VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper highlights the implications of violence against women in the context of peace and security in Nigeria. The achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) was linked to the extent women are protected from violence. The paper argues for the abolition of harmful practices such as sexual violence and female Genital Mutilation (FGM), honour killing, early marriage, women trafficking and the kidnapping of women by the insurgents as panacea for lasting peace in Nigeria. Government’s efforts in combating these practices were also laid bare. The paper recommends that the Nigerian government through state and non-state actions should put substantive measures in place to protect women from violence and that the several bills on violence against women should be passed into law and enforced.

Keywords: Violence, Women, Peace, Security, Nigeria

Introduction
Violence against women is widespread in the world. This is a burning issue of human rights often swept under the carpet as if it does not matter, especially in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. This is not limited to physical violence. There is also sexual, psychological, economic and political abuses women suffer at home, on the streets, in the workplace and in the political arena. It is worse in conflict situations or even under peace-keeping situations as women are often raped on a massive scale and later left to bear the child alone and care for the child without any assistance from the ‘unknown soldier’ or the state. Thus, such women are left to grind in poverty and the cycle of poverty most times, remains unbroken for generations (Ayeni and Ajibogun, 2013).

Violence against women is a major threat to social and economic development. This was recognized in the Millennium Declaration of September 2000, in which the General Assembly of the United Nations resolved “to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women”(United
Nations, 2005). Such violence has serious implications for peace and security of any nation because they are intimately related with complex social conditions such as poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, child mortality, maternal ill-health, and human immunodeficiency virus syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of assault that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life (United Nations, 1993). Physical violence occurs when a woman is: slapped, or had something thrown at her; pushed, shoved, or had her hair pulled; hit with a fist or something else that could hurt; choked or burnt; threatened with or had a weapon used against her. Sexual violence means a woman has been: physically forced to have sexual intercourse; had sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do; or forced to do something sexual she found degrading or humiliating. Though recognized as a serious and pervasive problem, emotional violence does not yet have a widely accepted definition, but includes, for example, being humiliated or belittled; being scared or intimidated purposefully. Intimate-partner violence (also called “domestic” violence) means a woman has encountered any of the above types of violence, at the hands of an intimate partner or ex-partner. This tends to be one of the most common and universal forms of violence experienced by women.

In Nigeria, violence against women is a prevalent harm to peace and security because it undermines the basic rights, freedoms, health and welfare of women and national development. It occurs in many settings and at many hands, including those of relatives, acquaintances, employers, insurgents and the state. Eze-Anaba (2010) observes that most forms of violence directed specifically against women in Nigeria seem to be met with silence not only by the state but also by much of the human rights community. Incidents of violence in Nigeria which negate peace and security include battery, beatings, torture, acid baths, rape, kidnapping, and even death through honor killing. It is estimated that one in every three women suffers domestic violence from the hands of those who claim to love and protect them (Hamm, 2000). However, many of the victims do not speak out about violations of their rights due to lack of positive response from the society. Hence, domestic violence is so entrenched in the society that even the victims condone such violations of their rights with some claiming it is a sign of love (Bill, 2003). Furthermore, due to poverty, fear and economic dependence on men, many victims suffer in silence for fear of losing the economic support of the male “perpetrator”. Amnesty International (2005) thus observes that where a victim summons the courage to report to law enforcement agents, the issue is trivialized and termed a “private matter”.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) and Violence against Women in Nigeria

The Millennium Declaration explicitly recognizes that the equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured. The third millennium development goal specifically addresses the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. It recognizes gender equality as a key in achieving all the eight MDGs.

Violence against women occurs in all social and economic classes. But, women living in poverty are more likely to experience violence especially as it constitutes a threat to health. As a result of violence or a fear of violence, most Nigerian women are unable to protect themselves from infection and to access HIV/AIDS services. Although Nigeria has ratified international and regional human rights treaties providing for women’s rights to protection against such violence and women’s rights to health, unchecked domestic violence and lack of access for women to
HIV/AIDS services are indications that the government is failing to meet its responsibilities. In addition to women’s greater physiological susceptibility, social, cultural, and legal forms of discrimination compound their vulnerability to HIV.

