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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE NIGER-DELTA CRISIS

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ABSTRACT: The peaceful and orderliness of any society cannot be divorced from the crucial role being played by women in their capacity as wives and mothers. In every society, women are not just being known as being peaceful, but in extension, they are also known as crusaders of peaceful means of settling any conflict. In this paper, efforts would be geared towards taking a critical examination of the role of women in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. Special focus would be geared towards the role of women in the conflict resolution of the Niger Delta crisis. Taking into consideration the pervasive influence of menfolk in decision making processes in any society, the Niger Delta women have demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt through peaceful protests and other means to bring the Niger Delta crisis to a logical conclusion. The research paper seeks to bring to writing the impact of concerned female activists and environmentalist who helped in galvanizing support for the ending of armed hostility in the Niger Delta. This and many other issues relating to women's role in the peaceful resolution of the Niger Delta conflict would be the crux of discussion in this paper. In the main, adequate recommendation would be proffered to forestall future occurrence.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Women are the channels through which life is given. In all society, the crucial role of women as wives, mothers and destiny molders cannot be overemphasized. They perform the function of life giver and care giver. In most African societies, women are confined to domestic sphere; while public life is reserved for men. The major reason being that African society is generally patriarchy in composition.[1] Howbeit; there are instances where women have ventured into the public life.

DEFINING CONCEPTS

Conflict is highly controversial and its definition is not excluded from this controversy. Conflict is simply defined as the pursuit of incompatible goals or interests by different groups or individuals.[2] This definition by implication asserts the intrinsic and inevitable nature of conflict in any society. Conflict could also be seen as a state of hostility between two parties. In political terms, conflict refers to an ongoing state of hostility between two groups of people.[3] Just as it is difficult to point to a single factor as being responsible for order within society, it is difficult to point to a single explanation for the emergence ,escalation or protraction of conflict whether violent or otherwise. It is mostly depicted as if it is totally negative. Depending on how it is handled, it can either be constructive {positive} or destructive {negative}. The term Conflict resolution is seen as a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict.[4] It could be deduced from the above definition that through conflict resolution, deep seated sources of conflict would be addressed and resolved. It connotes that the behaviour of actors involved in conflict would no longer be violent as a result of peaceful resolution of conflict. The Interdisciplinary Research Programme on Causes of Human Rights Violation sees conflict resolution as an antagonistic situation or adversarial process between at least two individuals or collective actors over means or ends such as resources, power, status, values, goal, relations, or interests.[5] By shedding more light on this definition, conflict is seen as victory or defeat, domination or surrender. Also, it is the process of resolving a dispute or a conflict by providing each side's need and adequately addressing their interests so that they are satisfied with the outcome. In line with this definition, conflict resolution aims at peaceful settlement of conflict that is mutually benefiting to the both parties involved. It should be stated from the outset that conflict resolution is quite different from conflict management. Conflict resolution speaks more of elimination of the causes of the underlying conflict, generally with the consent of the parties involved, whereas conflict management refers to the elimination, neutralization, or control of the means of pursuing the conflict.[6] Looking at it from another perspective, conflict resolution connotes a sense of finality, where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and conflict is resolved in a true sense. From the point of view of need, a

conflict is resolved when the basic needs of parties have been met with necessary satisfaction and their fears have been allayed

METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION
In African traditional setting, resolution of conflict involves many processes and preparation. This entails consultations and invitations being sent to the appropriate parties involved. Typically women are kept out. However, decisions taken are meant to include and affect women and children within the community.[7] In our modern world, methods of conflict resolution are largely influenced by the Western norms and practices. These methods include open communication, collaboration, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication and crisis management to mention but few.[8] These approaches are meant to create resolution of conflict.

THEORIES OF CONFLICT
Disciplines in both the humanities and the social sciences, despite the severe limitation imposed by the unpredictable behavior of human beings, have been able to come up with theories that allow for a high level of generalization. Conflict theories tend to be classified under the broad category of analytical theories, which are logical in their approach and seek to link relationship between variables, but because of their focus on humans, are difficult to test.

Scholars have written extensively on the nature, causes, and the impact of conflicts. In the the following sections, I would be seeking to explain some of these theories as frameworks for the understanding of conflict.

