Women in Peace Building and Post-Conflict Development in the Bakassi Peninsula

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ABSTRACT

The Bakassi Peninsula witnessed several skirmishes which resulted to a full scale conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria and the judgment delivered by the International Court of Justice gave sovereignty of the area to Cameroon. After handing over the Peninsula to Cameroon, the government initiated several projects in the area, but presently, poverty and misery coupled with lack of social amenities are widely observed in the peninsula. While the conflict inflicted suffering on the population, women were particularly affected by its short and long term effects. As a result, Bakassi women assumed new roles as primary providers in the area, but their determined efforts to promote development were often neglected. This article seeks to analyze the roles women can play to promote peace and address developmental issues in the peninsula. The qualitative research method was used to assess the various views of women in other to evaluate the implementation of priority projects in the area. The research findings reveal that women must be involved in post conflict development and peace building efforts at all levels. When they are not active participants, the views, needs and interests of more than half of the population are not represented, and therefore interventions will not be as appropriate or enduring. This is so because, the realization of post conflict developments weighs so heavily on women as they naturally show great interest in peace building processes and as such, development may not be realized if women are not involved in the process. The paper suggests ideas to integrate a gender perspective into post conflict development and peace building efforts so that Bakassi women's initiatives can be exposed.

Key Words: Women, Bakassi Peninsula, Development, Post Conflict Resolution, Peace Building,

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Introduction

In the contemporary epochs, countries in Africa have had succession of conflicts and presently the problem is far from being halted. This has caused indescribable misery on the people and also taken enormous clang on the development of the continent. The horn of Africa, particularly the Great Lakes regions, have become locations for some of the deadliest and most protracted of these conflicts. In 2006 alone, there were 17 conflicts in Africa, which were at varying degrees of forms and intensity. Of all the countries in the Greater Horn of Africa only two (Djibouti and Tanzania) can be said to be relatively stable, although each had its fair share of internal skirmishes (Mpangala, 2004; Aghemelo and Ibehasebhor, 2006). Kenya was also stable until the post-election crisis that erupted in 2008. There have also been border conflicts in some African countries, which lasted for many years like those between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which culminated in the independence of Eritrea. Botswana and Namibia also went to war over their border between 1984 and 1999 (Kah, 2014; Fonkeng, 2014). Similarly, Chad and Libya went to war over their border between 1972 and 1994, and Cameroon and Nigeria clashed several times with casualties on both sides over the Bakassi Peninsula, between 1981 and 1996 (Bekong, 1997).

The consequences 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 as refugees (Anjoh, 2017). In such calamitous situations, women and girls are often exposed to acts of violence which seriously undermine their human rights and deny them opportunities arising from gender inequality. Studies have shown that women are worst hit in situations of violent conflict and are also affected differently from men during these crises (Dayo, 2007). It is becoming increasingly obvious that women have unique opportunities for post conflict development and peace building due to the unique role they play in society.

As culturally designated caregivers, women must struggle to support their families and keep their households together while the traditional breadwinners, husbands and sons are caught up in the fighting and are unable to provide for their families. The new role as primary provider exposes many women to further abuse. Conflict shatters the comfort of predictable daily routines and expectations. Women and girls are equally affected in a fragile environment where social services they once depended on degrade or disappear. Although conflict may, in some cases, improve gender relations as a result of shifts in gender roles, some changes even improve women's rights but its impact on women is devastatingly negative. Women are rarely mere passive victims of

conflict and should not be treated as such. Women can play active roles in the events that lead to fighting and instability, and even in combat itself, yet they have also served as the forerunners of peace movements that have ended conflict (Mutunga, 2007). However, the determined efforts of women to bring an end to fighting are usually behind the scenes.

Since women do not have the same level of influence that men do in most societies, they are easily marginalized. Keeping the peace may be viewed as a 'male' role and women may be left out of that important area of responsibility. However, when women organize themselves for peace efforts, they can significantly impact the peace process. According to Gopinath and Das-Gupta, in (Bakassi Peace Letter, 2010) "increasing and enhancing the participation of women around the peace table … stands to secure a more inclusive settlement to the conflict, as well as lay the ground work for rebuilding a just and equitable post-conflict society". While existing data indicate that no woman participated during the resolution of the Bakassi conflict, post conflict Bakassi provides an enabling environment for Bakassi women to play a major role to the development of the area. This article identifies women's needs that must be met to stimulate post conflict development and peace building and to enact well informed planning, policy making and action to build a culture of peace in the Bakassi Peninsula. It addresses how Bakassi women can perform important roles as development agents, peace builders and peace educators in their families and societies.

