

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN ORGANISATIONS IN PROMOTING PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the role of women's organisations in promoting peace and security in Nigeria, using a qualitative approach. Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is regarded by many as the most significant global framework for increasing women's role in conflict resolutions. The risks to women and children and the importance of involving women in peace issues have been recognised as a global issue. There is a growing understanding of violence against women generally and particularly in armed conflict including the issues of sexual violence. Women are often excluded from peace processes, reflecting the fact that the majority of the actors in conflicts are men and the masculine nature of conflict and peace. Hence, this paper considers and highlights a range of ways in which women's capacity can be developed so that their full inclusion in peace and security developments can be achieved. The popular "Feminist" theory was used in this study. This paper made use of secondary data. From the research, there exists a gap between the gender's participation in issues relating to Peace and Security in Nigeria. The paper therefore, recommends that the Nigerian government should create legal frameworks and policies that will promote the inclusion of women in conflict resolutions.

**Keywords:** Women, Women Organisations, Peace and Security

**Introduction**

The acknowledgement that conflict disproportionately affects women is aptly documented in the conflict and peace building literature. Though, women are severely affected by war, vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence including rape, sexual slavery, forced conscription, abduction and forced impregnation among others, They are not simply victims but can play more proactive roles as well. Peace and security are some areas in which women have been marginalised, particularly where crucial policy decisions are made and resource allocations taken. The continued marginalisation of women in peace building and conflict resolution processes has greatly affected development and community resilience, especially at the local level, since tradition does not encourage women leadership.

Both feminist scholars and gender activists studying and/or working in conflict areas had earlier highlighted the essence to focus on the roles played by men and women during conflict, the gender differential effect of violent conflict, the need to address the challenges of women and to enhance their partaking in peace and security structures and processes (United Nations, 2018). In all areas of government, including our military and policing strategies, feminists have made efforts to ensure that women are well represented.

Going further, the Security Council of the United Nations Organisation adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2000. The resolution re-confirms the vital role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacekeeping, peace-building, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and emphasises the relevance of their equal participation and complete

involvement in efforts for the maintenance and facilitation of peace and security (Adinma, 2011).

Resolution 1325 urges all actors to enhance the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in United Nations peace and security exertions. Likewise, UNSCR 1325 calls for more representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and possible resolution of conflicts; to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys; to boost the number and role of women in peace missions; to integrate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations; to back local women's peace initiatives to guide women and girls from gender-based violence (GBV); to eliminate impunity and to guarantee more gender-sensitive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes (Anurugwo, 2016).

Certainly, UN declaration on human right and numerous other human rights conventions and constitutions around the world explain that: everybody has the right to live, liberty and security. Sometimes, the quest for freedom and rights has reduced into civil war in some States. While the right has been traditionally understood in its negative sense as the security of the citizen from State coercion, it is gradually being developed as a positive right to State action in pursuit of security of its citizens. A gender approach to peace and security does not imply treating the unequal equally; rather, it takes fair cognisance of the physiology, strength, ability and human resource that can be harnessed from gender towards actualising sustainable peace and national / individual security (Allen et al, 2022).

In utilising this alternative, there should be complete participation of women at every level of decision-making in peace processes, peacekeeping and peace -building. Thus, the question of women inclusion could be construed in two different perspectives; the protection of women in conflict situations and women's participation at every level in conflict resolution, peace-building, peace processes, and peacekeeping to avoid deteriorating into conflict (Deckor & Ejekwu, 2022). A gender perspective to peace and security considers the impact of gender on people's opportunities, privileges, protection, social roles and interactions in conflict situations and peace-building.

### **Literature Review**

In every country of the world, women and children share the brunt of conflicts and wars. During these conflicts, they are frequently exposed to unimaginable and horrific massacres, atrocities: sexual assaults such as kidnapping and sexual slavery, forced marriage and mutilations, forced pregnancies and HIV/AIDS (Danjuma et al. 2013) Rape is actually utilised as a weapon of war in most cases. Although, it is obvious that the realities of women and girls vary from those of men and boys, in conflict management and peace-building initiatives and processes, the former are largely invisible. It is not because of any biological or structural reason that women or girls are unable to partake in violent confrontation, it is due to the many obstacles placed by the system before them.