THE REALIST THEORY
This theory highlights inherent nature and traces the root of conflict to a flaw in human nature which is seen to be selfish. This theory argues that the imperfection in the world, namely conflict, has its roots in human nature; that human nature is selfish, individualistic and naturally conflictive. It further to state that nations will always pursue their national interest until it would come in conflict with those of others leading to the inevitability of conflict.

THE STRUCTURAL THEORY
The main argument of the structuralist conflict theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problems like politics, exclusion, injustice, poverty, exploitation, inequality and such likes as sources of conflict. To the structurlists, conflicts occur because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, domination of one class by another.

The emphasis of structural theory is thus on how the competing interests of groups tie conflict directly into the social economic and political organization of society as well as the nature and strength of social networks within and between community groups. It presents a large number of of such factors that makes the emergence and escalation of internal conflict possible. While economic and social factors are more common, political and institutional factors are equally as critical.

THE FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY
The proponents of this theory include John Dollard, Leonard Berkowitz, Aubrey Yates among others. This theory focuses on the psychological motives and behavior, as well as frustration and aggression. Where expectation does not meet attainment, there is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions

The main explanation that the frustration-aggression theory provide is that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct, but that it is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is not derived either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way the society is structured, the feeling of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence. A good example in which frustration leads to aggression can be seen in the Niger Delta crises. Youths in this region have taken law into their own hands by vandalizing oil pipelines, kidnaping oil workers for fat ransoms and generally creating problems for those they believe are responsible for their predicament.

THE SYSTEMIC THEORY
This theory postulates that any social context within which it occurs such systemic failure include environmental degradation, the negative effects of colonial legacies, marginalization to mention but a few. These are all examples of systemic causes of conflicts. Lucuen Pye and other theorists are some of the proponents of this theory.

THE RELATIONAL THEORY
It attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, and historical relationships between such groups. It postulates that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationship between individuals and groups in different ways.

The relational theory is based on the tenet of cultural, political and economic differences that exist within a society. A number of conflicts grow out of past history of conflicts between groups that have led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination. Time will not permit delving into

other theories of conflict in the field of peace and conflict studies. However, these theories of conflict are not without their shortcomings. One should guard against mono causal explanation when explaining the cause of conflict.

BACKGROUND STUDY TO THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS

The oil –producing communities of Nigeria are located in eight states –Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo, Abia, Akwa-Ibo, Cross-Rivers and Ondo. The Niger Delta is a largest delta covering about 7000 square kilometers, with about one-third of it made up of wetlands, and third largest wood mangrove forest. At the geographical and ecological level, the Niger-Delta is one the foremost wetlands in the world both in terms of expanse and bio-diversity. It can be generally surmised that both oil exploration and upstream activities such as dams, agriculture and other activities have affected the hydrology and the ecology of the Niger Delta tremendously since 1960s.

The region is known for crises and conflicts because of the injustice and underdevelopment that exploration and exploitation of oil have brought upon the people. Oil spillage, illegal oil bunkering, oil workers kidnapping and oil pipeline vandalisation and violent killings feature on daily basis in the area. Then, why the crises in this oil – producing region? The answer is not farfetched. Right from first discovery of oil at Oloibiri by Shell in 1957,the foreign capitalist firms came to that part of Nigeria ,for exploration and exploitation of oil. It follows that environmental degradation became serious and this is no doubt led to series of protests by the local people,including women.[4] Successive Nigeria's government, both civilian and military yet to find a permanent solution to the crisis. Comment below speaks volumes of bad situation in this region:

"…Given the mono-cultural character of the economy of the nation, the South-South bears the brunt of being the goose that must lay the golden eggs. However, as a result of decades of marginalization and obnoxious regulations, the people of the area are not involved in the production processes in the area. The cumulative effects of the petroleum Law, Land Use Act,etc. are alienation ,disempowerment, pauperization and marginalisation of the people against the spirit of "the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy' which stipulate inter alia that "the exploitation of human or natural resources in any form whatever for reasons ,other than the good of the community, shall be prevented .' It is common knowledge that the environmental of the South South has been so degraded that it is already endangering livelihood and health of the people in several communities….It appears to us that there is a collaborative amnesia by the Nigerian state and the oil companies over the hazards which ongoing pollution, arising from gas flares, oil spillages, etc, pose to the health of the people. Today, the right to a clean and safe environment and the right to life are being negated by the destruction of the environment and the forceful alienation of communal lands. Fishermen spend more hours in the high sea without any catch because countless species of seafood are now extinct as a result of the deleterious effects of oil exploration in the marine eco-system.in the place of communities where anti-social vices were the exception we now have such monstrosities as 'Ashawo villages and hellish ghettoes where rampaging youths decapitate traditional rulers as they struggle for crumbs of manipulated compensations while members of the ruling class cart away petro-dollars. Attempts by the peoples to protest their marginalization in the power matrix and political economy of Nigeria have been repressed by the combined monstrous might of the state, multinational corporations and the ruling classes. In this respect the tales of Jesse, Odi, Kaiama, Umuechem and Ogoniland are still fresh in our minds…"[9]