Background to the Bakassi Conflict

The border conflict that occurred between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula in the 1980s and 90s had never appeared to be a genuine problem at all. This is because the socio-political integration of the South West peoples of Cameroon and the peoples of Eastern Nigeria dates as far back as the 16th Century, even before the arrival of the Germans and the British in this region (Chiabi, 1986; Aletum, 1993). The annexation of Cameroon by the Germans and the colonisation of Nigeria by the British necessitated the demarcation of the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria. The Rio-del-Rey situated at the Bight of Biafra became the boundary area and through many agreements and negotiations the boundary line was drawn placing the Bakassi Peninsula as an integral part of Cameroon. These agreements and negotiations are: The Anglo-German Agreement of April 29, 1885; the Anglo German Agreement of March 11, 1913; the diplomatic negotiations between Cameroon and Nigeria from 1970 to 1975, which all determined the position of the Bakassi Peninsula, making it an integral part of Cameroon (Baye, 2010).

Barely six years after independence Nigeria was affected by a civil war; which lasted from 1967 to 1970. During this war, the Government of Cameroon played a supporting role, which influenced the victory of the Nigerian Federal Government over the Biafran secessionist. The Cameroon Government refused to facilitate the independence of the break-away Eastern Region of Nigeria because of the devastating political effect, which a successful secessionist's Biafran state would have had on the territorial integrity and unity of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. This fear was well understood and expressed by Cameroon Government officials. A prominent Cameroonian ambassador according to Ngoh (1998) said "Cameroon was threatened by divisive internal forces through domestic action". Thus, an independent Eastern Region from the Nigerian Federal Government would have encouraged secessionist tendencies in the former West Cameroon.

After the Nigerian civil war, President Ahmadou Ahidjo played the role of mediator between Nigeria and the African countries, which had recognized the sovereignty of the Biafran state. As a result of the influential role played by Cameroon in the Nigerian civil war, President Ahidjo of Cameroon and General Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria met in 1975 at Maroua, North Cameroon, and produced the Maroua Declaration (Jurisdis Info, 1994; Konings, 2005). The Declaration was focused on the Cameroon-Nigeria border. In effect, Gowon made frontier concessions that gave Cameroon sovereignty over a seabed rich oil deposit area around the Rio-del Rey region called the Bakassi Peninsula. The cordial relations between Cameroon and Nigeria, however, strained after 1979 when some prominent Nigerians, including the Supreme Military Council (SMC) began criticizing Gowon's acceptance of the Maroua Declaration and out rightly advocated a rejection of its clauses. These conflicting views culminated into the first Cameroon-Nigeria border crisis in 1981 (Owolabi, 1991; Price, 2005).

Although the 1981 Cameroon-Nigeria border crisis was peacefully resolved, it left many Nigerians, especially the Igbo dissatisfied. This was as a result of Cameroon's diplomatic and moral support to Nigeria during the 1967 to 1970 civil war. The anti-Biafran posture which Cameroon adopted was a source of irritation to the Igbos. It was probably because of that, that Dr. Okoi Arikpo and his supporters posited that Gowon's decision to surrender part of the Nigerian territory to Cameroon was to compensate Cameroon for the support she gave the Federal Republic of Nigeria during the war. They also asserted that the Cameroon Nigeria boundary west of Rio-

del-Rey, around the Bakassi Peninsula, had never been well defined and thereby encouraged Nigerian fishermen to settle in the area, which they believed was part of Nigeria. But when the Cameroonian authorities decided to tighten up tax payment and curb smuggling in this area, they stepped on the toes of Nigerian fishermen who neither accepted to pay the taxes nor recognize Cameroon's sovereignty in the area (Omoigui, 2006).

On 21 December 1993, in defiance of the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on inter-state relations, especially the principle of the respect of colonial boundaries and the peaceful resolution of disputes and also in defiance of agreements signed between the two countries concerning their border, the Nigerian armed forces crossed the border and occupied the Bakassi Peninsula, precisely in the localities of Jabane and Diamond Island. On 18 February 1994, Nigerian troops moved towards the villages of Archibong, Atabong and Akwa Bana in the Peninsula, maintaining that the villages belonged to Nigeria (Sama, 2006). In the quest for a peaceful settlement of this crisis, the Government of Cameroon took the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for arbitration. On 10 October 2002, the Court passed its verdict ceding the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon (Summary of ICJ Judgment, 2002).