Sadly, women are frequently seen only as powerless victims of violent wars, rather than as agents of change whose ability can be explored in peace processes. They are often confined to a passive role and their impacts are ignored in the reconstruction of peace, community rehabilitation and national reconciliation (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). It is widely accepted that women are not the primary perpetrators of violence and, as such, are not

important in the discourse on peace and security. Their contribution is thus, often restricted to trivial, cosmetic or logistical contributions, depicting their status as ‘wives and mothers’ instead of active actors. The exclusion of women from structured conflict management and peace-building programmes and processes in general represents their absenteeism from public life (Galadanci, 2011).

Women’s supporters for peace and constitutional participation have long espoused a rights-based approach to the issue. They have the right, as part of a society in these decision-making processes that will influence their lives, to be represented. Since the acceptance and adoption of its landmark Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, the United Nations Security Council has also recognised the essence of increasing women’s participation in conflict resolution and peace building processes, especially at decision-making levels (Odeh., 2017). Evidence confirms that when women are significantly involved in peace building and reconciliation processes, there is a higher rate of their successes and are more likely to last. For instance, an analysis of forty peace processes in 35 countries over three decades found that an agreement was almost always got when women groups were able to effectively influence a peace process.

Likewise, a study of 182 peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2011 found that a peace agreement is 20% more likely to last for at least 2 years and 35% more likely to last for at least 15 years if meaningful representation is assured for women. According to Opara (2019), to embrace elements that generate the foundations for peace and shape the structures of society, peace processes increasingly go beyond outlining cease-fires and dividing territory. Still, the contributors who prefer the former continue to do so by and large. Peace processes, traditionally, have majored on bringing to the negotiating table the combatants who are rarely women.

### **The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 is the first UN resolution that recognises the disproportionate effect of war and conflict on women. It brings the reality that women have traditionally been left out of peace processes and stabilisation initiatives. It calls on the bodies of the United Nations and the Member States to embrace those actions that will help to increase women’s representation and participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution as well as to involve them in peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building activities in the process. It also attempts to develop respect for and preservation of women’s rights, ensuring that their security is strengthened in conflict and post-conflict situations (Shah, 2018).

Over the years, the resolution has been a facilitator to raise the voices and leadership of women, strengthening their involvement in peace processes and leadership in security structures and bringing peace-building grassroots initiatives to an international level (Odeh, 2017). It is obvious that UNSCR 1325 has been a major motivating factor for women to participate and contribute at the decision-making levels including the grassroots. It has also shown that a lot can be attained when the society (particularly women) is aware of their political, social and economic rights and are able to pursue it accordingly. The availability of women at the grassroots will go a long way to enhance the political, social and economic stability of the nation.

### **Localising the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Nigeria**

The United Nations Security Council recognised that national implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions are important instrument for facilitating the agenda for Women, Peace and Security. Consequently, the presidential statements of 2004/40 and 2005/52 called on Member States to embrace Resolution 1325, including the creation of National Action Plans (NAPs) or other national strategies (United Nations, 2018). Presently, Nigeria acknowledges the significance of Security Council Resolution 1325 in the implementation of peacekeeping and peace-building mandates and in conflict prevention efforts to provide more attention to gender perspectives.

In response, the Nigerian government developed an Action Plan that will help strengthen the agenda for Women, Peace and Security. In this wise, the Nigerian National Action Plan encourages and strengthens women's participation and representation in every peacekeeping activity, peace negotiations, peace-building and post-conflict activities including in state decision-making processes. Equally, the State Action Plan (SAP Resolution 1325) in eight states and two Local Action Plans (LAPs) were created to guarantee state ownership and contextualisation to state conflict dynamics (Shah, 2018).

