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## **Women in Peace Building and Political Representation in Liberia**

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### **Abstract**

*Women are known to play important roles as custodians of culture, nurturer of families, community organizers etc. Yet, in times of conflict they are not represented in large number vis-à-vis their male counterparts as peace negotiators or in the community reconstruction peace agreement. The thrust of this paper therefore is to explore the extent of women's participation in peace building process and their representation particularly in Liberia. The paper adopts the patriarchy theory which places emphasize on male dominance in the society to the detriment of women. The paper also wishes to state here that the work relied on mostly qualitative data in addition to quantitative sources etc. the paper identifies that certain factors responsible for the minute number of women's representation in conflict and peace building efforts. Finally, the paper idea is to integrate a gender perspective to increasing the representation of women into lasting peace building process with focus to Liberia so that there can be a long lasting peace.*

**Keywords:** Africa, Political Representation, Women and Peace Building.

### **1.1 Introduction**

In recent past, countries in Africa have experienced numerous conflicts and presently the problem is far from being abated. This has brought about untold hardship and suffering on the people. It has also affected the pace of development of the continent.

In 2006 alone, there were 17 conflicts in Africa, which were at varying degrees of forms and intensity. Of all the countries in the Great Horn of Africa only two (Djibouti and Tanzania) can be said to be relatively stable, although each has its fair share of internal skirmishes (Mpangala, 2004). Kenya was also stable until the post-election crisis erupted. In the same vein, Harermans (2000) maintained that in Sudan, where conflict has existed since 1956, almost two million people have lost their lives and property worth of millions. The long decade of long civil war also led to the displacement of over 800,000 refugees and over one million internally displaced persons. The ethnic conflict in Rwanda resulted in genocide in 1994 with the killing of over half a million persons from one ethnic group. Liberia as one of the country in Africa is not excluded from this web of conflicts as record shows that it has become one of the locations for some of the deadliest and most-protracted of these conflicts. The country has been embattled by series of conflicts from 1987-1997, 1999-2003.

The prevalence and virulence of intrastate conflict in recent decades has had serious implications for women, most notably in that there is no longer a clear

distinction between “the battlefield” and “the home front.” This increase in inclusive violence has meant that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict. In particular, women often experience a level of violence—principally sexual violence—and mortality similar to that of male combatants throughout the course of the conflict. This is because, in many societies, women are especially vulnerable due to the preexisting gender imbalance in levels of political, economic and social power. Further, women are often associated with the “virtue” or identity of a group, making them appealing targets for the opposition who wish to undermine the ethnic or cultural foundations of a society by raping or shaming their women.

The traumatic effects of Civil War are not unique to male combatants, it is important to recognize the consequent impact this violence has on women—and thus on durable peace and reconciliation. Often, women are not included in formal efforts to resolve conflicts and build peace; however, the participation of women represents a potential opportunity to bridge seemingly insurmountable divides and also to incorporate

actors from civil society and the family, rather than the battlefield, for the purposes of creating sustainable peace. Women are often key players in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), popular protests and other grassroots movements, empowering them in civil society and allowing them to inspire societal change and support sustainable peace.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the ways in which women are incorporated into, or excluded from, the process of building peace and whether the level (in terms of representation) of female involvement can impact the success and longevity of that peace. While it must be acknowledged that this transition from civil war to stable peace is inherently complicated and challenging—and no one factor can determine its success—it is precisely because of the complex nature of peace-building that a stronger focus on the incorporation of women and their concerns into the process should be explored. This was acknowledged internationally on October 31st, 2000 in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which codified the expansion of the role of women in U.N. field-based operations to better respond to the needs of women in postconflict societies and also to provide a more solid foundation for peace. However, the role of local women in the decision-making process is still marginal, particularly informal peace negotiations and also in many of the new political institutions that are created after Civil War.

