CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN AFRICA: PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

In pre-colonial African societies, gender-profiling in respect of duties and responsibilities to the communities were visible. However, it is claimed that the colonial administrations in the various states deliberately relegated the importance of women to the background. African women have joined other feminist ideological movement that blew throughout the developed world in the twentieth century to agitate for gender equality in all facets of life in order to sustain their ability towards the development of their various societies. In this crusade, the plight of the African woman in crisis situation came to the fore; hence, the increasing demand for power equilibrium in the area of conflict management. The United Nations (UN) Security Council has proclaimed UNSCR) 1325 to support equality of both genders. However, sustainable development has suffered severe setbacks as a result of the non-commitment of African states to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. This paper interrogates the challenges confronting African women during the periods of conflicts and by extension, the relegation of women in the process of conflict management.

Keywords: Conflict Management; Equilibrium; Gender-Equality; Sustainable Development; Gendering.

INTRODUCTION

There has emerged a renewed scholarly vigour on discourses relating to gender issues within the context of conflict management and sustainable development. Hitherto, minimal attention was focused on the roles of women in conflict management in post-conflict societies, until a surge of intellectual drive premised on the feminist ideology began to question the prototypical roles of women in society. The necessity for a re-definition of the female-gender's role in conflict management emerged as one of the focal points of the feminist movement's drive for gender-equality. The drive for gender-equality, especially on matters of conflict management was further amplified as a result of the disappointment that the Brahimi Report represented on the issue. Instructively, the Report failed to reflect the necessity for active participation of women in conflict management. As noted by Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, (2008), the consequence of the non-inclusive nature of the Report provoked various international organizations into lobbying the United Nations Security Council for the institutionalization of adequate representation of the female-gender in the whole gamut of peace and conflict matters.

Gender discrimination and the fear of violence inevitably reduce women's ability to sustain the new development of patently contributing to politics and conflict management. These challenges are even more acute in Africa where gender roles are traditionally bifurcated, such that the male-gender is presumed more aggressive, militarized, domineering and easily fed into the organization of war; while the female-gender is presumed to be suited for non-violent and mundane issues that may essentially be domestic in nature. Contemporary realities have however carved more demanding roles for women in seemingly every facet of life.

The various wars of attrition, that pervaded the African continent consequent upon the end of the Cold War, have made it inevitable for African women to be fed into new roles and responsibilities for sustainable development in their various societies. Women being among the most vulnerable groups in conflict/war situations need more protection and pro-active policies that can protect them in war situations. The problematic here is that despite the dynamics of conflicts on the African continent, and the consequences on the female-gender, deserved attention is yet to be focused on the reinforcing importance of active participation of the female-gender in conflict management.

It is therefore imperative that women should be fully engaged in the process of post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation and re-integration with a view to ensuring sustainable development on the continent. As an addition to the body of knowledge, this paper begins with a framework of analysis inspired by the need to deepen the understanding of gender issues within the context of conflict studies. Thereafter, there is an analysis of the traditional roles of women in African society in order to provide the platform for juxtaposition with the contemporary roles. The paper further undertakes a general overview of women's struggle in achieving gender equilibrium in conflict resolution, the challenges encountered and the achievements so far made.

FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

For an adequate explication of conflict, the analysis focuses on two variables- firstly, incompatibility, and secondly, goals. Basically therefore, it is the inability to effectively manage the efforts towards the achievement of incompatible goals that degenerate into conflict. Conflict arises in different contexts and occurs at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-group, organisational, and international levels. In effect, conflict is a state of affair in which two or more irreconcilable views or options are posited towards the solution of a particular problem. According to Galtung (1971) conflict can be "defined as a property of the action-system which obtains when there is no overlap between acceptability-region and compatibility-region". It is however the inability to manage the overlap between the two regions between groups within a state or at the inter-state level that may lead to the violent expression of conflict- war. An important aspect of the analysis of conflict is the difficulty encountered in establishing the precise causes of conflicts; whether remote or immediate. Despite this challenge, it is an understanding of the causes, which incorporates other variables, such as, nature, context and scope that can pave the way for the resolution of a conflict. Thus, a concrete analysis of conflicts would be premised on the combination of factors that give rise to them. An analysis must be cognizance of the character of conflict as a social phenomenon that evolves in the course of human interaction, hence, the limited room provided for rigid scientific explanations. On that score, Ross (1993:6) described conflicts as "frameworks for resolving internal differences, as well as means to transforming hidden differences into open tension". As remarked earlier, the tensions could degenerate into wars, thus making war the highest point of conflicts, at the state level of analysis.