It is as a result of abysmal state of things that led the restless youths of the area taking up arms first against the oil firms and later against Nigeria's state. The social arrangements in the Niger Delta is undoubtedly pervaded with injustice, abject poverty, economic, deprivation, destitution, lack of social, amenities, land degradation ,kidnapping, unemployment and youth restiveness. Oil has become the main-stay of the Nigeria's economy since the oil boom of 1972. Oil resources production alone accounted for about 88%of foreign –exchange earnings. With this economic revenue benefits from oil for Nigeria's government comes gas flaring, water pollution and environmental degradation to the people of that region. Cassava cultivation is decreased in length, weight, starch and ascorbic acid {vitamin c}. Another case in point is the water pollution which is a major threat to women's fishing sea foods and fuel wood collection by the inhabitants of the area. It should be noted that water pollution is a direct cause of oil spillage by the various oil companies exploring within the region. Successive Nigeria's governments have put forward various efforts in form of dialogue, compensation and boards to address the Niger Delta crises at one time or the other.

KEY PLAYERS IN THE NIGER DELTA IMBROLIO

As early as 1960, immediately after Nigeria's independence, Adaka Jasper Isaac Boro staged a 12-Day Revolt. This was when the Niger Delta crises were still at infant stages. Ledum Mitee also formed the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People{MOSOP}. Ken Saro Wiwa became a vocal voice of MOSOP's movement which eventually led to his infamous prosecution, hanging and death by the unpopular dictatorial regime of Gen. Abacha.

The main militant groups within the region today include the Niger Delta People Volunteers Force {NDPVF} being led by Mujahid Asari–Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilante Force {NDVF} being led by Ateke Tom. All these militant groups took up arms against the oil firms and the Nigeria's military at one time or the other. It is noteworthy that the Federal government of Nigeria under President Musa Yardua made the Niger Delta crisis

his regime top priotity.it was under his leadership Nigeria government put forward the Amnesty Plan which led to the cessation of hostilities by the militants within the region.

INSTITUTIONS CREATED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA TO ADDRESS THE NIGER DELTA'S CONFLICT

The Niger Delta Development Board was created in 1960, immediately after independence to look into the agitations and concerns of the people of the region. It is on record that this body did not achieve much. Many crises that the region have witnessed since the creation of this body attested to the above assertion. The Mineral Producing Area Development Commission {OMPADEC} was created by the government of Gen. Babangida in 1992. Though this body worked vigorously by providing social amenities such as provision motorable roads, pipe borne water, electrification among others, it could address the root cause of the Niger Delta conflict. Then under the regime of President Obasanjo, the Niger Delta Development Commission {NNDC} was created in the year 2000. So far, the NNDC is purposely making wave in the area of provision of social amenities, construction of motorable roads, health care delivery and education.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES

In assessing the role of women in the peaceful resolution of the Niger Delta crises, a critical assessment of the role of women in an African society would be pertinent. Despite the fact that most African societies are patrilineal in composition, there is always space for women to contribute to decision-making and overall progress of the communities. Senior women have a voice on many issues in such societies.

In the pre-colonial African societies, division of labour was along gender lines. Occupations such as food processing, mat weaving, pottery and cooking were predominantly women's enclave. Beyond the household level, political power was generally dominated by women. However, even in this sphere of men's influence, we could still spot some instances where women hold influential political positions thereby contributing to decision-making. In many African societies, women believe that if society has to make decisions that would have serious bearing on their lives, they have a right to be consulted. The general believe in such society is that peace could only be maintained when all parts of the society operate in a harmonious, complimentary manner.