After the verdict of the ICJ, Cameroon and Nigeria intensified meetings to improve their bilateral relations through the influence of the United Nations Organization. Under the auspices of the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, Presidents Paul Biya of Cameroon and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria met on five occasions to foster the implementation of the ICJ verdict. During these meetings, the two heads of state resolved to establish a new form of cooperation, common under-taking in border areas and the promotion of initiatives that were aimed at building confidence between the two countries. To sustain these objectives, a Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission was created by the UN to resolve the border disputes and improve relations between the two countries. From 2002 to 2006 some nineteen sessions of the Mixed Commission were held, alternating between Yaounde and Abuja (United Nations Mixed Commission, 2007).

The Mixed Commission was very successful in its activities. It supervised the peaceful and orderly transfer of authority in some forty villages around Lake Chad and along the land boundary; some 460 kilometers of land boundary was demarcated and agreements covering the four disputed sectors were realized. As a result of these United Nations initiatives, the Green Tree Accord was signed on June 12 2006 and on August 14 the Nigerian Government withdrew its forces from the Bakassi Peninsula. The Nigerian withdrawal was in respect of the October 10th 2002 International

Court of Justice ruling, which recognized the sovereignty of Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula (Rangarajan, 2006). The peaceful resolution of the border disputes between Cameroon and Nigeria has been hailed in Africa and indeed world-wide as proof that it is possible for neighboring countries to solve their problem without resorting to war. After the resolution of the Bakassi crisis, peace building and post conflict development were initiated for a sustainable peace in the Bakassi Peninsula. It was realized that women can play a vital role in peace building and post conflict development to promote sustainable peace and development in the Peninsula.

Conceptualizing Peace Building and Local Development

Peace building are policies, programs, and associated efforts to restore stability and the effectiveness of social, political, and economic institutions and structures in the wake of a war, protracted conflicts or some other debilitating or catastrophic events. Peace building generally aims to create and ensure the transformation of conditions for 'negative peace', the mere absence of violent conflict engagement, and for 'positive peace', a more comprehensive understanding related to the institutionalization of justice and freedom. The UN peace building operations in Namibia in 1978 were then understood primarily as a form of post-conflict reconstruction. The conceptualization of peace building, however, has since expanded, as can be seen in the 1992 and 1995 editions of former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 'An Agenda for Peace'. Although speaking in relation to post-conflict situations, Boutros-Ghali (1995) identified a range of peace-building programs, including 'co-operative projects... that not only contribute to economic and social development but also enhance the confidence that is so fundamental to peace'. More specifically, he mentions activities focusing on agriculture, transportation, resource management, cultural exchanges, educational projects, and simplification of visa regimes.

He continues that 'there exists a connection between security and development which is an accepted tenet in peace building and the implications of this mutually reinforcing relationship are extensive'. The United Nations has launched several initiatives that involve elements of peace building, including the Peace building Support Offices under the Department of Political Affairs, first operative in Liberia in the late 1990s and later in Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. Yet, peace building involves a wide range of international donors, aid agencies, and international, regional, community, and grassroots civil society organizations. Such initiatives have revolved around several foci. The following represents a small selection of them: assisting

an end to military or violent exchanges through the decommissioning of arms, the demobilization of combatants, and rehabilitation and reintegration programs; providing humanitarian relief to victims, protecting human rights; ensuring security and related services; generating an environment of trust in order for social relations to function properly; establishing non-violent modes of resolving present and future conflicts; fostering reconciliation among the various parties to a conflict; providing psycho-social or trauma healing services to victims of severe atrocities; repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons; aiding in economic reconstruction; building and maintaining the operation of institutions to provide such services, and co-coordinating the roles of numerous internal and external parties involved in such interrelated efforts

Although isolated or partial elements of such a conception of peace building have been implemented to alleviate the consequences of past wars and acute conflicts, the integration of this complex model of processes is a relatively new phenomenon. The changing nature of war, and the increasing frequency of wars within nation states as opposed to between them, has also complicated peace-building initiatives. To date, no comprehensive formula for peace building exists. Such efforts have been developed and implemented mostly on an ad hoc basis, and they vary widely from case to case in accordance with local and temporal circumstances.