The thrust of this paper therefore is to explore the extent of women’s participation in peace building process and their representation particularly in Liberia. The main research question driving this paper is: to what extent were women in Liberia involved in peace building process in the first and second phases of the conflict? An exploration of this question is particularly relevant because the current marginalization of women has led to an expectation on the part of important post-conflict actors, both international and domestic, that proof of women’s contributions must be provided before they should be equally incorporated into the peacebuilding process.

And finally, women's participation will be linked to political representation. The paper examines the First Liberian Civil War (1989-1996) and the Second Liberian Civil War (1999-2003). The first phase of the conflict in Liberia illustrates the situation where there was little or no participation of women and failed peace while the Second Liberian Civil War presents the peace successes following substantive participation by women and women's organizations.

## 1.2 Conceptual Clarification:

Prior to discussing the specific role of Liberian women in peace building process, the main factors preventing the attainment of long-term peace must be elucidated and the mechanisms for reducing those factors identified. First, it is also important to note that peace building is separate or different from peace making and peace keeping. "Peace making" generally refers to the signing of agreements between policy makers, which results in a suspension of fighting. For the United Nations, peacemaking requires the involvement of two hostile parties to agreement through diplomatic means, most commonly through negotiation.

Peacekeeping involves the deployment of international personnel to maintain peace and security. Peacekeeping is generally a multilateral activity, and all of these missions involve military personnel, although may include substantial civilian components as well (Forna, 2008). The functions of peacekeepers are broad and many encompass the observation of a ceasefire, the establishment of a buffer zone and the organization of elections (the United Nations). Put simply by Lederach (1997) "peacemaking" aims to bring about a cessation in hostilities and allow the combatants to pursue nonviolent solutions; "peacekeeping" attempts to separate the disputing parties and maintain a state of no violence. Finally, "peace building" is a process that establishes the conditions for a sustainable settlement (Bercovitch and Kadayifci, 2002).

Thus, the major purpose of peace building, as defined by Bercovitch and Kadayifci (2002) is the prevention of a relapse into violent conflict. To achieve this, peace building goes beyond diplomatic agreements to promote social and psychological change at the grassroots level (Bercovitch and Kadayifci, 2002).

**Peace:** Peace as put by Clark and Casmir ( ) is one of humanity's highest values. Its meaning is multilateral and multi-disciplinary, depending on which notion is central in the determination of peace as a concept. The most common use of the concept of peace is in the absence of dissension, violence or war. In addition, it is the absence of crime.

Peace is synonymous with serenity, a state of harmony, concord, tranquility and a balance of equilibrium of powers. While some theorists argued that peace is the opposite of conflict on one hand, others maintained that peace is also a state of justice, goodness and civil government on the other hand. Peace is conceived with diverse perspectives. For example, the sociological perspective views peace as a value that emanates from just human relationship which enhances social harmony, creativity and productivity and the prevention of war.

Huntington (1968) cited in Clark (2009) states that peace entails institutionalization of political structures that guarantee security, which means that political structures acquire value and stability. What it means is that the stable structures must be put in place for peace to take its course.

### **Peace- Building:**

Boutros-Ghali (1992) defines the term peace building as ranging from specific tasks that might derive from a comprehensive peace agreement – such as helping to disarm the parties, cantontroop and hold or destroy weapons, motoring elections, fielding civilian police, and repatriating refuge through far broader and less tangible objectives such as the restoration of order, efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting formal and informal processes of political institutions. Kofi Anan (1997) depicts peace building as “the various concurrent and integrated actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation”. The objective of peace building is to strike a balance between “negative peace” and “positive peace”. Because conflicts usually leave their mark on the post settlement process in form of broken lives, shattered and divided communities, distrust, and hatred, the task of constructing a self-sustaining peace is never an easy one. The post-settlement peace building in such circumstances becomes what Grenier and Dandelin (1995) call the “peace building market place” (the cessation of violence) is traded for other commodities, such as political opportunity (election) and economic advantage (land).