The Yoruba legends describe periods when women were either the actual kings or heroines. Names such as Moremi of Ile-Ife. There is also legendary Queen Amina of Zaria. The Amazons of Dahomey were forces to be reckoned with being that they were actually field fighters and acted as spies in the pre-colonial history of Dahomey. In many African societies, women were initiators of verbal arts, business tycoon, traditional healers and leaders of political arms of palace councils. For example, every council of Obas {Kings} has as a member the Iyalode{female political leader}. The leader of all businesses carried out in the market place is, as a rule, a woman-the Iyaloja {mother of the market}. Also, among the Yoruba and Edo there are specific titles given to women. A good case in point is the Queen Mother title.

During the colonial period women's influence in most African societies were relegated to the background. In a nutshell, colonialism did not have space for women. There was a lack of genuine political will to ensure that girls are given equal access to education in Africa. In most, African societies, extending access to education and training is often difficult when the culture and monetary costs are high or the benefits are limited. When families face economic problems, they prefer to invest their limited resources in the education of boys. This trend was carried over to post independence period.

Outside of the political arena which starkly against women in most African countries, their important role is disclosed through the figures of mother, spouse and educator. As a mother, the women hold the indispensable role of life giver and care giver. She has a privileged relationship with her son. As a mother, women can use her prerogative to advise or even command her. She is the foundational pillar upon which all the family and community structures rest. The role played by the queen mothers in the foundation of most empires and the establishment of civil peace.

As a spouse, her role as a responsible partner in partnership with her husband cannot be brushed aside. The ideal is that husband and wife become friends: one taking the advice of the other into consideration. Through understanding, important issues ranging from family, busineness, profession and other issues related to the society are discussed. Another attribute of the African women is her role as an educator. Through this medium, she acts as a destiny moulder. Genuine education involves the shaping of character through exemplary lifestyle. Through this medium, the role of African women in the context of violence is to restore peace. This is because they understand life as being precious than anyone else. Therefore, they would do whatever they can to protect fragile lives through conflict resolution.

RISE OF FEMINISM AND AGITATION FOR A GENDER-BALANCED APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Women's Participation: As defined by Security Council Resolution

1325 (2000) refers to the "role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and…their equal Participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace

and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution."[10]

It has been over a decade since the passage of the United Nations Security Council 1325, the landmark document reaffirming the importance of women's participation and involvemen at all levels of peace and security agenda. The resolution underlines the gradual acknowledgement among international organizations such as the United Nations that women and men have different experiences both during and post-conflict stages. Moreover, the informal contributions of women have been highlighted and declared invaluable to resolving conflict.

Suffice to say that, the agitation for gender-balanced approach to resolution of conflict does not come on a platter of gold. The agitation for a gender-balanced approach of conflict resolution hinges more on the rise of feminism.

Feminism could be simply defined as the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of equality of the sexes. It is a multi-disciplinary approach to sex and gender equality understood through social theories and political activism. Other phrases use in its place are women's movement, women's liberation, female emancipation, and women's rights. Feminism is not a recent development, only that it gained prominence after the end of the Second World War in 1945. There are three types of feminism.

The socialist feminism is also called Marxist feminism or materialist feminism. It traces the oppression of women to inequalities that developed in connection with the class system of private property. Socialist feminists view gender inequalities as intrinsic to the capitalist system. Reformist feminism on the other hand affirms that gender inequalities can be eliminated through legislative and electoral reforms without the need to alter the capitalist system. Lastly, radical feminism target male psychology and biology as the source of women's oppression. Extreme form of radical feminism is separatism which advocates a total break with men.[11] Through feminism, women now have the rights to own property, right to education and right to participate in public life in most parts of the world today.