As an extremely broad concept encompassing democracy, development, gender, human rights, and justice, peace building can be thought of as a bridge from conflict resolution to 'positive peace'. According to Boutros-Ghali (1995), Peace building aims to create and foster stability and adequate functioning of a region or society. Attempts to refine and implement peace building have encountered several difficulties, including the following: failures to address the underlying or root causes of the conflict; lack of legitimacy in the eyes of recipients and target groups, particularly in relation to newly formed institutions; lack of agreement over the acceptance of roles and implementation of responsibilities by all parties to the conflict; limits on leadership in times of political transition or extreme crisis; over-reliance on external parties; aspirations to build a society that functions generally better than it did prior to the conflict.

In addition to noting such complications, practitioners and commentators have raised theoretical criticisms and questions as well. First, the activities of relief and development have usually been conducted and studied separately, and their intersections are not well defined. Peace building bridges this traditional divide, but a reformulation is needed for

integrating the theory and practice of these interconnected disciplines. Second, peace building seems to suggest long-term, extensive effort and commitment by parties to the conflict and external partners. Conceptualizing a timeframe for such efforts has generated considerable debate. Third, peace building is often understood as the final phase of a conflict, yet some argue that such processes can begin in the midst of a violent conflict. Fourth, the importance of gender in relation to conflict and peace building continues to be overlooked, often completely. The sufferings resulting from conflict affect men and women differently and their subsequent roles in peace building differ as well.

The Bakassi communities, as many other rural areas in Cameroon, continue to face serious obstacles to development, though the existence of considerable natural resources and unique local knowledge. Therefore, there is an urgent need to value these local potentials and ensure their real integration as a baseline in addressing developmental issues in these communities. Local development can work in Bakassi communities by applying the enabling features of traditional thought, but one visible aspect of modernization will serve particularly well to an open and commercialized market economy, connected nationally and globally through free exchange of goods, services, resources and knowledge. Modifying local thinking or behaviors comes from largely theoretical observations of development activists or actors and practitioners. Chambers (1983), who was highly sensitive to the failures of both liberal and Marxist agendas for development, offers a set of practical proposals and guidelines to enable development intervention to operate more effectively. Chambers solution is bottom-up development, a challenge to established procedures, breaking downwards thinking, women participating in decision making, and helping them articulate their demands for services rights and learning by acting on the ground in development actions with those that most need help. Local development thus hovers in the shadows of some of these reformulations and strongly underpinned by value judgments about desirable forms of development of a conventional type.

Supporting women initiatives and local networks of traditional practitioners and communities' exchanges can help to disseminate useful and relevant local knowledge and to enable communities to participate more actively in the development process in Bakassi. Local development might be considered as having a number of distinguishing characteristics, especially in Cameroon. In recent years, the old development approaches used to emphasize more on equipment and infrastructures, neglecting a key parameter i.e. the integration of women and their

local knowledge. This invariably led to failures. At times, women in local communities may not be able to understand the importance of projects and necessity for them to make good use of these. Populations in this context tend to be discouraged and become reluctant to any innovative idea or thinking, which situation is a major obstacle to development. Therefore, investigations on women and local potentials have become urgently needed as a baseline in addressing developmental issues in these communities. As Chambers (1983) states, at the end all our efforts should be centered on the people and how to bring about good changes for them through development. Even though poverty stricken, women in the Bakassi Peninsula can contribute enormously to the economic growth of the Bakassi Peninsula which is experiencing several challenges to peace building and post conflict development.

Challenges to Post Conflict Developmental Projects in the Peninsula

In spite of Cameroon's Government implementation of priority projects in the Bakassi Peninsula, several communities are still in need of basic necessities such as good portable drinking water, electricity, healthcare and are further impoverished by the constant water erosion that destroy food crops, infrastructures and inflict water born diseases to the indigenes. Water crises are a critical issue to the inhabitants of Idabato, Kombo Amunja 111 and other fishing villages. The combination of poor diet and contaminated drinking water leaves the inhabitants of these areas prone to water born diseases. Water pollution in Idabato is not only caused by seawater erosion but also by raw sewage disposal accruing from poor latrines (Anki, 2015). Most of the latrines are poorly constructed, leaving sewage to flow in the streets during high tides and water erosion. In addition to the obvious immediate health risks, raw sewage eventually flow into unprotected wells polluting the water for the population which consume water from wells in the area. Beyond the water borne diseases, diseases such as AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis and many childhood diseases common in the peninsula have a direct link to poverty. On an individual level, those affected by these diseases are highly above the international poverty level standards for most of the people in the peninsula are living on less than 2US Dollars a day (Ekukole, 2013).