The way in which gender is integral to peace, and violent conflict makes clear that a gendered analysis to peace building is essential to preventing and mitigating new violent conflict in societies while helping them recover from current conflicts. The paper adopts the definition of peace building unannounced in the “peace building initiative strategic framework” by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (2002). The CIDA describes peace building as follows:

Peace building is the effort to strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. The overarching goal of peace building is to enhance the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence. Ultimately, peace building aims at building human security, a concept which includes democratic governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equitable access to resources and environmental security ... Peace building may involve conflict prevention, conflict resolution, as well as various kinds of post-conflict activities. It focuses on the political and socio-economic context or humanitarian aspects. It seeks

to ... institutionalize the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Peace building is all inclusive activities. It is therefore important that all sectors of society that have passed through or is ongoing form of conflict, are represented in negotiations and actions that seek to lay the foundation for peace building.

### **1.3 Overview of the Liberian Civil War (First Civil War 1989-1997)**

The first Civil War in Liberia took place between July 19<sup>th</sup> 1989 and 1997 when rebel forces backed by other neighboring countries fought to oust Liberia's warlord-turned-President, Charles Taylor (The Guardian, 2018). It was one of Africa's bloodiest civil conflicts in the post-independence era. The war consumed more than two hundred thousand Liberians in a nation of 2.1 million people and displaced a million other citizens in refugee camps in neighboring countries. On December 24, 1989, a group of rebel led by Charles Taylor attacked Liberia from the Ivory Coast. Taylor's rebel group which was called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) consisted mostly Gio and Mano people from Nimba County in eastern Liberia. These groups had long been persecuted by Liberian President Samuel Doe and his Krahn ethnic group. There was emergence of child-soldiering. The NPFL clashed with governmental forces and other ethnic militias supporting President Doe between December 1989 and mid-1993. During this period, there were lots of civilian casualties as Taylor's NFPL was responsible for the slaughter of thousands of Liberians, both military and civilians who opposed him. Targeted people during this period were people from the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups who remained loyal to the Doe's government.

As a result of the heavy casualties, Nigerian and Ghanaian troops from ECOWAS were taken to Liberia to ensure that peace reign. By September 9, 1990 Doe was captured and killed by Prince Johnson and his rebel group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) which had been waging war against the government. In the bid to prevent Taylor from capturing Monrovia by the ECOWAS, there came the creation of the Interim Government of national Unity (IGNU) led by Dr. Amos C Sawyer who became the nation's president but the fighting continued as Taylor refused to work with him. As the war continued, seven factions were involved in the conflict, including the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the United Liberian Movement of Liberian for Democracy (ULIMO), The Lofa Defense Force etc.

The fighting between these various factions continued and generated more civilian casualties. Finally, in 1992, Taylor and his group launched a large scale attack on Monrovia, called Operation Octopus. By August 1996, Nigerian officials forced the major warring factions to sign the Abuja Accord requiring all to disarm and demobilize for peace to reign ("First Liberian Civil War," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/worldwar/liberia-1989>).

The second Liberian Civil War was an intense four-year's conflict that witnessed child soldiers on all sides and a high level of civilian casualties. The war spread into neighboring countries like in Guinea and Sierra Leone. The conflict began in April 1999 which saw the former rebel leader Charles Taylor become president of the entire nation, following UN-monitored elections in 1997. The country witnessed peace for only two years before LURD began its military campaign. Most of the LURD were Mandingo and Krahn fighters led by Sekou Conneh. Many of them were part of the groups that fought during the first Civil War.

By early 2002, LURD troops had taken over some parts of the country and outnumbered Taylor's forces. Under leaders Conneh and Thomas Nimely, LURD's troops mounted successful raids that bypassed government strongholds.