Although, a lot has been done since the commencement of the NAP in 2013, this has been mainly at the level of policy processes rather than impact. There have been some challenges also that have hindered its implementation in Nigeria. They include:

- Insufficient number of women in decision-making positions.
- Inadequate awareness of UNSCR 1325 and NAPs.
- Poor coordination among stakeholders and lack of technical skills among the women (negotiation, advocacy, mediation, lobbying skills, etc.) required for active and strategic participation.
- NAP and SAP policies are not legal documents, meaning that officials are not mandated to implement them and there are no penalties for non-compliance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Present study embraced Liberal Feminist theory. Feminist theory is broad. There is no one theory as such. Rather, there have been evolutions of the various frameworks under the broad heading of "feminist theory" since the late 1700s. Feminism is the doctrine advocating social, political and economic rights for women equal to those of men. It is an alternative theory, which tries to examine women's oppressed positions in today's society.

There were two waves of feminism. The first wave concerned the issue of suffrage i.e. the campaign for women's right to vote. The second wave of feminism manifested during the civil rights movement which concentrated on women's liberation.

The concepts of feminism include:

- **Gender:** Culturally determined cognitions, attitudes and belief systems about females and males.
- **Sex:** The descriptive, biologically-based variable that is applied to distinguish females and males.
- **Sex roles:** Patterns of culturally approved behaviours that are regarded more desirable for either females or males.

### **Liberal Feminism**

This type of feminism points to the discrepancy in social conditions as the basis for women's oppression. It argues that men and women are basically the same since they both possess the capacity to reason, thus, equal opportunities and treatment should be the norm. Political action, changing social conventions and the ways in which children are socialised are crucial to achieving this equality.

### **Significance of the theory to the present study**

With the broad assertion of feminist theory that decisions should be made dependent on quality and participation, it is adequate to state unequivocally that if women are involved completely in the decision making process, they can contribute a reasonable lot to the myriads of challenges in Nigeria. The assumptions of liberal feminism have made it that men and women possess identical capacity to reason; thus, neither of them should be given more treatment than the other. With this assertion, women should be assisted with the needed support and position to tackle insecurity conflict in Nigeria.

### **Discussion**

#### **Leading organisations changing the lives of Nigerian women and girls**

Some institutional, religious and cultural nuances continue to impede the holistic growth, development and transformation of women and girls in Nigeria. In certain instances when faced with challenges, women and girls do not know where to turn. As Nigeria's economic situation persists and as budgetary concerns increase, many programmes that back women and girls are likely to be cut or deemed irrelevant. Mary Olushoga listed (16) leading organisations that are changing the lives of Nigerian women and girls. This is in no way a comprehensive list but only the starting in identifying institutions assisting to promote women's rights and freedom in Nigeria.

#### **Awesome Treasures Foundation**

Founded by Jumoke Adenowo, Awesome Treasures is a faith-based organisation supporting the overall growth and enhancement of women leaders in Nigeria. Well known for its Woman of Purpose summit, Awesome Treasures connects women with one another and assists them to find their purpose.

#### **AWP Network**

Founded by Mary Olushoga, AWP which stands for African Women Power Network is one of the leading platforms for African entrepreneurs. The body has launched several initiatives to include the AWP Network Agropreneur Project, a training programme helping women farmers polish their entrepreneurial skills, increase farming productivity and household income. The AWP Network equally launched the dream project – a pitch competition for secondary school students in Lagos State (Baba, 2012).

#### **DAWN**

Founded by Semhar Araia, the Diaspora African Women's Network (DAWN) encourages talented women and girls of the African diaspora who are focused on African affairs. The members of this organisation are called DAWNERS.

#### **FIN**

Founded in 2015 by Lola Omolola and presently with more than 200,000 members in its online community. FIN, which represents Female in Nigeria is an online safe space for

women. The group was created shortly after the #BeingFemaleinNigeria hashtag trended on twitter. The online group provides a means for Nigerian women to display the complexities of their shared struggles. Currently, the organisation is using its renowned platform to investigate the disappearance of one Miss Charity Aiyedogbon who went missing in May, 2016.

### **KIND Nigeria**

Founded by HafsatAbiola-Costello, the Kudirat Initiative for Democracy promotes leadership development for young women. The organisation attempts to eradicate barriers to women's public participation and seeks to eliminate violence against women (Opara, 2019).