Although more research is needed to fully understand the connections between poverty and violence against women, it is clear that poverty and its associated stressors are important contributors. Efforts to reduce poverty and hunger may help to prevent violence against women, and should thus be supported. Thus, the Nigerian economic development strategies must be conceived in ways that respond to and address gender inequality. For example, such strategies must:

- promote the girl child access to basic education, vocational and technical education for women, so as to address gender gaps in earnings as well as barriers to women rights;
- extend and upgrade childcare benefits to enable women’s full participation in the paid labour market;
- address issues of occupational segregation that often translate into inferior conditions of employment for women; and
- ensure social protection and benefits for women in precarious employment situations – often those involved in informal employment.

With the above in mind, economic development strategies in Nigeria should serve as guides towards the realization of decent, productive work for women, which promote peace and security for all.

It should also be recognized that increasing women’s educational status and economic independence does not guarantee the elimination of violence. In some cases, this may actually increase women’s chances of experiencing violence – at least initially. According to Abama and Kwaja (2009), improved economic conditions may provide more opportunities to escape and avoid violence, but they are only part of the complete eradication of violence against women. Programmes to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger should therefore be designed specifically to promote women’s economic participation and independence of women in ways that do not expose them to increased violence.

Nonetheless, efforts to reduce violence against women in Nigeria should be allied with women empowerment through education and social orientation. There seem to be evidence that women with less education are generally more likely to experience violence than those with higher levels of education. Education empowers women by giving them greater self-confidence, wider social networks, and greater ability to use information and resources, and attain economic independence. Alarmingly, 65% of the world’s children who do not attend school are girls, and two thirds of the world’s illiterate people are women (UNAIDS, 2002). Policies and programmes aimed at Universal Basic Education should therefore promote education for girls and women as a means of empowering and protecting women from violence. This is one of the conditions under which peace and security can be assured in Nigerian communities.

Enrolment in and completion of secondary education is also a critical area of concern as it is associated with employment opportunities and women empowerment. However, the relationship between educational attainment and its protective effect on women could be complex. In some instance, Nigerian men may react violently to women’s empowerment through education, particularly when educated women challenge traditional gender roles. Thus, in some communities, there may actually be increased risk of violence for some women until a sufficient number of them (women) reach high educational levels.

Women education is an important site for normative change and should be seen to offer strategic opportunities for addressing gender inequality and violence against women. As the task
force for MDG 3 points out, “Girls and their families may find little reason to attend school if the curriculum or their teachers or counselors convey the message that girls are less important than boys or if the school tracks girls into fields of study or training for low-paid occupations considered appropriate for females (Cole, 2003). Educational programmes should therefore include measures that enable girls and women to benefit from their increased educational level without fear of violence.

The Nigerian Senators of recent were considering the approval of child marriage. Women in Nigeria are subjected to multiple forms of violence especially in the homes. According to Project Alerting (2004), the most common form of violence is wife battery ranging from beating, verbal abuse, denial of financial resources, rape, and death. Domestic violence, already a leading cause of female injury, deprives women of bodily integrity by eliminating their ability to consent to sex, negotiate safer sex, and determine the number and spacing of their children (Karanja, 2003). Due to a dearth of official statistics, it is difficult to establish the extent of domestic violence. However, it is believed that gender based violence is of “epidemic proportion (Convention on the Eradication of all forms of Discriminations against Women, 1997).

According to Human Rights Library (2007), a recent trend of violence against women in Nigeria is acids bathing. This causes permanent disfigurement of the victims. Many cases of acid baths are a result of the refusal of the woman to renew, or at times submit to, a relationship with the perpetrator. Another aspect of domestic violence which is often ignored is abuse of domestic servants, especially female domestic servants. Some of these domestic servants are as young as twelve to thirteen years old and are expected to serve as nannies and carry out general cleaning in the house. They are usually the last to go to bed and the first to wake up in the morning, taking care of kids who may be their age or just a few years younger. They are denied access to education and are physically abused. These abuses constitute violence against women which undermine peace and security in Nigeria.