By 2003, another group called Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) to challenge Taylor's government as well. Another peace conference was organized by the former President John Kufor of Ghana to abate a further bloodshed. Taylor's refusal to support the peace process led to creation of an organization by Leymah Gbowee called "Women of Liberia Mass Action in Peace" which, after a silent protest outside the presidential palace, extracted a promise from the Liberian Head of State to attend the peace negotiation in Accra.

With the seizure of the capital by LURD forces, a ceasefire was declared by LURD which allowed ECOWAS to send battalions of mostly Nigerian troops to the capital as peacekeepers. The period nonetheless witnessed over one thousand civilians killed and thousands rendered homeless on a large scale. By August 11, 2003, President Charles Taylor resigned and flew to exile in Nigeria. There was a transition as a result of the Accra Peace Agreement with Gyude Bryant as President. The Agreement also scheduled Liberia's first-post civil war national election for 2005 which brought Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the first woman and the twenty-fourth President of Liberia. (Global Security, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/worldwar/liberia-1997>).

#### **1.4 Women in Peace Building and Political Representation in Africa**

Africa as a continent has been bedeviled by upsurge of conflicts and crises in recent times. There has been a devastating upsurge of violence against girls, children and women. In Nigeria, the abduction of 200 Chibok girls from a school in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram militants in April 2014, remains a tragic case in point. In Somaliland, the citizens have been plagued by protracted political insecurity and militarized violence as a result of the collapse of its government. Other countries such as Rwanda, Burundi are not let out of these. So has the sexual violence been used as a weapon of war in Cameroon, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). South Sudan and Sudan among others (Musau, 2015). The attendant effects of this conflict vary in scope, intensity, and nature. Conflict has taken immeasurable toll on human lives, leaving people dead, maimed, and displaced either internally or in other nations (Agbalajobi, 2009).

In such situations, women and girls are often exposed to acts of violence which seriously undermine their fundamental human rights and deny them

opportunities arising from gender inequality. According to Musau (2015), women and girls are singled out and targets by terrorist and extremist groups who abduct them and use them as suicide bombers or sex slaves. Although women generally despise war, their bodies have become the new battle fields. Worse still, they are not consulted on issues of peace and nation-building. Studies from existing revealed that women are worst hit in situations of violent conflict, impact and effects differs from conflict to conflict. It is becoming increasingly obvious that women have unique opportunities for peace building process given the unique role they play in society.

Musau (2015) asserts that women in Africa play important role as custodians of culture and nurturers of families, yet in times of conflict they are not represented at the peace negotiating table or in community reconstruction efforts. According to UN Women, a UN body that promotes women's empowerment and gender equality, women constitute fewer than 10% of peace negotiators globally and only 3% of signatories to peace agreements. In the same vein, women in Rwanda, Mozambique, Palestine and Sri Lanka shows that women may be victims, but they often participate actively as soldiers, informants, couriers, sympathizers, and supporters. Many experts believe that leaving women out of peace and security processes hinders communities from finding long-lasting peace.

Building a lasting peace that sustains post-war, economic, political and social development requires the full participation and cooperation of all citizens including women and girls. Yet, it is obvious that women's participation in peace building process has received inadequate policy attention (Agbalajobi, 2009). It is in this assertion, that Musau (2015) argues that in times of conflict, women's vulnerabilities and unique needs are often forgotten during negotiation which in turn limits the effectiveness of both peace and security agreements, and humanitarian responses.

Agbalajobi (2009) maintained that preventing a war is entirely different than resolving one once it has begun. In order to prevent violent conflict from spreading, stable societies and its opportunities must be created and be proactive. These societies are characterized by three components: 1. Security 2. Wellbeing 3 Justices for all its citizens, including its women. According to Lute (2002), women's roles in these three causes provide examples of their activities towards preventing the emergence, spread or renewal of mass violence. The belief that women should be at( in) peace building process is not based on essentialist definitions of gender (Lisa and Manjrika, 2005). The field of sociology makes a distinction between sex, and gender. Human beings are not born 'men' or 'women'. Masculinity and femininity is learned, rehearsed, and performed daily (Butler, 1999).