### **Mirabel Rape Crisis Center**

Founded by ItotoEze-Anabais, the Mirabel Center is a great initiative of Partnership for Justice. The organisation assists victims of rape and sexual assault. It offers survivors of sexual violence an opportunity to have access to free forensic, legal, medical and counseling services.

### **Moremi Initiative**

This initiative offers leadership development training to young African women. Through its MILEAD programme, mentoring, research and advocacy are provided to these women.

### **Nigerian Women Fund**

Founded in 2011 and led by OlufunkeBaruwa, the Nigerian Women fund targets to increase women representation in governance. It equally seeks to address the growing concerns of gender imbalance in both elective and appointive positions in the country (Bayeh, 2016).

### **STER Nigeria**

Led by OluwaseunAyodejiOsowobi, STER also renowned for Stand ToEnd Rape is a youth-led organisation working to end every form of sexual violence and abuse using education and advocacy. It also helps in providing prevention mechanisms and psychosocial support services for survivors.

### **She Leads Africa**

Founded by Yasmin Belo-Osagie and AfuaOsei, 'SheLeads Africa' is dedicated and committed to empowering the next generation of African Women entrepreneurs. Its flagship programme, the Entrepreneur Showcase glitters the spotlight on women driving Africa's growth through leadership, commerce and innovation (Eseyin et al, 2014). During the event, participants contest for \$15,000 in cash prizes, media features in international news outlets and top notch meetings with big investors.

### **WAAW Foundation**

Founded by UnomaOkorafor and renowned for its summer camps and scholarships for African girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, the WAAW Foundation is established to empower girls throughout Africa by increasing the number of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields.

### **Wellbeing Foundation**

Founded by ToyinSaraki, the Wellbeing foundation is committed to educating women on maternal, newborn and child health information. Renowned for its hashtag #Maternal

Monday, the organisation attempts to empower women and improve access to quality health services and health outcomes.

### **WiMBiz**

Founded in 2002 by 14 persons who discovered a serious issue regarding women in the workplace and in business, the organisation focuses on leadership capacity building and networking for growth. WimBiz is known for boosting the proportion of women in senior positions at corporate organisations and on boards (Carr, 2011).

### **WITIN**

Founded by Martha Alade, Women in Technology in Nigeria (WITIN) attempts to teach and inspire women and girls to pursue and retain careers in STEM.

### **WTEC**

Founded by OreoluwaSomolu-Lesi, WTEC, which represents Women's Technology Empowerment Center is a non-profit organisation working to encourage Nigerian girls to accept technology in order to build themselves socially and economically. Recognised for its technology camp, the organisation prides itself in introducing young girls to technology and assisting them to develop their bright minds.

### **WOWE**

Founded by Tori Abiola, her company Montgomery West Africa organizes Women's Entrepreneurship Day and the very well attended annual WoWe festivalAs well as entrepreneurship conference (Opara, 2019).

### **Women and Peace Process in Nigeria**

With demoralising effects on the Nigerian economy as well as its people, particularly women and children, conflicts have repeatedly been violent. For instance, in the past two decades, the Boko Haram uprising, ethnic-religious scuffles and violent clashes among nomadic pastoralists and some agrarian communities have brought serious anguish and misery-mentally, emotionally and physically to many Nigerian women in Borno, Niger Delta, Gombe, Yobe, Plateau, Kaduna, Benue, Kano, Bauchi, etc (Castrol et al, 2016).

In the lives of women and children, the direct consequences and effects of these conflicts are verywell noticed, as they are the most vulnerable. When women suffer from conflict, it is vital that peace-building processes consider their plight in the construction of long-lasting settlements (Leasure et al, 2022). The international community and the Nigerian government have recognised the call for increased participation of women in all peace building processes.

'Women in Peace Process' is a concept that has only recently found recognition within the Nigerian environment. The discussion of female participation in peace processes is at its lowest in a country such as Nigeria where patriarchy is deeply seated, with several of the resolutionmechanisms put in place by the government being predominantly male. It is fundamental to change the attitude towards women's empowerment and inclusion in these peace-building processes (Nwagbara et al, 2012; Mbera et al, 2015). Men and women should be seen to partakefairly in the processes at different levels of the procedures. This is due to the fact that conflict affects both men and women differently; hence, their definition of protection

will also vary. Thus, it is very necessary to look into the perspective of women in peace building which provides a better holistic approach to attaining a lasting and sustainable peace.