Peace and Security of Women in Conflict Situations

Most of today’s conflicts in Nigeria take place within states. Their root causes often include poverty, the struggle for scarce resources, and violations of human rights. These have a tragic feature in common: women suffer their impact disproportionately more than men. According to International Organisation for Migrants (2002), while women and girls endure the same trauma as the rest of the population -- bombings, famines, epidemics, mass executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation -- they are also targets of specific forms of violence and abuse in conflict situations. These include sexual violence and exploitation. Efforts to resolve these conflicts and address their root causes may not succeed unless there is empowerment of all those who suffer most from them - including and especially women. Hence, until women begin to play a full and equal part, in conflict resolution, we cannot build the foundations for enduring peace - development, good governance, human rights and justice (Annan, 2002).

Armed conflicts continue to occur in many parts of the world and have escalated over the last decade. According to Iyob (2002), in Africa, over one quarter of the continent’s countries were afflicted by one form of conflict or the other in the late 1990s. Today’s armed conflicts are predominantly internal, with regional and sub-regional repercussions; and the victims of those conflicts are disproportionately women, just as we have in Egypt and Syria. In the after-math of most conflict situations, women are often the first to become unemployed or under-employed. In 2001, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that there were
19.8 million refugees, asylum-seekers and others of concern to the Organization. UNHCR also estimates that women and children constitute 80 per cent of the world’s refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (United Nations, 2002).

**Different forms of Violence against Women**

**Sexual Violence:** Although women are more at risk of violence from their intimate partners than from other persons, sexual violence by non-partners is also common in many settings. According to the 2006 In-Depth Study of the Secretary-General: “Sexual violence by ‘non-partners’ refers to violence by a relative, friend, acquaintance, neighbour, work colleague or stranger. Estimates of the prevalence of sexual violence by ‘non-partners’ are difficult to establish because in many societies, especially in Africa, sexual violence remains an issue of deep shame for women and often for their families. Statistics on rape extracted from police records, for example, are notoriously unreliable because of significant underreporting (UN, 2006).

According to José Alcalá (2005), it is estimated that worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. In many Nigerian communities, the legal system and community attitudes add to the trauma that rape survivor experience this is because, often times, the perpetuators are not brought to book.

**Harmful Traditional Practices:** these practices are forms of violence that have been committed against women in certain communities and societies for so long that they are considered part of accepted cultural practice. These violations include: (1) female Genital Mutilation or cutting (FGM), (2) honour killings and (3) early marriage.

- **Female Genital Mutilation:** it refers to several types of deeply-rooted traditional cutting operations performed on women and girls. Traditionally, FGM is sometimes justified as a way to ensure chastity and genital “purity.” It is estimated that more than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM, mainly in Africa and some Middle Eastern countries and two million girls a year are at risk of mutilation (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). Since the late 1980s, opposition to FGM and efforts to combat the practice has increased. According to the Secretary-General’s In-Depth Study, as of April 2006, 15 of the 28 African States where FGM is prevalent made it an offence under criminal law.

- **Honour Killings:** In some Nigerian communities, rape victims, women suspected of engaging in premarital sex, and women accused of adultery have been murdered by their relatives because the violation of a woman’s chastity is viewed as an affront to the family’s honour. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that the annual world-wide number of “honour killing” victims may be as high as 5000 women (UNFPA, 2000).