It will be wrong to think that all women respond in a similar manner in any situation or that women are natural peace builders' (Lisa and Manjrika, 2005). Gender identity is performed differently in different cultural contexts. Gender identity must always be viewed in relationship with an individual's other identities such as class, race, age, nation, education, and religion. It is important also to note that there are different expectations for man and woman in various sector of the society and gender roles shift with social upheaval. In conflict situation, men and women face new roles and changing gender expectations. Their biological and



sociological differences affect conflicts and peace building. In all, most societies value men and masculinity to women and femininity (Lisa and Manjrika, 2005).

Despite this existence of 'sexism' or 'patriarchy' there are some widely accepted reasons why women are important and should be involved in peace building process. As part of the ongoing concern and advocacy for women's involvement in peace building process, women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed significantly to the well-being of the human race (Enemu, 1999).

Kritashvilli (2007) argued that women are not only mere passive victims of conflict and should not be treated as such. Women play active roles in the event that sometimes lead to fighting and instability, and even in combat itself. According to Sorensen (1998), women contribute to the outbreak of violence and hostilities, and in many cases, they are instrumental in inciting men to defend group interests, honour and collective livelihoods. Women also serve as agents, active participants in wars, directly or indirectly, supporting rebels; take on new economic roles, often as heads of household (Steward, 2010). Women and girls may have multiple roles among fighting forces such as domestic servants, cooks, sexual partner, porter, guard, informant and soldier. As noted by Kritashvilli (2007) the number of women who participate in fighting forces is increasing in nearly all conflicts. Women were active female combatants in Algeria, El Salvador, Eritrea, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, South Africa and Sri Lanka. A survey of 55 countries found women as active in 38 (Stewart, 2010).

Estimates suggest they form one-tenth to one-third of fighting forces; they, in most cases, play a bigger role in supportive services (cooks, messengers, etc.) than active fighting but they do fight too (Stewart, 2010). Outside Africa, studies revealed that in Kashmir, women played significant roles in militant activities, contributing both materially and ideologically (Stewart, 2010). They helped armed separatists to escape during crackdowns. Besides carrying out tasks such as feeding combatants and providing shelter, women in Kashmir acted as couriers carrying messages, arms and ammunition under the veils (Stewart, 2010).

The United Nations Security Council in 2000 passed the Landmark Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The first Resolution was to address the impact of war on women, women's contributions to conflict resolution and peace building. The resolution calls for equal participation with men and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It is as a result of the recognition of the fact that women are often sidelined in peace process, the integration of women's perspectives either as victims of conflicts, active participants in conflicts or resource persons continue to find their place in UN's document as women continue to be underrepresented in almost all sectors.

While the international community and women groups are bracing up to meet the challenges of women in conflict and post-conflict times, their efforts are not without obstacles. In Africa, patriarchal, traditional and cultural norms pose great challenges to women. Their participation in term of number in formal peace process is often stated due to societal traditional contraction and classification of gendered roles. Patriarchy in Africa means that society has produced norms and practices that

are largely opposite to women (Ekiyor) and this translates into their lack of or limited participation to peace building. The existence of gendered perceptions about the capacity and potential of women in society remains a serious threat to women participation in peace building and reconciliation (Mutumba and Izabiliza, 2005). The issue of Somalia and Ethiopia are clear cases. The Somali women in later UN peace conference were merely restricted to that of an observer, which does not allow them to influence the debate directly (Sama, 1996; Byrne, 1966 cited in Sorenson, 1998).

It is worthy to note that when women organize themselves for peace efforts, they significantly impact the peace process (Kvitashilli, 2007). This has been demonstrated by the Mano River Women's Peace Network, in which women in three West African countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea) were able to successfully participate in and influence the outcome of the peace process.