### **Women's Involvement in Grassroots Peace Movement in Nigeria**

Far from just being the victims of the havoc necessitated by war, women in affected countries such as Nigeria are assuming leadership roles and making efforts at addressing the consequences and causes of protracted, violent conflict (UNIDO, 2013; Shah, 2018). The involvement of Nigerian women in peace building has been a very marginalised and unbalanced one since the escalation of violent conflicts in Nigeria, one that depicts women taking the peace-building initiative only within the non-formal sphere at the grassroots. This is because this happens to be the only available medium to them through avenues such as non-governmental civil society groups, informal female-based groups, etc; and very little or no representation within the governmental spheres.

Women work at all levels, from local to national and in some cases, even international, to improve political participation and to assist their conflict-torn communities. Women's responses come in many forms such as building cross-community coalitions, coordinating grass roots and stepping forward as role models and mediators. They are developing mechanisms to advance the quality of life of their families, neighbours and societies (Anna & Carlson, 2016)

Grassroots efforts are among the major outlets of women's peace activism, given the relative lack of presence of women in the formal political realm of many conflict-torn nations such as Nigeria. It is indeed those women who are excluded from formal conflict resolution efforts that are at the vanguard of grassroots organisations addressing the issues elicited by prolonged violent conflict (Anurugwo, 2016). Women's participation is frequently seen in their use of informal networks and organisations, such as loan committees, mother groups or neighbourhood alliances, to discuss conflicts, to resolve them non-violently or to influence the conduct of more formal mechanisms, especially in situations where they are systematically silenced and made invisible in the formal, public domain. This is not to say that 'participation behind the scenes' is adequate but to state that it is very necessary to look beyond the formal and appreciate the roles that women play in communities in order to identify and enhance the active role of women in peace building (Bayeh, 2016).

It may not only be through a top-down peace process that prolonged conflicts are ended, with just armed actors at the negotiating table. It has been verified that conflict can also be resolved through the bottom-up approach of the grassroots. This requires a more inclusive process, one that involves women playing crucial roles in building peace both from the bottom up and from the top down, involving multiple stakeholders (Anurugwo, 2016).

Over the centuries, Nigerian women have played prominent roles in peace and war situations, majorly as traditional peace-makers, as priestesses who confer with gods to ascertain whether or not it was right to go to war, as eulogers of men during battles in order to guarantee their victory. Examples of such women are: Queen Moremi of Ife who rescued her people by negotiating with the opposing side, Queen Amina of Zaria who led the victory of her people, Efunsetan Aniwura who was a fierce female general in Egbaland and so on (Shah, 2018).

In Plateau State, Nigeria, where a minimum of 4,000 people have been exterminated in recurring community violence since 2001, UN Women established a women-led peace

network under the European Union-funded programme to assist in enhancing women's engagement in Northern Nigeria's peace and security efforts. This has helped to solidify women's leadership, encourage gender equality and boost the protection of women and children in grassroots conflict settings.

In Borno State, women have organised and participated in many marches, campaigns, rallies, and demonstrations to raise awareness of abuses, to call for participation and to create action for peace. Within local vigilante units, such as Kungiyar Marhaba (hunters' association), some women fight against Boko Haram and particularly the Borno State-based Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Women's organisations also mediate and assist returned abductees who are pregnant / have children whose fathers are / were with Boko Haram by developing community support. This is a serious obstacle to community life reintegration; which women are working very hard to correct. Borno State was also the number one to develop a State Action Plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325 to ensure the involvement of women in peacekeeping. These women in the North East (as elsewhere in Nigeria) have come together to defend and enhance women's rights across religious and other lines of identity (Castro et al., 2016)

Going further, women in the Niger Delta area are not unlike women in other parts of Africa. Traditional patriarchal cultures bound and limit them as well. They are forced to submit through these cultures to men. They also face unimaginable human rights abuses for which redress is unattainable because the government agents who commit such abuses are invincible and shielded from the rule of law. In some places however, women are the ones called upon to initiate a truce in a situation of conflict between men and ethnic groups. Thus, the role of women from the time immemorial shows their capacity for peace-making (Anna & Carlson, 2016).