- **Early Marriage:** The practice of early marriage is prevalent throughout the world, especially in Africa and South Asia. This negates peace and security of any nation because it is a form of sexual violence, since young girls are often forced into the marriage and into sexual relations. This practice jeopardizes women rights to health, raises their risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS and limits their chance of attending school. Some parents and families justify child marriages by contending that it ensures a better future for their daughters. Some parents and families also marry off their younger daughters as a means of gaining economic security and status for themselves as well as for their daughters. Insecurity, conflict and societal crises also support early marriage. As reported by UN (2002), many African countries experiencing conflict, where there is a high possibility of young girls being kidnapped, marrying them off at an early age is viewed as a way to secure their protection.
Trafficking in Girls: Trafficking involves the recruitment and transportation of persons using deception, coercion and threats in order to place and keep them in a situation of slavery, forced labour or servitude. Women are trafficked into a variety of sectors of the informal economy, including prostitution, domestic work, street begging, mining, agriculture, cottage industries (Ertürk, 2006). While exact data are hard to come by, UNESCO (2004) estimates of the number of trafficked persons range from 500,000 to two million per year, and a few organizations have estimated that up to four million persons are trafficked every year. Although women and men can become victims of trafficking but the majority of victims are always female. This is because various forms of gender-based discrimination increase the risk of women becoming affected by poverty, which in turn puts them at higher risk of becoming targeted by traffickers, who often use false promises of jobs and educational opportunities to recruit their victims. Trafficking is often connected to organized crime and has developed into a highly profitable business that generates an estimated US$7-12 billion per year (José Alcalá, M. et al., 2006).

Ethno-Religious Violence against Women by the Terrorist Group (Boko Haram)

The rise of Boko Haram coincided with the adoption of Shariah in 12 northern states, and was to some extent a by-product of this. The version of Shariah law supported by Shekau and Boko Haram promotes narrow gender roles for men and women, enforcing strict rules on women’s dress and sexual conduct and instituting other discriminatory and abusive practices against women. These range from the enforced segregation of school-children, to the public flogging of women for fornication (BBC, 7th January, 2003; Akanji 2009: 55–60; Zenn and Pearson, 2014).

In Maiduguri, in August 2013, a Christian student reported an attack by Boko Haram on her university accommodation: the men were murdered; the women segregated into Muslim and non-Muslims, and the Christian women systematically raped. Such attacks on Christian women by Boko Haram can be regarded as an extension of other institutionalised and long-term discriminatory practices against them in Northern regions. Women have faced broad discriminatory practices in both the professional and domestic spheres. They have been targetted in acid-attacks for ‘un-Islamic’ practices, such as a failure to wear the hijab, or for taking a job. Women are also often accused of ‘dishonouring Islam’. In 2006, riots ensued in which more than 50 Christians were killed, mostly women and children, after a Christian female teacher confiscated a Qur’an from a student in Bauchi (Alao 2009: 40; Barkindo et al 2013: 23).

Also in Maiduguri, six Christian women were abducted and repeatedly raped by insurgents who claimed this as sexual ‘jizya’, a tax paid by Christians under Islamic law. However, the surname of one of the women distinguished the group as ethnic Berom, who are perceived by Boko Haram as “immigrants” to northern Islamic lands. The rape therefore effectively served as a punishment, and a threat to leave. In other sexual attacks against women, the victims’ perception has been that the assaults were driven by an essentially ‘criminal’ element of the group (Barkindo et al 2013: 23) in Zenn and Pearson (2014). In November 2013, a Christian teenager told how she was abducted by Boko Haram from a rural region of Gwoza, Borno State, and forced to cook and clean for the group. This 19-year old girl, Hajja, was held for three months, during which time she was also forced to convert to Islam, set to be married to one of the group, and pressured to carry out operational tasks for the fourteen-strong team of men who took her. Hajja was made to lure government soldiers into positions where they could be targeted, and to watch as their throats were slit by Boko Haram members after they were captured—killings in which the Muslim wife of the Boko Haram cell leader reportedly
participated. A Gwoza official estimates more than a dozen other Christian women remain in captivity in similar circumstances, and young girls are particularly targeted (Reuters, 17 November 2013; Wall St Journal, 14 January 2014).