Nevertheless, the determined efforts by women to bring about a lasting-peace are usually behind the scenes. While women often bear the greater brunt of the conflict and brutalities (Osondu, 2012) and are sometimes involved in combatant activities (Kitashvilli, 2007), their roles in conflict management and peace building are rarely recognized or appreciated. Women are rarely part of peace negotiations, peace accords or policies at the formal level to resolve conflict. As pointed by Kritashvilli (2007), because women do not have the same level of influence that men do in most societies, they are easily marginalized. Despite the active roles of women in war, women are too often neglected in the post-conflict situation; in terms of peace negotiations, demobilization programmes and post-conflict reconstruction (Stewart, 2010).

In recent times, the UN has called for gender mainstreaming in all government policies and political decision-making. This means gender mainstreaming as given by the UN is "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas at all levels (Osondu-Oti, 2015). The 1995 Beijing Conference is not also left out of this advocacy, as it called on governments to ensure and support the full participation of women at all levels of decision making. It was observed that Somali culture and social structure hindered women from participating directly in decision-making process.

UNIFEM estimated that women account for less than 10% of members in formal peace negotiations and less than 20% of signatories to peace agreements (Stewart, 2010). Congo, Sudan and Uganda, passed a conclusion that recognizing and support the role of women in preventing and mitigating conflict was, in general, a minor afterthought. In South-Eastern Nigeria, women were neither represented nor consulted in peace negotiation (Stewart, 2010).

When women are excluded from peace process (in this case peace building), women's experience are more likely to be disregarded and their concerns are more likely not to be incorporated, which in the long run, could facilitate and legitimize gender inequality and stall progress to positive peace. In the words of the former United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon:

Sustainable peace is only possible with women's full participation in their perspectives, their leadership, their daily, equal presence wherever we seek to make and keep the peace (cited in Gillis, 2012).

### **1.5 Women's Participation in Peace Building Process in Liberia**

As rightly observed by Schirch (2004) that peace building prevents, reduces, transforms, and helps people to recover from violence in all forms in post conflict times. Lambourne (2004) defined post conflict peace building as strategies designed to promote a secure and stable lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met and violent conflicts do not recur. This by implication means that responsibility of proving and ensuring a long-lasting peace is to be carried out by all without the exclusion of half its population. Osondu (2012) opines that peace building in the longer term has to include a wide range of measures to promote social, political and economic change that move closer to the ideals of positive peace in specific, concrete circumstances.

In recent times, the international community recognized the importance of women's participation in creating the conditions for lasting peace. On 31 October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which acknowledged the vital role women, could play in preventing and resolving conflicts, negotiating peace, participating in peace keeping and in humanitarian response and post-conflict peace building.

It further reaffirms the need to protect women and girls from human rights abuse, including gender-based violence (Osondu, 2012). The UN in its efforts to address the issue of gender disparity between male and female, on October 5, 2009, attempts to improve the level of women's participation in peace process and the need to improve women's engagement in political and economic decision-making in all peace building processes. This is given due to the fact that women have always been sidelined in peace building process in Liberia and the world at large. This is why Osondu (2012) maintained that the integration of women's perspective either as victims of conflicts, active participants in conflicts or resource persons continue to find their place in the UN's documents, given the fact that many countries are yet to be signatories to the UN Resolution. Women continue to be underrepresented in almost all sectors.

By focusing on the roles women could play in peace building process in Liberia, the paper acknowledges that peace building processes as well as their political representations are more effective and productive when they integrate women's perspectives. The fact that women play diverse roles during conflicts ranging from active participants (combatants), supporting participants (forced to serve as cooks, wives, slaves etc) and victims and spoils of war, place them in a great position to resolve or manage conflict (Osondu, 2012).