Tickner's work throws more light on the three levels of analysis from which war can be understood. These levels are the individual, the state and the international system. In relating these levels of analysis to gender issues in conflict management, the author faults the realists' position of conflict management as a male-dominated domain. Tickner (1992:29) therefore asserts: "the way in which realists describe the individual, the state, and the international system are profoundly gendered; each is constructed in terms of... idealized or hegemonic masculinity....In the name of universality, realists have constructed a worldview based on experiences of certain men; it is therefore a world view that offers us only a partial view of reality." In contrast to the realists' view,(Andrew Natsios, 2001:VII)' gender analysis of conflict focuses on the contribution of both sexes, rather than the chauvinistic position of the realist. By implication, the author discards the notion of women as passive victims of conflict. Rather, it is the very fact of conflict and the impact that it has on women, their families, their community and the society that spurs women to take political action during conflict and try to bring it to an end. He went further to state that since war is dynamic, women assume new roles as war escalates or de-escalates. He concluded that, "women valiantly look after their families in the most trying of circumstances. They shoulder new economic burdens and responsibilities and play vital roles in the community. Many join military operations on both sides of conflict...women are survivors, demonstrating remarkable perseverance and initiative in the tragic conditions of war." Burton's (Burton 1990) contribution to the debate is more assertive for it focused on the necessity of addressing human needs as the need of a collective. Therefore, the collective, irrespective of sex, must work to resolve and prevent conflicts, so that the condition that creates an environment of conflict can be eliminated and, more importantly, conditions that create cooperative relationships can be promoted. It would seem logical, therefore, that in order to realize those objectives, it is essential to have a clear understanding of "gender as a form of power, and power in its gendered form". In effect, gendering conflict should be

regarded as very paramount and make most relevant issues in conflict in general and conflict management in particular. Ramsbothan et al (2008) emphasize that, to "ignore gender as both constituting and being constituted by conflict in general, and conflict management in particular, is to valorize and leave unexamined the existing power structures" in the international system.

'GENDERING' ROLES IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES

The historiography of women and their contributions to the development of their societies have gained recognition as a significant area of academic study. Awe (1992:1) however lamented that, "inexplicably, most writings on the African past tended to concentrate on the significant achievements of men without paying deserved attention to the contributions of women". Aside from scholarly writings, the practical reality was such that women were relatively under-celebrated. The situation in pre-colonial Africa continued unabated during the colonial era. During the colonial era, the government merely accepted and worked with the institutionalized secondary role of women as met on ground. In this seeming clothed antagonism against women, there is also the contention that the nature of the African environment favoured the obliteration of whatever records of women's achievements existed thereby giving little recognition to the repositories of such information. Adeniyi (1993) has observed that the dearth of information, particularly documentary evidence, is so acute that some of the outstanding women in history have been mistaken for men and their achievements attributed to male rulers. Despite the seeming attempt to consciously relegate the contribution of women to the development of the society, Jilie Mostov (1993) asserts: women are mothers, daughters and wives—symbols of purity, nurturers and transmitters of national values, and reproducers of nation's warriors and rulers, ... In an analysis of women's contribution to the existence of peace in the African traditional society, Mathey (2003:35) revealed that a fundamental fact central to traditional African societies was the sacred character of the respect given to the elderly in general and to elderly women in particular. Here, the elderly woman was respected by all, and she played a key role in crisis management and conflict resolution. When a conflict degenerated into armed violence, an appeal would usually be made to a third party of advanced age to calm the tension and reconcile the combatants. Though, such an appeal for mediation was usually made to a woman who enjoyed the consideration and respect of all who know her (Ibid). In this regard, the Tubur group in Cameroon was prominent for the mediatory role of women on issues related to conflict management. The 'wogclu' otherwise known as old women, were responsible for mediation and consulted on all problems disturbing the peace of the society (Mohammed 2003:103). Historical research has also shown that, in some parts of Somaliland, women at times employ desperate measures to stop inter and intra-clan wars. They usually form human chains, lined themselves up between the warring parties, and refused to leave until the two groups backed down on their proposed violent clash. All they wanted was to ensure that the two armies did not shoot at each other (Ibid). Women in this community created an environment that enabled the warring parties to settle their differences peacefully and to establish good relationships. Other writings have revealed overwhelming evidence of the contributions which women have made in the past. Most African oral traditions, surviving religious cults and extant political institutions still attest to the significant position which women occupied in social, economic, and political evolution of different African communities. The study of Nigerian women in historical perspectives provides a good starting point for the investigation of women's roles as harbinger of peace in the society. In Yoruba land for instance, history has it that women rose to the highest political office any person could occupy in the land. A prominent example was the reign of Ooni Luwoo who ruled as the 21st Ooni of Ife in (1000 C.E)