Consequently, a lot of women's groups have emerged and empowered themselves to enlighten women at the grassroots level and to defend their fundamental human rights. In the Niger Delta situation, those women and their groups are the unsung heroines. According to Galadanci (2016), women are never afraid of situations and have been involved in a number of regional peace-building initiatives. The women's group has variously taken the lead in calling for interventions in the region.

The Kebekache Women Development for example, is a non-governmental organisation for women's advocacy and education that has worked with women to develop their capacity and facilitate their involvement in community affairs and advocacy in over 15 oil-impacted communities, towns and villages in the Niger Delta. They have organised protests independently, recognised the interests of women and their desire to act; and have begun training in conflict management and peacebuilding. (Mbara et al, 2015).

As a community-based organisation, the Tere-Ama Women's Association, took concrete action to persuade young men in the creeks of Okrika to dissuade them from partaking in armed violence in the run-up to the 2007 general election. The women resolved a land ownership dispute that was a threat to the main community market and livelihoods by inviting the traditional leader to a meeting to avoid bloodshed. The market remains a vital source of income for the Tere-Ama community.

Another instance of women's involvement in Peace Movement at the grassroots is the women's non-violent protest against Chevron in Escravos, Delta State in 2002, for destroying the environment and livelihoods of many local villagers. The angry women held Chevron in captivity for ten days. While the negotiations were going on, all operations had to stop and the firm was compelled to declare "force majeure". The resolution included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the women (Odeh, 2017).

Women are becoming more aware of their relevance in the political and peacebuilding spheres. Also, women-led non-governmental organisations are gaining momentum in not only advocating for gender equality but also educating and equipping women and girls with skills on how to seek for their rights, prevent violent extremism and build peace within their various communities. The role of these NGOs in peacebuilding in a country such as Nigeria cannot be over-emphasised. This is because humanitarian, developmental, human rights and conflict resolution activities are conducted by NGOs which strengthen the peacebuilding process. These NGOs are doing more peace building activities by the day than any official governmental agencies. (UNESCO, 2013).

An instance of a woman-led Non-Governmental Organisation that speaks for peace is Galaxy4Peace, founded by Precious Ajunwa to maintain an environment branded by peaceful co-existence among tribes, communities, states and country by enhancing the general population's responsiveness to peacebuilding and conflict management initiatives targeted at the major objective of building lasting peace in Nigeria. The NGO performs this by creating awareness and sensitising the general public through capacity building, advocacy and innovative interventions targeted at peace culture facilitation

Another instance is Elect-Her, a non-partisan political advancement organisation that was co-founded by two Nigerian women – Ibijoke Faborode and Abosede Alimi. It aims to bridge inequality gaps in Nigerian politics by handling the under-representation of Nigerian women in elective offices by behavioural change communications; skills growth, mobilisation of human capital and campaign financing, with a final objective to enable capable women vote, run and win elections competitively. Elect-Her is on a mission to back 1000 women to go for elective posts in 2023 (Anurugwo, 2016).

The Women for Peace and Gender Equality Initiative (formerly the Commonwealth Women's Organisation Nigeria) is another example of a women led non-governmental organisation that is committed to building girls and women through equitable gender equality with the potential to develop sustainable peace (United Nations, 2018). They also intend to ensure the active participation of women from the grass roots to the national level in Nigeria in the peace building and policy making process.

### **Impact of women involvement on the peace building in Nigeria**

Building peace is encumbering. It is more challenging for women peace-builders. They do not only seek to end the conflicts plaguing their communities; they are doing so in the face of bigotry, injustice, silence and physical violence. Women have had a tremendous positive impact on the individual, family, community, national and international levels throughout history. Women such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Moreme and Mrs Ransom Kutu have contributed in many ways over the years (Odeh, 2017).