Another major challenge is the constant destruction of priority projects in the area by floods. In the Nigerian dominated town of Idabato, floods have destroyed several houses beside the sea rendering several inhabitants homeless and forced others to move further into swampy areas to settle. The floods also submerged the newly constructed Government Health Centre in Kombo Amunja 111 and some sections of the Government Secondary School Idabato (Kendemeh, 2013).

The Inspector of Basic Education for Idabato Sub Division maintained that because of the lack of embankment to prevent sea water from flowing into the community, heavy rains increased the water level which penetrated into homes, destroy buildings and properties. As a result most Nigerians migrated to their country leaving desperate Cameroonians in the poverty striking locality (Ambeno, 2014). He posited that the health center which was poorly equipped in terms of material and personnel was not highly welcomed by the inhabitants for it was grossly lacking in its ability to assist patients. Its destruction by floods only rendered the health situation in Idabato worst as patients now have to travel to distant areas for treatment.

With regards to education, the Inspector for Basic Education in Idabato maintained that attending schools has never been a priority for the local population in the area highly dominated by Nigerians. As a result most Nigerian children in Idabato prefer fishing and trading as a profession than schooling. Again, the Nigerian community believes that Cameroon's Elementary Education is too difficult and will steadily pull away their children in classes 4 or 5 to do the Junior Secondary Program (JSP) that catapults them to secondary schools in Nigeria (Mbelle, 2015). In 2013, Idabato Sub Division registered only thirteen candidates for the Government Common Entrance with only eight sitting in for the exams while for the First School Leaving Certificate only seventeen registered and thirteen wrote although they scored 100 percent in both cases. According to the Inspector, floods in the region crippled the efforts of the educational community to provide sound education to the inhabitants. Before this sad situation, Government Secondary School Idabato had twenty-four students from forms one to four with twelve teachers during the 2012/2013 academic year.

Furthermore, poor road infrastructures or lack of access to several localities in the Bakassi Peninsula and even communicating from one school to another presents undue hardship to teachers. Nobody likes to live and work in an area where travelling from point A to point B takes about four to five hours in an engine propelled boat. Even to get access to a health center becomes impossible at times, especially during the rainy seasons. Consequently, teachers posted to this locality always abandon their jobs and move to big towns (Agbor, 2015). The Cameroon Government, through the appropriate ministerial departments should intensify the maintenance of roads to make them passable all year round and the provision of other facilities. Better still, there should be the creation of more health centers with adequate medical personnel. This would make

the living conditions of teachers comfortable thereby reducing the high rate of abandonment by teachers.

Presently, there are few radio and television signal coverage in some areas in the Bakassi Zone. This situation has influenced the Cameroonian population to depend on foreign radio and television stations for news and information concerning their country. Since they mostly concentrate on the unusual occurrences of bad news in the Bakassi Peninsula, the foreign media outlets tend to present the area in stereotyped ways that limit the public's perception of lasting peace and security possibilities in the area. Bakassi Peninsula now only boasts of a private mobile telephone network, Orange Cameroon widely received only in Isangele (Moki, 2014). Nigerian Radio Waves are spread throughout the peninsula and the UNESCO subsidized Bakassi FM Radio went dysfunctional and was later blown off by thunder some years ago.

Piracy, smuggling and insecurity pose a major challenge to the development of the Bakassi Peninsula. The numerous creeks and dense mangrove vegetation in the peninsula provides protective cover and safe navigable hide-out for smugglers who escape from custom officials and pirates who attack commercial vessels. Most inhabitants in the peninsula are victims to gangs of bandits, armed robbers and pirates operating along the numerous unguarded creeks (Fonkeng, 2014). Similar incidences occur today, though with less frequency and gravity thanks to the creation of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) in Jabane, Idabato Sub-Division. While the BIR provide security to curb piracy in the Atlantic Coast, the numerous creeks and beaches within the peninsula remain unguarded and serve as a safe haven for all forms of clandestine trafficking of goods, petrol, drugs and even human beings. Many settlements in the Peninsula are incorporated into these networks of contraband activities; serving as depots, hide-outs and reinfusion centers. Many traders either use fishing boats for camouflage, concealment and transportation of their goods or sail during the night to evade capture by customs and security officials. Reports of such disastrous incidences are abundant and many certainly escape public notice rendering the peninsula insecure, deprive it from huge financial benefits and affect its development. The situation in the Bakassi Peninsula necessitates women participation to assist governmental initiatives for a sustainable development in the area.