Although, the role of women vary from society to society, the Liberian women in the process of peace building participated in the DDR process (disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reconciliation) as part of the

requirement for peace in 1996. This was necessary in order to prevent a reoccurrence of armed. The 1996 DDRR program involved three stages: during the first stage fighters were disarmed, registered and counseled. In the second stage, these disarmed combatants were drawn into work and training programs to gain marketable skills. Finally, the ex-combatants were reintegrated (Jaye, 2010). This group included 4,306 child soldiers and only 250 adult female fighters. It is important to note that child soldiers were the primary fighters in the first phase of the conflict – accounting for 15,000 to 20,000 of the soldiers between six major armed factions of which girls are of significant proportion (Adebajo).

Women were also involved with the fighting, participating as direct combatants and as women associated with fighting forces (WAFF), who voluntarily or involuntarily provided logistical support and resources to the rebel groups. This support included cooking food, cleaning camps, and fetching water; the women and girls were also used as sexual slaves or forced into marriage (Mazurana, 2002). Although according to Mazurana, the exact number of female combatants for the first conflict could not be ascertained, women and girls in Liberia comprised 30 – 40% of all fighter forces, or approximately 25,000 to 30,000 participants, between 1989 and 2003. While more women voluntarily participated in the second phase of the conflict, the number that joined during the first conflict was still substantial (Sheriff). For example, Charles Taylor's NPLF included a female artillery unit, and numerous women achieved the rank of "general" within all of the warring factions (Demmen, 2009).

In Liberia, the roles of women in bringing about the return of peace cannot be underestimated. The first Civil War of the country (1989-1997), witnessed the Liberian women forming the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) under the headship of Mrs. Etweda Cooper. Most of the street protests, rallies, and demonstrations during these periods to persuade the combatants to stop the bloodshed and surrender their guns in return for gainful employment were organized and coordinated by LWI. Annie Saydee (cited in African Women and Peace Support Group, 2004:13) asserts that: "we talked to them (leaders of the warring factions). They are children to us, and we wanted this fighting to stop. We, the women, bear that pain. So we begged them - KromahBoley, Taylor- at different times".

The Women Peace Initiative was remarkable in its activities. The organization stood solidly behind the West African intervention force (ECOMOG) during the demobilization of the various armed fractions that commenced in late 1995. It should be recalled Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme was central to the Abuja Treaty II that paved the way for the election of 19 July 1997. During the conflict, a women's organization, the Women in Liberian Liberty (WLL), led by Mrs. Myrtle Gibson and Mona Wureh initiated food aid and sensitization programme that helped tremendously in alleviating the suffering of war victims. Additionally, the organization carried out its activities beyond the shores of Liberia, by visiting Liberian refugee camps in the Gambia, Sierra-Leone and Nigeria.

Even during the Liberian second war (1997-2003), women were still active. The combined oppositions to Taylor's National Patriotic Party Government by the

Liberian United for Reconstruction and Development (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) resulted in creating strong solidarity among women of all faiths in the country. Consequently, a women group, the Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET), mobilized and organized marches and sits-ins in Monrovia in front of the Government House, House of Parliament, etc. Furthermore, women didn't only played political and social roles but also played religious roles by organizing fasting and prayers for the return of peace. These religious activities in negotiation for peace were even recognized by the New York Time, which asserts that:

*In an empty field, in a heavy downpour in the middle of the rainy season in one of the world's wettest countries, was a small group of women, nearly all dressed in white, throwing their arms to the sky and dancing and singing drenched from head to toe, calling to God to bring an end to war. They are Liberia's peaceniks, a radical, some would say delusional breed, who for three months have been bent on praying on the side of the road, in the sun and rain, every single day, to bring an end to war (New York Times, 1 July 2003).*

Finally, Mcarthy (2011) in her work, titled: Women's Participation in Peace building: A missing Piece of the Puzzle classified women's participation as seen in the Table below:

	Participation in DDR Process	Accountability in Gender Crimes	Formal Political Inclusion	Involvement of Women's Organizations
Liberia, 1989-1996	LOW	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
Liberia, 1999-2003	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH

She further demonstrated women's substantial participation and peace outcomes in the two phases of the crises which can be seen in **Table 2** below.