A study for Nigeria’s Political Violence Research Network suggests that more than 45% of those killed by Boko Haram are Christian women and children. This, too, appears to be connected to the increased government pressure on Boko Haram in strongholds in northeastern Nigeria, with insurgents abducting Christian women as they flee the security forces. The Christian Association of Nigeria has been reporting the abduction of Christian teenagers since July 2013 (Barkindo et al 2013: 17-22; Agenzia Fides, 23 July 2013). If the abduction of women by Boko Haram is tactical, other violence against Christian women appears primarily punitive. Reuters, 17th November, 2013 reported that Suspected Boko Haram militants kidnapped at least 25 girls in an attack on a remote town in northeastern Nigeria, witnesses said, despite talks on freeing over 200 other female hostages they seized in April.

Suspected Boko Haram gunmen reportedly abducted 13 women at a farming settlement area near Dalwa village in Damboa local government area of Borno State, witnesses and security sources said. The women, according to the source, were driven by hunger to return to their abandoned farms to get some crops harvested, but unfortunately ran into trouble with the terrorists. About four of the women were said to be nursing mothers who carried their kids on their back. The abductors were said to have flocked the women towards the seized town of Damboa. Boko Haram militants killed 32 people and kidnapped scores of others in an attack on the village of Gumsuri in the restive northeast, two local officials and a witness said Thursday. The officials, who requested anonymity, said locals were still counting those abducted in the attack on Sunday in the remote area but that the figure could pass 100 and included women and children. “After killing our youths, the insurgents have taken away our wives and daughters,” said Mukhtar Buba, who fled Gumsuri to the Borno state capital Maiduguri. Gamsuri is located on the road that leads to Chibok, where Boko Haram abducted more than 200 girls from a school in April. One of the local officials said the village had previously been protected against Boko Haram violence by a strong vigilante force, but that they were overpowered in Sunday’s attack.
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Table 5.1: Some Religious Violence in Nigeria, 1999–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>7-17 Sept. 2001</td>
<td>Jos</td>
<td>A religious riot between Muslims and Christians in Jos. Mosques, churches and several properties were damaged or torched. The clashes started on September 7 and lasted nearly two weeks, ending on September 17.</td>
<td>The riot broke out when the Islamic Brigade attacked a Christian woman who attempted to cross a public high-way barricaded by Muslim worshippers on Friday. Over 300 people were killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>16 Nov. 2002</td>
<td>Kaduna</td>
<td>The Miss World crisis in which Muslims attacked Christians and churches.</td>
<td>The crisis was triggered by an article authored by Isioma Daniel in Thisday newspaper, alleging that Prophet Mohammed would have loved to have the girls. Over 250 people were killed and several churches destroyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>22 Mar. 2007</td>
<td>Gombe</td>
<td>Muslim pupils killed their Christian teacher, Mrs Oluwatoiyin Olusesan</td>
<td>The pupils claimed that their teacher desecrated the Qur’an while attempting to stop a student from cheating in an examination hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>26–30 Jul. 2009</td>
<td>Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Yobe</td>
<td>Religious violence unleashed by the radical Boko Haram sect on Christians</td>
<td>Over 700 persons killed, 3500 persons internally displaced, 1264 children orphaned, over 392 women widowed, and several properties destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>7 Mar. 2010</td>
<td>Plateau</td>
<td>Attacks by Fulani Moslems on Christian dominated villages of Dogo Nahawa, Shen and fan in Jos</td>
<td>Over 500 people – mainly women and children – were killed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Political Marginalization of Women in Nigeria