(Akorede and Olaleye, 2008:255). (The position of an Ooni then was equivalent to that of the president of a country today). Gisela (2004:18) wrote that in Ghana, the Ohemaa, or female ruler, among the Akan in Ghana occupied the senior of two stools, a visible repository of political authority. She advised the chief and had jurisdiction over domestic matters and those of the royal family.

These foregoing records give ample evidence of a female population that had not only been industrious and resourceful but which had also demonstrated significant and distinguished leadership role in the society (Awe, 1992). Further studies have also shown that African women played prominent roles in the military of pre-colonial African societies such as the role of the Amazons of Dahomey. Dahomey often sent between 12000 and 15000 soldiers on annual military campaigns out of which were 5000 women. The Amazons were said to be feared and ferocious in battle (Walter Rodney 1992:142). More importantly, the legend of Inkpi, Moremi, and Daura highlight the place of women in our myths of origin and present them as playing the role of saviours in times of crisis in their societies. Other prominent women in this category include; Queen Amina, Queen Kambasa, Iyalode Efunsetan, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Aduni Oluwole, among others. These women occupied the highest ranks open to women and at a great cost to themselves, participated, with a high degree of success, in the exercise of power thereby, working towards the creation of an atmosphere of peace and sustainable development within their communities. Furthermore, an essential contribution of women in traditional African societies is their role as the repository of moral virtues and knowledge for the young. Through their mothering role, the culture of peace is entrenched in children as a foundation for peaceful living in families, the clan and the community. It is to be noted that progress and sustainable development cannot thrive in an atmosphere of disharmony; therefore the totality of the roles of women in African societies in ensuring peace is to create avenue for sustainable development and economic emancipation of the communities. More importantly, the role of women as the purveyors of peace through their mediation activities for encouraging the settlement of disputes among warring parties during crisis cannot be overemphasized.

THE EVOLVING ROLES OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Gender issues cut across all sectors of the African society, regardless of socio-economic, political, or the legal contexts through which the issues are assessed. The articulation of gender perspectives to issues of political violence and armed conflict are often particularly marked. Consequently, the impact of armed conflict and political violence on gender relations and gender equality has become a key issue, because of the subjective traditional profiling of the two sexes within the African environment. Political violence and armed conflict are seen as male domains, executed by men, whether as members of armed forces, guerrilla groups, paramilitary or peace-keeping forces. Aside from being victims in the course of crisis, there is a general conclusion that it is uncommon for women to be involved in armed conflict or political violence. Women are not only denied participation in conflict management but also deprived equal opportunities in political participation that can maximize their potential for sustainable development. With such deprivation of women in conflict management and political participation, it is therefore not unexpected that women are marginalized in the process of achieving peace and security.