Integrating Women with Local Knowledge to Develop Bakassi Communities

Following the last population census conducted in 2005, the South West Region had a total population of 1,318, 079 inhabitants with about 665,630 women (Population Census, 2005). Of this figure, about 13,706 women inhabited the Bakassi Peninsula distributed in the five sub-divisions as follows: Bamusso 8,513; Isangele 1,595; Idabato 1,451; Kombo Abedimo 1,128 and Kombo Itindi 1,019. Women are major promoters of development in the Bakassi Peninsula through trade, food production and fishing. In order to empower themselves to promote peace building and enhance development, they created the Bakassi Women's Forum. The Forum is an Association of women common initiative group based in the five sub-divisions in the peninsula. It was created in 1993, with the assistance of the Bakassi sub divisional services of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, to serve as a forum where the women of Bakassi converge and share ideas that could enable them fight poverty and support the men in promoting development in the peninsula. The local services of the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family use the Forum as a bridge to reach its target population, the local women in the peninsula (Bakassi Peace Letter, 2010).

The membership is about 100 women from the five sub divisions who became members through registration in their various 'Ijangi' or cultural groups. The Forum organizes coordination meetings with the various women groups and also workshops to sensitize and empower them on women issues especially their roles in peace building and development in the peninsula. The Forum also assist the Government to mobilize women to massively participate in public events such as the International Women's Day, Rural Women's Day, National Day Events in Cameroon and other events that require women participation (Personal Communication with Magdalene Pondi, 2016). The Forum owns a five hectare plantation where cassava, plantain and palms are cultivated and produced sold to large corporations like the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and PAMOL. According to Magdalene Pondi who is the current president of the Forum, the organization had several projects to execute but limited finances paralyzed their activities. She also maintained that very few women were given the opportunities to participate in developmental projects executed by the Government and some Non-Governmental Organizations in the Peninsula.

In connection with these local development objectives, a Non-Governmental Organization based in Buea called *AFRICAphonie* initiated a Peace and Development Plan with the local population and some women in the Bakassi Peninsula. Guided by facilitators from *AFRICAphonie*,

the local women drew their peace and development plans which with the help of their Municipal Councils will promote sustainable development in the peninsula. Their priority development plans included getting the new cold store in Isangele operational to solve the problem of lack of fish in Isangele market; contact with the Regional Delegate of Public Health for the South West to provide a resident doctor in Bamusso; construction of footpaths and bridges as well as the acquisition of more transport boats to facilitate movements in the towns of Idabato and Kombo Itindi and create a mixed crop farm to address the issue of food scarcity in Kombo Abedimo (*Bakassi Peace Letter*, 2011). Though few women participated in the workshop, the outcome of the group work was that the participants drew their development plans as illustrated in the table 1 to 5 below.

Table 1: Local Development Plan of Isangele in the Bakassi Peninsula

No	ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS	TIME
1	Lack of fish in Isangele Market	Get the new cold store operational by renting it out to interested stakeholders	Elite, Mayor, Business Partners, Chiefs	6 months
2	There is no electricity in Isangele municipality	Install and activate the existing generator and cables	Mayor, Peace Committee, Government	1 year
3	There is an abandoned water project	Look for actors-native funding for boreholes	Mayor, Elites, Government Member of Parliament (MP)	1 year
4	Dilapidated classes at G.S. Isangele	Repair works on the roofs of those blocks	Mayor, Government, MP	6 months
5	Erosion problems on the main streets of Isangele	Construct concrete gutters on both sides of the affected streets	Mayor, Chief, MP, Elites, Government	1 year

Source: Adapted from J. Konang, "Bakassi Peace Committees Craft Action Plans"*, in Bakasi Peace Letter,* No.13, 2011, pp.8-9.

Table 2: **Local Development Plan of Bamusso in the Bakassi Peninsula**

No	ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS	TIME
1	No resident doctor	Contact the South West regional delegate of public	Mayor Development Committee, Peace Committee	3 Months

		health for a doctor to be transferred to Bamusso		
2	Embankment due to sea encroachment	Seek for foreign partners and the government	Mayor, MP, Elite	1 Year
3	Mangroves conservation for Afforestation	Contact the South West Regional Delegate (SWRD) of environment and nature protection	Mayor	3 Months
4	A border market for fish mongers	Contact SWRD of trade and industry	Mayor	6 Months
5	Road network, linking the villages of Bamusso	Contact the SWRD of Public Works	Mayor	1 Year

Source: Adapted from Konang, "Bakassi Peace Committees Craft Action Plans".

