knowing that even if they lose, their courage to come out and participate will be acknowledged and hopefully rewarded.

In a democracy like Nigeria, increased quota for women or even actualising the "Minimum of 30% of seats to women in elective and appointive positions in all governmental bodies" Oluwemi-Kuta (2004 p.217) provided in the Abuja Declaration of 2003 and 35 % affirmation plan for women in governance is a safe place to begin encouraging women's participation in governance. True democracy provides an environment that is conducive for gender equality.

- Another very fundamental opportunity for building women's capacity for peace building is through prioritising women and girls' education and training in vocational skills. According to Lisa Schirch who cited Thelma Ekiyor, 'In many places, there is still the belief that educating the male child is a better investment than educating the female'. Schirch (2004 p. 28) this is painfully true in the northern part of Nigeria as earlier observed. This discrimination against women and girls should be seen as obsolete, inappropriate and dangerous for Nigeria at a time like this, hence should be proscribed. In order for Nigeria to move forward in this regard, free and compulsory education be provided for young girls and women in Nigeria (North) by the government. Scholarships should be awarded for young school girls across the different levels of education (especially at the secondary and tertiary levels) who are outstanding, to encourage them to develop their potentials and that of the country at large.

When women and girls are educated, their level of reasoning is greatly improved, they are able to contribute meaningfully in the society at different levels whether in the family, community and in the boardrooms. Their potentials are harnessed. They are able to make informed decisions about themselves, their future and even on peace tables. Education and training in vocational skills gives them the opportunity to earn good jobs, and even become employers of labour, so they are able to liberate themselves from poverty and overdependence on their husbands and fathers, and as widows, they are better able to fend for themselves and other members of the families. The federal, state, and local government should collaborate with international organisations like the World Bank, the UN (unicef) and other well-meaning international donors towards providing funding for girls and women to go to school for free or obtain scholarships to study abroad. This will go a long way in building the capacity of women to engage in peace processes. Education and learning vocational skills like sewing, knitting, basketweaving, beading etc provide the platform for women's empowerment which according to Lisa Schirch is 'The ability of women to have resources, access, skills and self-esteem to participate fully in the decisions that control and affect their lives' Schirch (2001).

When women are educated, it becomes easy to train them in peacebuilding skills they are able connect and engage at community levels and on the peace tables with experts. Once women are educated and equipped with the necessary skills, government should ensure an increase in the number of women appointed to

ministerial portfolios, other government offices (federal, state and local), in businesses and other organisations especially those of international repute like the UN, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), African Development Bank (ADB), etc. "To break the cycle of violence and the oppression against women, it is essential for more women to work and make the changes from within formal government structures" Oluymi-Kuta(2004 p.216-217)when women are educated, 'The benefits are evident across major indices, including infant mortality, health status, and family income' King (2005 p.31)

- In the same vein the Nigerian Government at different levels (Federal, State and Local) should synergize with international organisations like the World Bank, UN and other international actors (Faith Based organisations, individuals etc)that are committed to improving the health of women and girls particularly those that have fallen victims of these conflict in one way or the other. The plight of girls and women who because of sexual assault by perpetrators of conflict or by the peacekeepers should be addressed. From unwanted pregnancies, Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF), life threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS, mental health issues emanating from post conflict trauma to other diseases that women are prone to contract because of poor facilities and exposure in the IDPS. These victims should be given free and adequate medical attention ranging from free trauma counselling, free HIV test and AIDS treatment, free VVF treatment, maternal and child health services, provision of mosquito nets etc, so as to help them recover from their plights and find meaning in life. Training of women in the health sector can also help them provide medical care to other girls and women who suffer one health condition or the other. It is naturally easier for the women and girls to relate with other female healthcare providers, hence they are able to open up to them with regards other issues of concern such as rape, domestic violence, early marriages that are usually treated as private issues especially in the northern part of Nigeria.
- The government through the Ministry of Women Affairs in partnership with other gender sensitive organisations, private voluntary organisations, civic society groups should periodically organise, programmes; teachings, trainings, workshops, seminars, conferences and other platforms for women to be trained in the theory and practice of conflict management and peace building, awareness for women about all forms of violence against women and children. For example In '2014 in Abuja a programme was launched 'Promoting Women's Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria' with objectives like strengthen women's role in conflict and prevention, peacemaking and peace building' (eas.europa.eu) this 'Programme which is targeted at selected local government areas in Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau states, is wholly funded by European Union to the tune of 10 million pounds' (eas.europa.eu). These platforms are to also encourage women to speak out when their rights are violated and train women in reconciliation and healing processes. This is to further buttress what Best argued 'To address the problem of gender-based atrocities, capacity building and sensitisation workshops should be organised for women and those found guilty of abusing the rights of women' Best, (2008 p. 22-23)
- Women in Nigeria are usually looked at as not supportive of their female counterparts especially those in the limelight. Those who are professionally or economically fortunate to climb the ladder of success, are hardly seen as forces or mentor that pull other less privileged women up. 'Nigerian women are divided not only by primordial identities, but also by class and professional fissures. Indeed, the representatives of the majority, poor women have not spearheaded the most politically visible women's associated in Nigeria' Osaghae and Suberu (2005 p.14). This factor is a very big barrier to women empowering other women, hence Nigerian women should make a conscious effort in supporting and empowering other women. However, while it is easy to see women social network around the country, this networks should be used as avenues for grooming