However, various women groups are unrelenting in ensuring active involvement in the processes of conflict management and social transformation towards sustainable development in post-conflict society. Snyder (2009:48) observed that there are two reasons why women become involved in peace-building, viz: they wish to change the very difficult circumstances created for

women by armed conflict; and they recognize that peace agreements offer an opportunity to transform society generally and gender relations specifically. Hence, it appears reasonable to create an enabling environment for the active involvement of women in conflict management issues, for the likely outcome may be a reduction in the rate of attrition the female-gender experience during the period of conflict. Tinde (2009:140) in corroborating this assertion observes that, women and girls face specific and devastating forms of violence related to gender, including rape used as a weapon and strategy of war and sexual slavery. Such practice she said exposes them to common diseases such as HIV/AIDS as they struggle to keep families together and care for the wounded on the margins of fragile war economies. They are the first to be affected by infrastructure breakdown, and may be forced into dangerous survival strategies.

It is therefore paramount that peace process should be gender-sensitive; in terms of the quality of representation and equality. The active participation of the female-gender at all levels of conflict management may provide an avenue for transformation of gender relations, and it would provide the opportunity for women to demand for the 'elusive' equality under the law and justice for crimes committed against them. Conflict analysts have observed that because of the Rwandan women's experiences and demands after the genocide of 1994, the new constitution of that country has now included: provisions relating to gender equality, including a 30 percent quota for women's representation in political decision-making. Rwanda has 48 percent women representation in the lower legislative house...President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman president on the African continent, was elected with the slogan 'all the men have failed Liberia; let's try a woman this time (Snyder, 2009:48). Similarly, a number of institutions at the local, national and international levels have displayed commitment to the cause of active participation and the empowerment of women on conflict-related issues. At the international level, the UN has played a leading role in promoting the subject of 'gender equality in conflict situations' by organizing the UN World Women Conferences: Mexico 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985 and Beijing 1995. The World Bank, government development agencies, Oxfam, and other Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have also played crucial roles in women development on conflict issues. In 2000, the Security Council passed Resolution 1325, which till date ranks as the most historic event in support of women as peace builders and their protection against gender-based violence. With this resolution, women, peace and security issues were for the first time in the history of the UN part of the formal agenda of the Security Council (Skjelsbaek and Tryggested, 2008). The actual text of Resolution 1325 is broad and far-reaching and is focused on women as actors in conflicts rather than as victims as it had always existed. Resolution 1325 stresses the importance of women worldwide in peace building and conflict resolution, and the need to protect women and girls against violence, particularly in conflict situation. It includes specifically a call for: women's equal and full participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building and peacekeeping. It calls on member states to ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspective in all areas of peace building (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 2000). Another significant event that brought the topic of women and armed conflict to international attention is the Fourth Women Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Speaking during a panel of discussion to evaluate progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on "women's participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building", Goetz (2008) has opined that "very few women participated in peace talks as official negotiators or observers". She observed further that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes rarely address the needs of women associated with fighting forces, and post-

conflict planning and financing for women's recovery was weak. As a follow up and having observed the slow and uneven pace in implementing the strategic objectives spelt out in Beijing five years earlier, participants at the special session of Beijing plus 5 at the UN Headquarters in New York 2000, called for the "creation of measurable goals, time-bound targets, and effective monitoring to spur progress".

Since the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325 and the relevant 2004 agreed conclusions of the Commission, state actors, women organizations and civil society networks have joined forces to make peace-building more effective and sustainable. The resolution calls for women's equal participation with men and their full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. This is a landmark achievement in an area that has been dominated by men. It is equally an evidence that "women have taken up human security worldwide as a key, overarching priority and as one in which their participation and input has been historically and semantically left out" (Torry, 2008). Understanding the enormous impact of armed conflict on women has led to greater inclusion of women in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Moreover, the documentation of rape, including systematized rape, has contributed to the recognition of rape as a war crime under international law. The document has also delineated theories on the use of rape as a weapon of war (Snyder, 2008). It is noteworthy that the Africa Leadership Forum is equally at the forefront of the advocacy on gender equality in peace building process. Commending the Forum in an address on 22 January 2001, Angela E.V. King (2001), the Assistant Secretary General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women remarked about the Forum thus: ...our host, the Africa Leadership Forum, has long advocated the importance of women's empowerment and security in creating a culture of gender equality in conflict management.