Women marginalization in Nigerian politics is directly related to the issue of poverty. The 1995 human development report of the UN maintained that 70% of the total world population are women, and that ‘poverty has a woman’s face’ (Harris, 2006). The 1991 population census estimates that the 31 million rural women in Nigeria, 16 million live below the nationally defined poverty lines. The negative impact of poverty on the advancement of women in Nigeria led to their marginalization in decision making capacities, poor appreciation of their contribution in the national economy, poor health, illiteracy, and lack of educational opportunity (Oloaye, 2008).
In the economic point of view, sexual division of labour deprived women of their economic status and led to their subsequent state of penury. Researchers like Ibiam (2005), Olori (2009) and Ezugwu (2004) blamed colonialism; maintaining that colonial employment opportunities were mainly for men (e.g. railway construction, court messengership. Traditional female midwives lost their jobs to European clinics and maternity homes. Only men were engaged in the new cash crop production while cocoyam, cassava and livestock (originally produced by women) ceased to be a measure of social wealth (Ibiam, 2005).

Senator Grace Folashade Bent (2012) once said:

The participation of women in politics in Nigeria is still abysmally low, although I reckoned with efforts by the President to make amends. The little regard for women in our politics is a setback in our quest and desire to consolidate on democracy and forge a stronger nation. No democracy can genuinely thrive when about 85 percent of its women folk are largely left out in critical decision making process. Currently at the National Assembly, there is a gross reduction in the number of women representatives. We really have to start taking steps towards ensuring more women’s participation in politics if only to, at least, reduce the tension in the country. I strongly believe that if women were encouraged to be governors, ministers and even president, the level of gangsterism, armed robbery, terrorism, armed militancy and other vices would never have been this high in the country.

The foregoing statement by a former senator and a foremost female politician of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria reveals that the rules of engagement are already skewed against women in Nigeria.

While there has been some advocacy on these issues in Nigeria, the government have hardly gone beyond mere lip-service and half-hearted measures. How much percentage of the annual budget is devoted to education which is primary for empowerment in a country where we pay lip-service to Universal Basic Education, which is an integral part of the MDGs, while there is still mass illiteracy and non-functional education, both in structures and in methods as well as in personnel and equipment? The United Nations specifies that 26% of the national budget should be for education. It is ironical that it was only during the military dictatorship of the Late General Sani Abacha that the national budget quota for education reached the double digit consistently for five years. Since the return to civil rule in the Fourth Republic, it has largely remained on the single digit (Okecha, 2002). Rather, it has been more of a question of ‘Ghana-Must-Go’ bags of money to the politicians both in the legislature and even more, in the executive halls of government.

**Governments’ Efforts in Combating Violence against Women**

In recent years, there have been increased efforts to promote peace and security in Nigeria through the protection of women from violence. These efforts are also consistent with protection and promotion of women’s rights through the international, regional, and national enactment of laws and policies. Such efforts have resulted in standard-setting documents like the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action at the international level. As a member of the United Nations, Nigeria has...
signed and ratified several human rights instruments. Some are general human rights instruments that specifically recognize the right to non-discrimination. Such general instruments to protect women against violence which Nigeria has signed and ratified include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in force in 1976), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in force in 1976), the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Nigeria signed and ratified CEDAW on June 13, 1985 without any reservations. She also ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW on November 22, 2004. CEDAW protocol provides the basis for ensuring equality between men and Women (Amnesty International, 2005). It urges state parties to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and pursue without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women by embodying the principles of equality of men and women in the Constitutions. But to what extent is this achieved?