Table 3: Local Development Plan of Kombo Itindi in the Bakassi Peninsula

No	ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS	TIME
1	Movement difficulties in the quarters/communities	Construction of foot paths and bridges	Involve Community, Mayor, Peace Committee	3 months
2	Fish/food scarcity	Creation of market, creation of fish ponds, involve Cameroonian youths in fishing, activities through CIGs, provide them with the necessary materials	Mayor, CIGs, Elites, Peace Committee, Youth Groups	4 months
3	Lack of drinking water in our area	Construct a bore hole	Peace Committee, Mayor, CIGs, NGOs Foreign Donors	1 year

Source: Adapted from Konang, "Bakassi Peace Committees Craft Action Plans".

Table 4: Local Development Plan of Idabato in the Bakassi Peninsula

No	ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS	TIME
1	Inadequate means of movements within and out of the subdivision	Increase the number of transport boats	The Council, CIGs, Government, Peace Committee	3 months

2	High degree of adult illiteracy	Organize adult literacy programs	Educationist, Mayor, NGOs, Peace Committee	6 months
3	Lack radio and telephone networks	Set up a community radio, install telephone networks	Mayor, Government, Elites, MP, Peace Committee	6 months
4	Lack of portable drinking water	Install pipe borne water	Mayor, Elites, NGOs, Peace Committee	1 years
5	Inadequate fish preservation facilities	Build more fishing smoking ovens, cooling houses	Mayor, CIG, Women's Groups, Government, Peace Committee	

Source: Adapted from Konang, "Bakassi Peace Committees Craft Action Plans".

Table 4: Local Development Plan of Kombo Abedimo in the Bakassi Peninsula

No	ISSUE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE ACTORS	TIME
1	Scarcity of food	Start up a small farm of mixed crop e.g. cassava, cocoyam and plantains etc.	Mayor, Chiefs, CIGs Agric Delegates Peace Committee	3 months
2	Water scarcity	Maintenance of bore holes, purchase of electrical water pumps pipes and tap heads	CIGs, Mayor, Village Development Committee, Peace Committee	6 months
3	Poor hygiene and sanitation	Community toilets, bathrooms, waste disposal tanks	Mayor SOWEDA, Peace Committee	6 months
4	Scarcity of fish product	Get into creation of ponds, poultry farming, animal rearing	Mayor, CIGs, MINEPIA, Peace Committee	1 year

Source: Adapted from Konang, "Bakassi Peace Committees Craft Action Plans".

Following the development plan elaborated in the table above, Bakassi women still complaint of limited participation in peace building and development in the Peninsula. This is because very few women were trained during the capacity building seminar for peace building and post conflict development in the area. Lina Zedriga Waru in (Nyeko, 2017) "…. Believes the involvement of women in peace building is vital to both securing a women sensitive agenda in

peace negotiations and in securing peace as a whole." Women she says " think with their hearts and not with their stomachs". One woman or even a few women on negotiating terms is not enough to ensure that gender issues are examined in peace agreement. This is seemingly obvious, yet the experiences from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) demonstrate that, too often women are not initially included in the negotiating teams of parties to conflict .When they are included often after substantial advocacy from women, only one or two women are appointed to the delegations. Female delegates repeatedly pointed out that one or two women are not enough to have influence, and that the minimum standard of 30%participetions should be supported. Civil Society Representation was critical in both the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) and Juba peace women participating directly in talk, as observer and experts. The ICD example clearly shows that the number of women on the negotiating teams of rebel groups and political parties were very limited, often to only one or two individuals. The Juba talk were similar, in that only one woman was on the government delegation and two women on the lord's Resistance Army (IRA) delegation. The inclusion of civil society and church representation at the Juba talk helped to create space for greater numbers of women to participate in the peace process (Surendrial, 2009).

**Effective Participation of Women in Peace Building Process
and Development in Bakassi Peninsula**

Women involved in peace building and post conflict development must be at a sufficiently senior level with male counterparts to have influence. Equally female delegates need to be experienced on negotiations and in political dialogue, to be equipped to raise gender issues during negotiations. The gender advisor to the UN Special Envoy at the Juba talk was a noted good practice Gender advisors on mediation and facilitation teams who provide valuable legal and other gender advice to mediators, facilitators and parties to the conflict. In the absence of such a focal point, it is difficult for civil society organizations especially grassroots women's groups to know when and how to contribute to the negotiation process.