younger women thereby championing the course for women solidarity. Women should be seen to be fully supportive of other women who are courageous to come out and participate in the political processes of the country, as such a terrain as Nigeria, is not women friendly yet. There should also be 100% support from women for the other women who are involved in peace processes, this is because the unity of women towards this cause will encourage those on the peace tables to speak on behalf of the voiceless women, knowing that they have a very strong support system made up of other women in the background. Also because of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, women working together will provide wider social networks and a higher level of mental protection.

- The more privileged and educated ones, particularly those from the north, who find themselves in positions of power/influence should see that as an opportunity to mentor younger women to take over from them in becoming future leaders and to be their voices at the decision making tables. They should also see their positions as avenues to represent the goals, views and dreams of the other less privileged women. These women should consciously open doors of opportunity to other young girls and women thereby helping to expand the presence of the women folk in different sectors of the country. The male counterpart should also be seen to be supportive of women. Fathers and Husbands should encourage their daughters and wives to participate in activities outside the home that will empower them and have them contribute towards peace building at all levels. Instead of seeing women as competition, men should see women as partners in the peace processes thereby working together for a common good.
- It is very unfortunate and sad, that during conflicts and even after, some security personnel charged with the responsibility of providing security to the people especially the vulnerable; women and children, are the same people who turn around and take advantage of their vulnerability through sexual and physical assault, or sometimes having these women and girls for sex in exchange for 'protection'. Security personnel, who are found guilty of such breach of trust, should be charged for crimes against humanity and thereby prosecuted for their crimes. This will serve as an important step towards ending impunity, eventually reducing such cases as it is becoming a rampant incident in Nigeria.
- Economic empowerment through programmes like Microcredit schemes for women with particular reference to the less privileged should be provided by the local, state, and federal governments with assistance from other international donors. This can help to provide succour and assistance even to those in the IDPs camps to help them settle when they return back to their homes. In addition, special grants like those provided for youth empowerment should be targeted towards these women and young girls to assist those involved in vocational skills produce their various products and services to meet the market standard and demands. For example 'In recent years Rwanda's women have become famous for their handicrafts, such as the peace baskets (Agaseke) which are sold on the international market' Hudson (2010 p. 267) this can be replicated in Nigeria, in order to help empower women towards a life of economic independence.

When these obstacles are addressed through the commitments of the government, international community, civil society groups, men and the women themselves, greater capacity for women towards peace building processes will be achieved and inclusion of women in the peace processes will be become easier, thus and the gap between women participation in peace building in the home/community level and in the boardrooms on peace tables will be closed. 'Recent studies reveal the factors that improve women's voice and agency: the ability to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to possess property ownership rights, and to be educated participants in decision making within and outside the family' King (2005 p.34).

## Conclusion

'Nigeria has engaged with the UN and its organs, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security. It has regularly participated in UN and African Union peacekeeping operations across the world' 2015 World Report (hrw.org). Efforts have been made by the Nigerian government towards a home- based approach in peace building. The campaign for the inclusion of women in all peace processes in Nigeria and indeed in Africa has already been established. For Nigeria as a member of the African Union and indeed United Nations, the adoption of the African Union 'Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa', this 'offers, thus far, the most comprehensive protection to African women of any international or regional human rights instrument.

Calling for an end to all forms of violence against women in the public and private spheres, it addresses equality in marriage before the law and the right to participate in political and decision-making processes' King (2005 p.27) and the adoption of the UNSCR1325 in Nigeria in 2013 has provided a conducive and safe place to start. However results, are not being felt by the ordinary Nigerians especially women in the conflict -torn Northern region. More still needs to be done. The recommendations proffered in this study are doable, what critically remains are the will and synergy between and among all the parties mentioned above particularly the Nigerian government to bring this noble cause to term.

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