It is noteworthy that women and children constitute the bulk of the unarmed population in any conflict. The Casamance conflict was a good case in point. Casamance is located in southern Senegal which is inhabited by the Diola, Fulakhunda and the Manding ethnic groups. These ethnic groups constituted the minorities in Senegal. Right from 1943, till this current time, Casamance women as acted as peace-makers. Names of such leading women include Aline Sitoe Diatta and a host of others. Women in Casamance were able to contribute to the Casamance peace efforts through several civil society organisations.[12] In the same vein, efforts would be geared towards examining the important role of women to the conflict resolution of the crises in Niger Delta.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NIGER DELTA CONFLICT RESOLUTION

'Atmosphere for peace is needed in this region so that we can enjoy the fruits of the land. The protracted conflict in the Niger Delta has worsened the level of women development. Markets, farmlands, oil-pipelines, oil-deposits, etc have been destroyed. 'Divide and rule' adopted by the oil-companies in the region cannot but exacerbate the crisis. Oil-companies 'settle' the traditional rulers and chiefs at the expense of the poor rural populace. The warlords continue to smuggle the crude oil in exchange for arms and ammunition. Women hate war! War is harrowing'.[13]

In an attempt to evaluate the role of women in conflict resolution of the Niger Delta crises, a muilti-dimensional approach would be employed. Right from the first protest against environmental degradation and marginalization of the people of the Niger Delta up to the time of hostage taking, kidnapping and open conflict, the role of women in the conflict resolution.

The involvement of women in the peaceful resolution of the Niger Delta crises takes different modes and dimensions. Their involvement which in most case contributed in no small way to cessation of arm conflict in that region is quite positive. Women involvement in decision-making processes toward fostering peace could be appreciated through their membership of professional organizations, women social club and women related non-governmental organizations. Women are always at the receiving end of any armed conflict especially wars. The Nigeria's Civil War fought between 1967 and 1970 left many women widows and turned many children fatherless as a result of negative efforts of war. Currently, political crisis in the Darfur Region of the South Sudan affects women and children the most.

It is not an over statement that women and children are the most hits in any conflict ridden environment. Land degradation and soil fertility loss compounds women's limited access to land for agriculture. Women neither own land nor inherit land in the Niger Delta being largely a patriarchy society. Response of women to environment damage caused by the exploration of oil in the Niger Delta include confrontation in form of protest between the women of these various ethnic communities and the oil companies. Most of these protests were geared by oil spillage, land degradation, gas flaring and water pollution. Major protests organised by women in this region were targeted against neglect, isolation, hunger, poverty, unemployment and mismanagement of oil resources. The role of women in the peaceful resolution of the Niger Delta conflict could be viewed from three dimensions: pre-conflict, armed conflict stage and post-conflict approach being taken by the women.

All over the world, as it is the case in Nigeria, women are known for working towards peaceful resolution of disputes. Knowing fully well that the outbreak of armed conflict benefit them no good. This perception connotes that prior the hostility between the armed militants on one hand and the oil companies and the Nigeria's security forces on the other hand, women of this region talked sense to their husbands and sons. The crux of the matter is that women in the Niger Delta played their role as peacemakers even before the youths took up arms in demanding for their rights. To prove this point beyond reasonable doubt, there were periods in the past when the youths of these oil producing communities did not result to arms struggle.

THE PROTEST APPROACH

Another role of women in the peaceful resolution of the Niger Delta crises has to do with various protests staged by women of different communities to register their displeasure to government's neglect. Virtually, every oil producing community in the Niger Delta has one socio-cultural women organization which meets weekly or monthly to discuss on how they can be of influence to the peaceful and orderliness of their community. A woman from one of such social groups in the region has this to say:

'We championed the 'amnesty' arrangement made with the militants who raised arms against the government over the oil exploitation. We have protested openly to government in Abuja, women have protested to the National Assembly, we have also protested to the international organizations, women have initiated peace meeting between the government and oil-producing communities. We are women, we are different from men. We believe in our capacity to achieve peace and development in the Niger Delta'.[14]

As far back as 1986,Ekpan women ,a community in the Niger Delta region staged a protest to register their grievances against overflooding of their farm lands caused by oil spillage. In the same vein, Okutukutu and Etegwe women staged a protest in 1991 to register their grievances against environmental degradation caused by oil exploration in the region. The protests embarked upon by women against mismanagement and exploitation of oil deposits in the region, were played down by most concerned bodies including the Federal government. The women are the most hit of the environmental hardships and otherwise experienced in this region.