	Peace Success	Peace Failure
Substantial Women's Participation	Liberia, 1999-2003	Liberia, 1989-1996
In substantial Women's Participation.	Nil	Nil

Table 3 shows an illustration of the metrics of women's Participation by Macarthy.

Peace building Functions

Women's Dimension

Reducing Fear and Distrust	Women's Involvement in the DDR Process
Rebuilding Institutions	Women's Formal Political Inclusion
Reconciliation	Accountability for Crimes Against Women
Fostering Civil Society	Participation of Women's Organizations in the Peace Process and

### 1.6 Theoretical framework

The paper adopts the Patriarchy theory as its framework of analysis. Proponents of the theory are Fige (1970), Goldberg (1977), Walby (1990) and Mazrui (1991). They have interpreted it from different perspectives. Patriarchy, by Goldberg (1973:63), means that:

In every society that has ever existed, one finds Patriarchy (males fill the overwhelming percentage of upper hierarchical positions in political and all other hierarchies), male attainment (males attain the high status roles, whatever these may be in any given society, and male dominance (both males and females feel that dominance in male-female encounter and relationships resides in the male, and social expectations and authority systems reflect this).

The assertion above indicates that male dominance it is a reigning ideology and is seen as natural. To this scholar, patriarchy is a universal scientific law that is common to all known societies in the world, be they developing or industrialized, past or present, traditional or modern/ revolutionary. For Goldberg, therefore, every society gives higher status to male roles than to the non-maternal roles of females. This is regardless of what the tasks involve and their significance in the development process. For him, therefore, the woman's greatest strength lies not in competing with men for male goals, where she will definitely lose, but in cultivating her natural feminine role in the nurturance of the human race. The agitations for gender equality, on the basis of a non -sexist and egalitarian social order, will fail because Patriarchy, (male dominance and male status in suprafamilial roles ) is inevitable (Norris,). **The implication of this theory on women in peace building is that it undermines their potentials. Women are denied access to being part of peace process and this lead to discrimination because war and peace process and building is seen as strictly preserved for men..**

### 1.7 Barriers to Women Participation in Peace-Building Process

It should however be noted that despite the remarkable advances/steps taken made by the international community for the integration of women into peace building on a large scale with focus to Liberia, endemic discrimination, under or low representation as highlighted, sexual violence remain the major obstacles in realizing the above peace building and increase in representation (number).

Other significant barrier as pointed out by Oguonu cited in Clark (2009) to women peace-builders is economic problems. She asserted that women peace activities lack the necessary funding and support to pursue their course. In most countries like Nigeria, Liberia, etc. women are rarely financially strong. Economically, women are not even expected to be serious about earning money in Liberia. A woman is supposed to be at home playing the mothering role, while the husband goes out to earn money. Even in some instances where the woman manages to earn a reasonable amount of money, the husband makes sure that the money is fully utilised in running the home, while the man invests his own wisely. So most African societies discourage women from accumulating more wealth. Other things that make it difficult for women to accumulate wealth include the laws of inheritance, taxation laws and banking laws (Oluwadiya, 1994).

Traditionally, it is expected that only the male children can inherit their father's property. Widows are visually denied access to their husband's property and fathers usually disinherit their female children. As regard taxation laws, men are usually allowed to claim all the 'claimable allowances' and women are left with little or nothing. This means that men will always go home with bigger pay. Oluwadiya (1994) also noted that in most aspect of banking laws, women are discriminated against. In most cases, are denied access to credit facilities except they bring a letter from their husbands, brothers, fathers in some cases. This is in addition to providing adequate collateral, which is the only thing needed from men folk. So women in peace building need financial support to be able to put in their best. Those who are willing to get involved as catalysts in peace building are also marginalized. Patriarchy is also another factor worth considering.

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