Women have been entrusted with key ministries at the Federal level in the Fourth Republic. Very important portfolios like that of Finance, Petroleum Resources, and Education have been largely entrusted to women. Women were only known to be Ministers of Women Affairs in the past or serve as deputy ministers or relatively obscure ministries are entrusted to them. The present Petroleum Minister was even once a Minister of Transport. A very delicate portfolio like the Ministry of Aviation was occupied by a woman. There was a time the Minister of Finance and her junior Minister of State were both women. When the former Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, President of the World Bank, was moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after securing debt relief for the nation and managing the nation’s foreign reserves, Mrs. Esther Nemadi Usman was raised to become the substantive minister. When the former Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, President of the World Bank, was moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after securing debt relief for the nation and managing the nation’s foreign reserves, Mrs. Esther Nemadi Usman was raised to become the substantive minister. Today, she has been elected by her people from Kaduna South Senatorial District as a distinguished Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Dr. Okonjo-Iweala has returned again from the World Bank not only as Minister of Finance, but also as the Coordinating Minister of the Economic Management Team of the nation under President Goodluck Jonathan. The incumbent President has fulfilled his campaign-promise of reserving a 35% quota of appointive positions to women in the Federal cabinet. This has largely compensated for the depleting number of women elected to revered seats in the two halls of the National Assembly (Ayeni and Ajibogun, 2013). Despite all these efforts by the government, violence against women are still persistent in the country especially in the Northern part of the country where the insurgent group, Boko Haram are creating insecurity situations and endangering the lives of women and children in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Violence against women is a fundamental and human right issue. It carries with it both short- and long-term implication on peace and security of Nigeria because it affects women’s physical and psychological wellbeing. This is because development will make little sense if the population of women is excluded from participating, contributing and reaping its benefits. That is exactly what happens when violence – together with harmful gender norms and discriminatory legislation prevents women from being full partners in development projects. Better job opportunities and female empowerment through education can reduce the risk of violence. However, in order for peace and security and the targets of the MDGs to be realized in the Nigerian communities, comprehensive approaches to peaceful coexistence that reduces gender inequality and violence against women must be developed and implemented.

Women cannot take their rightful place in the power structure of Nigeria until the cultural attitudes and socialization practices are overcome by women themselves. The inferiorisation and demonization of women that they lack the will and self-esteem to actually seek and gain power
must be overcome by a broader informal and formal education system. Educational levels of women must improve. Illiteracy, the bane of the majority of women, must be battled. Harmful traditional practices militating against women having the time and space to do politics must be stopped. Women on their own must respond to these, by speaking out and creating support base for themselves and also try as much as they can to inculcate moral values into their children.

Recommendations

Based on the prevailing implications of violence against women on peace and security of lives and property in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

- There should be advocacy and legislation on the abolition of all traditional practices that limit women’s access to credit, economic resources, property rights and right to inheritance.
- Gender Policies that state the strategies to improve women’s economic rights, should be made effective.
- Poverty reduction strategies should have substantive gender components. Hence, government should mainstream gender and rural women in the implementation of development initiative such development initiatives.
- All the programmes for the development of rural areas and empowerment of rural dwellers should articulate the needs of rural women and allocate resources to address these needs as a matter of priority. By so doing, such policies like the NEEDS/SEEDS policy should as a matter of urgency recognize the contributions and situation of rural women and the implications of violence on rural women empowerment.
- There should be training for policy formulators on how gender dimensions be tackled and integrated into policy and how these gender dimensions be integrated within the MDG’s and the NEEDS/SEEDS and made sustainable.
- Efforts to Domesticate CEDAW and pass the Abolition of all forms of Discrimination Law and the Administration of Criminal Justice Law should be renewed. Hence, effective domestication of these laws should be decentralized and implemented at all levels of government.
- All legal provisions denying equal capacity under the law should be repealed. Women’s human rights should be integrated in the application and implementation of Sharia laws in Nigeria. By so doing, the Nigerian government should abolish all statutory, religious and customary laws that promote violence against women.
- The capacity of Justice Delivery institutions both at the Federal and State levels should be strengthened to enable them to perform their functions in protecting women against efficiently and effectively.
- Nigerian government should put substantive measures in place to protect women from violence by both state and non-state actors. Hence, the several bills on violence against women at the National Assembly should be passed into law with immediate effect.
- Women should rise above emotions and token considerations and rally themselves, while enlisting the support of men of goodwill, to campaign massively for issues that affect them and their children, including the unborn, the handicapped, and the unemployed.
There is a need for a more concerted effort to support women in political parties and such support must include a coordinated social network which must include important stakeholders like the civil society, media and other key stakeholders in the parties to achieve gender parity.

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