Rather than being proactive and sensitive to the needs of the people of this community, government on most occasions sent military and police forces to suppress their fundamental human rights. The Odi Crisis which resulted in the complete destruction of the entire community under the leadership of president Obasanjo was a good case in point. The comment below buttresses this perception: "It is the consequence of the intense pollution of the Niger Delta on the economy of the people and their general standard of life that has given birth to the phenomenon which is generally known as the Niger Delta crises".[15]

During the heavy hostility between the armed militants and the security forces, women from Niger Delta staged series of protests in different communities in the Niger Delta and in the National Assembly in the Federal Capital Territory to make their request for cessation of hostility known.

LEADING WOMEN LEADERS/ACTIVISTS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE NIGER DELTA.

Noticeable among the leading women's leaders and activists from the Niger Delta is Senator Florence Ita-Giwa, popularly known as Madam Bakassi. She once represented the Cross Rivers state at the Upper Chamber of the National Assembly during Obasanjo's regime. During the humanitarian crisis that ensued as a result of judgement of International Court of Justice following the transferring the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon and subsequent taking over the region by the Cameroonian government in 2008. Senator Florence Ita-Giwa used her prestigious position in the senate to protest the inhuman conditions subjected her people to as a result of this development. She agitated for the resettlement of the Bakassi indigenes in another suitable location within the Cross-Rivers State since they were not ready to be part of Cameron's Republic. Due to her efforts and other concerned individuals and non-governmental organisations, they resettled and relief materials were provided for them.

Another prominent women figure in the Niger Delta is the current Federal Minister of Lands and Housing, Mrs. Ama Pepple. On several occasions, she has protested through writings and mass media to register the grievances of the Niger Delta women due to environmental and economic woes being experienced in the region. Through her activities and others, public attention was directed to plight of women and children in the Niger Delta as a result of oil spillage and gas flaring which cause environmental degradation in the region.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CLUBS

It is pertinent at this juncture to say that the role of women in the resolution of conflict in the Niger Delta as elsewhere is always ongoing. As a build up towards the Amnesty Plan by the government, various interest groups were consulted and invited for dialogue including women to find a lasting solution to the endemic problem within the region. Since the adoption of the Amnesty Plan by the government, many women socio-cultural organizations/clubs and women related non-governmental organizations are deeply involved in one sensitization and empowerment programmes or the other. Most of these oil producing areas have local socio-cultural clubs which cater for their members which indirectly impact positively on the entire community since most of this women have husbands and children. To me, this is another way of contributing to the atmosphere of

peace in the region. This statement by a member of one of these socio-cultural clubs in the region supports this fact:

'We have organized cooperative and thrift society to address poverty among women. We have also given out soft loans to women. Our organization has given alternative business opportunities to women in replacement of their sources of subsistence that have been destroyed by the exploration. Our organization has also provided scholarships and grants to young school girls in secondary and tertiary institutions. Vocational training has been organized for women. Women mind is flexible and soft. We cannot wage war, carry arms like men.'[16]

As emphasized in the Platform for Action of the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women, "while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in the society and their sex."[17] It is quite unfortunate that women in any conflict ridden society suffer grave casualties. Women are the main civilian victims often render powerless at any outbreak of armed conflict. To add insult to the injury, they are often excluded from peace-making efforts. This ugly scenario reinforces women's victimization in any crisis. The Guatemalan Case has become a reference point. After the civil war raged in Guatemala for about 36 years, the peace accord was signed in 1996.

However, the Guatemalan Peace accords were praised for including systemic reference to gender-related issues. Though only two women were included in the negotiation terms of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity {URNG} and the Government of Guatemala participation of women's organization and civil society groups was high. For this major reason, the peace process in Guatemala sometimes been commended by those who argue in support of a gendered balance approach to peace building and conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION

So far, we have looked into the role played by women in the resolution of conflict, taking the Niger Delta crises as our case study. In like manner the Casamance women played a huge role through their contribution to the peaceful resolution of conflict in Senegal, the positive impact of women towards the conflict resolution of the Niger Delta crises is also a success. It is established through this write up that despite the pervasive influence of men such as chiefs and kings, the role of women in bringing order to a troubled society like the Niger Delta cannot be overlooked.

It is quite unfortunate that the just concluded National Dialogue which ended in Abuja recently did not have women representatives standing for the cause of the Niger Delta women's rights. Such similar forum in the future should consider Niger Delta women's slot in its composition. This is because women are the most affected in any crisis ridden society and the Niger Delta crisis is not exclusive.

ENDNOTES

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