Female delegates from the Bakassi Women's Forum mentioned that during post conflict development in the area, they did not have enough experience across sectors to be able to unpack gender analysis on all issue. As such subject matter experts with specialized knowledge on for example, Mediation, Facilitation, Negotiation, Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration,(DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR), Human Right and so on, should inculcate

these ideas to women in the area in order to bring gender analysis on specific issues under deliberation (Manga, 2010). The women's caucus format from the ICD was one such example, where civil society expert at the negotiations assisted delegates in deepening gender analysis on women's right content. The ICD was a strong example of women working across conflict lines to develop a common   agenda for negotiations (Mpoumou, 2004).

However, such gains were limited when women entered the mainstream talk. Pressure on women to represent party or group positions sometimes conflicted with women advocating for a common agenda on peace and women's right. Bridges built during "women only" pre-negotiations or capacity building workshops were precarious when women entered the tough political environment. In the case of the Juba peace talk the vastly different experiences of women in Southern Uganda who had more access to education than women living in the displaced camps in the north created challenges for women to work together. Tensions between different women's groups led to two women's coalitions participating in the talks as observers (Wijeyaratne, 2008). Strategies and approaches for supporting women's participation in peace processes need to cater to the specific context, an assessment of the capacities of women and conflict dynamics influencing the extent to which women may be able to work together.

In both the DRC and Uganda, women reported that they found it difficult to negotiate with men. The women were trained and empowered more among other women than with men, and therefore found it challenging to translate both the skills and gender issues agreed on for negotiations, into the peace talks with men, while skills development and empowerment of women are clearly needed and beneficial external support to peace talk also need to consider whether the women are being empowered to face the reality of the negotiating environment in which they work (Wijeyaratne, 2008; Mpoumou 2004). Also, women's participation and effectiveness in peace building processes is fundamentally influenced by the extent to which specific funds are provided to support women's capacity building and sustained participation in dialogue initiatives. Funding for women's participation was a noted challenge to the Bakassi Women's Forum, the ICD, the Goma Peace Conference and the Juba Peace Talk. Budgets developed to fund peace talks and other dialogue efforts specifically and amply need to fund gender advisors, women delegates to talk, capacity strengthening initiatives, and the participation of civil society and expert women in dialogue processes and post conflict development.

Conclusion

Since 2000, several resolutions were adopted to include women in peace processes and post conflict development. Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security has proven to be an important tool in pressuring government, parties to conflict, mediators and facilitators, and donors to fund and include women in peace talks. The examples of the ICD and Juba peace talk demonstrate the positive impact of nations and peace activists in calling for women's participation in peace processes. However, simply getting women to the negotiating table is not enough. As the examples from the DRC and Uganda demonstrated; women are too often confronted with hurdles in fully advancing peace and women's rights. Donor's and external actors, by being more responsive and strategic in their support to women, can help to develop the conditions for more effective women participation in peace building processes and post conflict development.

Participatory developmental approach in post conflict communities emphasizes more on local determination of development options, women control over the development process, and the retention of the benefits of development rather than constituting a model of development with clearly identified theoretical roots. In this strategy, local development is determined, it is transplanted into particular women and internally determined, lead to high levels of retained benefits within local economies, export the process of development from the region, and respects local values. As Bakassi is concerned, there is an urgent need to educate women by talking to them, discussing with them on the importance of development changes, train them on new strategies in sustainable management of natural resources and look for ways to influence both the direction and pace of change as well as understanding the impact of current changes that individuals and communities are prepared to identify opportunities and action plans that will achieve their goals.

Local knowledge is a critical factor for sustainable development and as such the empowerment of women in peace building processes and post conflict development is a prerequisite for a sustainable development. The integration of appropriate local knowledge into development programs by women in the Bakassi Peninsula will contribute to efficiency, effectiveness and sustainable development. Women initiatives need to be constantly put to use, challenged and further adapted to the rich economic potentials in the area. Supporting women

initiatives can help to disseminate useful and relevant Knowledge which could enable communities to participate more actively in the development process. The participatory strategy of women to local development has often sought to foster greater levels of local entrepreneurship and to generate sustainable developments.

Whilst it is possible to measure growth in a one dimensional manner, it becomes more problematic measuring development as a whole. This must take into account tradeoffs between growth and equity, between productive and social investment and between short term growth and sustainability. Women initiatives and Local knowledge is used by the communities as the basis for making decisions pertaining to food security, human and animal health, education, natural resources management and other vital activities. Women participation in peace building and post conflict development are key elements of the social capital of the poor and constitutes their main asset in their efforts to achieve control of their own lives. For these reasons, women potential contribution of local knowledge to manage, sustainable and cost effective survival strategies should be promoted in the development process of Bakassi within the spectrum of post conflict reconstruction and peace building.

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