The Forum was amongst the first to engage in a frank and wide-ranging discussion on practical links between peace, women's leadership and gender equality. The Special Adviser affirmed the complementarity of the efforts of all stake holders in conflict management when she said further that: Outsiders can help to draw up agreements and bring former adversaries to the negotiation table. A cease-fire may be declared and United Nations or Regional peacekeepers may be sent to monitor and keep control. But real peace, the bonds of trust and confidence, holding families and communities together, cannot be recreated overnight. It must be built on the interrelation of social and cultural norms and values in accordance with international human rights instruments and democratic principles...

It requires the involvement of all sectors of society in the process. The necessity to include women in conflict management was further stressed by Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) when they expressed the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (DPKO) concern that: Women's presence [in peacekeeping missions] improves access and support for local women; it makes male peacekeepers more reflective and responsible; and it broadens the repertoire of skills and styles available within the mission, often with the effect of reducing conflict and confrontation. Gender mainstreaming is not just fair, it is beneficial.

In essence, the international system is coming to terms with the dangers of limiting the importance and salience of women participation in peace-building and conflict management to mundane and secondary roles to that of active stake holders in peacemaking projects. Without doubt, the existence of the enabling environment for active participation in conflict management has further thrown up and shed more light on the capacity of the African woman to engineer peace and security in the society. Expectedly, the new role comes with its own challenges for the African woman.

CHALLEGES TO THE CAPACITY OF AFRICAN WOMEN FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

There are no longer doubts about the positive impacts of women's participation in conflict management and sustainable development in post-conflict societies. However, despite women's positive roles in nation building, there are multiple challenges and constraints inhibiting their effectiveness in this endeavour. It is to be noted that Resolution 1325 calls for the active involvement of women in peace process in the belief that they have important roles to play in societies so as to enhance their involvement in sustainable development. Yet, the reality is that there are few women who are involved in such endeavours. One of the reasons for this is the paucity of women in leadership positions; even where women hold leadership positions in opposition groups or the government...they remain excluded from high-level decision making. Specifically, "the dearth of women in position of leadership in African states is consequent upon the inherent patriarchal system of association which encourages the super-ordination/subordination dichotomy in gender relations, thereby creating hurdles for female advancement in decision making and politics that surround women in all spheres of life ..." (Emenuo, 1999:22).

Furthermore, discrimination or domination of women by male-chauvinists in an average African society is one of the challenges hindering women from attaining positions of leadership, where they could have the opportunity to impact on the processes of peace-building and conflict management. For instance, Ghana as a signatory to so many international conventions on gender equality has reviewed its constitution to accommodate gender equality. Despite these international conventions and constitutional reviews, relatively little has changed in terms of Ghanaian women's life experiences. They still continue to experience gender-based discrimination, powerlessness, relative poverty and social and political exclusion from active participation in the national development of their country (Sossou, 2013). Even while women involvement in governance process is being increasingly noticed, their participation in post-conflict processes through which their roles in sustainable development could be enhanced are still grossly undermined. Women are discriminated against in their erstwhile locality during post-conflict reconstruction which affects their potential towards ensuring post-conflict sustainable development process. Such discrimination includes stigmatization, deprivation of democratic participation, social exclusion, and economic disempowerment among others.

Part of the challenges faced by women in forming a formidable front towards achieving the aspiration of active participation concerns the inability to systematically articulate their positions. Moreover, their cause is weakened by the duplication of the objectives of series of NGOs angling for a more active participation for women on issues of conflict management. According to Badmus (2009:808), despite the proliferation of women's civil society organizations, cooperation among them is weak and this, more often than not, makes them vulnerable to domination. Furthermore, lack of coordination and rivalry among diverse women groups with different agendas have led to weak networking of these groups and sadly, jeopardized the goal of influencing the public sphere. There are other areas of difficulties, which include lack of education and economic empowerment that hinder the ability of women to rise to positions where they can meaningfully contribute to peace process and conflict management. Clearly, for women to participate equally and equitably in matters that affect their well-being such as those relating to conflict management and sustainable development, they must be adequately empowered, especially in the areas of education, literacy level, and indeed, economic capacity. Furthermore, they must not be bogged down by issues