Women perform a key role in assisting their families, strengthening communities and building a world that is peaceful, positive and sustainable, sometimes even during the most difficult times. It is worth noting that due to the patriarchal aspect of culture that is inherent in Nigeria, women are still marginalised in the sphere of affairs and this is reflected in various sectors of the country, particularly the public sector. Their low participation in education is also part of the shortcomings. Women are grossly excluded, even on the peace table, where their own concept of security ought to be heard in order to attain a more durable approach to building lasting peace. They are also not adequately represented, despite the fact that they constitute a large portion of the population and the most affected during the conflict (Castro et al, 2016).

Irrespective of their relegation, in the history of Nigeria, women have attempted in various ways to avert, monitor and eliminate otherwise threatening situations of peace and stability. Their activism and advocacy, education, successive governments' positivity towards their empowerment, and interest in politics are gaining greater deal of positive energy. This is a sign that there is a better future for the involvement of women in peace and decision-making processes (UNESCO, 2013).

Women peace builders have greatly impacted peace building in Nigeria by embracing democracy and human rights. As peacekeepers and aid workers, women contribute to the reduction of direct abuse. They have worked very hard to transform partnerships and resolve the causes of violence as trauma recovery counsellors, mediators and politicians (Deekor & Ejekwu, 2022). They have also contributed to developing the capacity of their societies and nations to deter violent conflict, by acting as educators and contributors in the development process. With a considerable level of women inclusion in peacebuilding and decision making in Nigeria, there is an opportunity to strengthen the voices of women and girls.

### **Conclusion**

The Nigerian patriarchal context puts restrictions on the mobility of women and plays on the conservative ideologies of gender. This complicates peace building and more inclusion of women as actors in peace building. While women are widely seen as victims in need of protection, they engage in informal peace building and demonstrate their organisation and advocacy for a better future through this. In order for sustainable peace to be actualised in Nigeria, it is necessary to pursue the full inclusiveness of women in every peace process and, very importantly, to remove barriers to the full inclusion and involvement of Nigerian women in peace-building by building and strengthening their capabilities.

Inclusion is not only about building women's participation in formal environments, but also recognising where they have the greatest influence. Many cases of gender inclusivity have resulted from informal structures, such as the influence women have within their families, which very often goes unrecognised. Men and boys in every society in Nigeria should partner with women in enhancing peace. Women need to be integrated into every level of governance and decision-making in order to ensure their complete involvement in peace-making and peace-building, so that they can have their voices heard and as such, help develop a better world society.

### **Recommendations**

The following are hereby recommended:

1. Sequel to the advantages of integrating gender concerns in peace building and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, Nigeria should recognise the relevance of the full and effective involvement of women at all levels, at all stages and in all aspects of the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention, resolution and mediation.
2. Peace agreements should explicitly highlight women's equal right to benefit from and have access to all social and economic measures provided by the negotiated deal. In particular, attention should be given to women's equal right to education, employment, health, inheritance, restitution of properties and lands as well as compensation for damage emanating from conflicts.
3. Education is a veritable tool for social change, national integration and development. It should be implored as a tool to inculcate knowledge, values and attitude in order to re-orientate the perception of people towards women involvement in engendering peace and security. Such positive attitudes and values include respect for the human person, honesty, dignity in labour, patriotism, loyalty and so on. This is crucial to free people from the shackles of culture that undermine the prospects and potentials of women and discourage an attitude that may cause disintegration and disunity.
4. To handle this issue, conflict prevention requires a variety of approaches, including measures targeted at building mutual confidence, reducing perceptions of threat, discouraging competitive arms accumulation, eliminating the risk of surprise attack and creating an enabling environment for agreements on arms limitation and reduction as well as on military expenditures.
5. Government should ensure the proactive integration of gender equality in all planned actions, including legislation, policy programmes in all areas and at all levels - politically, economic and societal spheres. There should be enactment of specific laws to address gender relations and inequalities, harassment, intimidation of women, sexual violence in armed conflict, violence against women, laws and practices that discriminate against women, impunity and its impact on women, the administration of justice, including access to justice and support to human rights mechanism.
6. The government should equally take conscious and consistent steps in the appointment of more women as Special Representatives, Special Envoys and regional directors in peace missions.

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