related to their professional callings as well as family or societal demands. One other major challenge confronting women in the match towards achieving gender equality in the participation and involvement in conflict management is the fact that the United Nations is divided on the issue of quota allocation. According to Jacqui True (2009:47), "the UN was internally divided over quotas." He further cited various organizations such as the UNIFEM, UNDP, and the UN special adviser to the Secretary General on gender as supporting quotas while the senior officials of the EAP strongly opposed them. This is a dangerous development which may hamper the success of women mainstreaming in the attempt to objectively emerge as relevant participants in matters directly involving the survival of the female-gender. It is equally challenging that power relations among states and UN agencies have also limited implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325. However while the African Union as a continental organization is at the fore front of implementing the laudable programme of the UNSC Resolution 1325, most member states of AU are yet to adopt national action plans for the implementation of the resolution. The political will to implement the relevant sections of the Resolution at the national level is lacking. This situation renders the prospect of collective action bleak. This is a great departure from the auspicious stand of countries like Austria, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom with a national action plan for the implementation of the UNSC resolution 1325.

This may have informed the decision of the European Union (EU) that anybody or organization wishing to obtain resources from the EU Structural Fund, such applicants must demonstrate that their project include a description of gender relations, along with measures of the impact of their work on gender relations (Skjesback and Tryggestad, 2008). On the part of the AU, several seminars aimed at agreeing on joint creative modalities of how to move forward in addressing the persisting reality of women's continued marginalization from formal peace processes, increased insecurity and high levels of violence against women and girls have been held. These seminars equally proposed Gender training manuals for all AU member states to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the rights of women; these rights are to be integrated into domestic law and policy as well as to create public awareness in the countries of the rights of women (Experts Meetings on Children Affected by Armed conflict, Addis Ababa, 2013). In the West African sub-region, the Gender Centre has launched a Network on Peace for Women in the ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO). The Centre's activities are multi-dimensional. However, on the issue of women equality for addressing conflict, the Centre seeks to contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women as well as to promote the active participation of women in decision making and other development processes in accordance with the provisions of UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (Animatta Dibba, 2010). A major area of constraint but which remains very critical in the implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 is that of the individual country or member states of either the AU or other sub-regional organizations in Africa. For instance, Nigeria has been a signatory to several international declarations on women's issues and rights, yet, female representatives have not received coordinated attention or participation and involvement in issues of conflict management in the country. This is despite the fact that the Nigerian state continues to be confronted with the challenges of widespread ethno-cultural and religious conflicts. For any discerning mind, it would be expected that the Nigerian authorities would embrace an integrative, coordinated and collaborative mechanism that would involve all stake-holders in conflict management geared towards the eradication of all manners of conflict.

CONCLUSIONS- THE NECESSITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Without any form of equivocation, it is apparent that African women form part of the vulnerable groups in conflict situations. In spite of the relatively unfortunate circumstances of this vulnerable group, they have been marginalized, in that they are unable to influence sustainable development that can improve their lots during post conflict reconstruction. The challenges they face are manifold, deriving mainly from under-representation at the higher levels of decision-making.

It has however become apparent that the processes of managing conflicts and rebuilding societies should be gender conscious and sensitive. The role of women as teachers and home developers buttress the fact that without equal and fair participation of women in conflict

Management and decision-making, the vision of a world free of scourge of war, poverty and gender discrimination as outlined in 1945 by the Founders of the United Nations Charter cannot be realized. Women should therefore be given the opportunity of actively participating at all levels of conflict management. Women have taken the initiative to rewrite history by engaging the centers of power, and doing away with most of the hindrances that hold them down. The agitations of women groups has resulted in the recognition of the fact of gender-equality by African states, thus, institutionalizing the processes that would provide equal advantages to both genders on issues concerning all. There are many NGOs at the forefront of actualizing these objectives. Institutions such as the African leadership Forum are also assisting women in their efforts to reduce the proliferation of small arms, disarming child soldiers, returning refugees and protection of children. Regional, sub-regional organizations and the United Nations should continue to support and complement these efforts to achieve success in ensuring enduring peace and prosperity in Africa in the 21st century and beyond.

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