

WOMEN'S ROLE TOWARDS CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LIBERIA

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the effort of Liberian women in order to create peace. In this study, the researcher conducted research from various legitimate sources to support this research. The researcher methods are conducted through library sources and website that in line with the study. The research uses the theory of Conflict Resolution by Johan Galtung. Then, the research findings proof that women can perform as the agent of change in Liberia. In addition, women also involve themselves in all stages of the peace process. Therefore, women are not only become as the victim when the conflict occurred in Liberia but the women are the initiator of peace realization.

Keywords: Liberia, Conflict Resolution, Women, Peace

Background

A conflict is an event that is certain or is being experienced by several countries in the world. This is usually triggered by several factors, namely internal factors and external factors. External factors are factors that originate outside the country. These factors usually come from other parties outside the warring country. This resulted in widespread conflict because the parties involved were in greater numbers and originated not only from the conflicting regions. On the contrary, these internal factors originate from within the country which usually includes political, economic, citizen rights, even ethnic and other disputes. One example of a country experiencing internal conflict in Liberia.

The conflict in Liberia has been going on since 1989. At that time Charles Taylor led a rebellion against the Doe government. President Doe was executed by rebel leaders and the first phase of Liberia's civil war ended in 1996 by the African Peacekeepers. Charles Taylor as the leader of rebellion groups wins the presidential election in 1997, more strengthen the end of Liberia's first civil war. In achieving his victory as president, Charles Taylor inflicted Liberia experience the split between military groups and factions because his campaign was very brutal.

The conflict between faction groups and the Liberian Government finally broke again in 1999 making the second phase of the civil war in Liberia. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) are the rebel groups who led the outbreak of the second civil war as the resist to President Charles Taylor. The pressure on the conflict continued to increase when LURD launched its offensive from Guinea to Lofa District in September 2000. Lofa

District became the center of violence since the initial invasion by regional hostilities between the borders of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. In 2000, the invasion by LURD forces left nearly 80 percent of rural areas in Liberia under its control. In February 2001, LURD intensified the activities of its forces to carry out raids in the rural Lofa area in northern Liberia (Dulce Foster, 2009). Until 2002 Taylor continued to maintain control of the City of Monrovia despite the pressure of ongoing fighting between government forces and LURD.

Monrovia as the capital city of Liberia is the place where the humanitarian disaster happen that caused by the rebels groups in the middle of 2003. The Liberian civil war finally was ended on August 18, 2003, after President Charles Taylor finally resigned and willing to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the two rebels groups LURD and MODEL in Accra, Ghana (Patrick Vinck P. P., 2011). The conflict that occurred in Liberia for 14 years has claimed the lives of 200,000 people die and 1.5 million Liberians have been forced to flee their homes. During the conflict, most of the victims of violence were experienced by women. Liberian women experience various kinds of acts of violence, confinement and even sexual abuse in the form of rape. The violence experienced by Liberian women is generally carried out by military members from rebel groups. According to the World Health Organization data, it is estimated that 82% of women were victims with multiple forms of violence and 77% of women experienced rape (Women. U. N., 2009).

From these conflicts, women have always been the ones who suffered substantial losses in the form of morale and materiality. Women are one of the parties who are often become the target of violence and even as the victims of sexual harassment by their

opponents. However, behind all the forms of oppression, women were also able to become an actor in initiating peace. A woman is also able to act as an agent of change in the midst of very brutal chaos.

To resolve conflict, a conflict resolution is usually needed. Conflict resolution is an ability to resolve a difference from one another. This is also an important aspect in a moral and social development. To carry out conflict resolution requires skills in negotiating and compromising with related parties (Mindes, 2006). In addition, this conflict resolution must also be carried out so that global security and peace can be maintained.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is one of the international mechanisms and products of international law for organizations and individuals throughout the world. Resolution 1325 is the first Security Council resolution in detail to focus on the negative experiences faced by women and girls during the conflict and call for the need to include them in all levels of the peace process (Women. O. o., 2004). The two main components of Resolution 1325 are addressing sexual violence in armed conflict and increasing women's participation in peace processes and political institutions. Within the United Nations, the resolution has led to increased attention to gender mainstreaming or assessing a policy's different impacts for women and men (Nations, United, 2010).

During the fourteen years of conflict that occurred in Liberia. The warring parties committed gross violations of human rights and war crimes committed against civilians specifically for women and girls who were the main targets of atrocities such as rape, other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Women must be included in recovery

from armed conflict, human security, planning activities and coordinated initiatives for the peace process. Based on the security situation in Liberia it is very important to respond to human rights violations and this security threat strategically and sustainably. Resolution 1325 is one of the products of international law that can help women to participate in every level of the peace process and need to be implemented by all relevant actors starting from the international community, government institutions and civil society organizations in the field (Women. O. o., 2004).

Whilst women's in Liberia has experienced many bad impacts from the Civil War. Realizing there won't be going to an end for the conflict women trying to take action to end the violence against humanity and initiating to hold peace talks for the warring parties. Women's in Liberia has an important role because they are avoiding the use of violence and prove that any kind of violent acts resulting in no positive advantages. Women 's involve in the peace process as they are the part of the society too whose didn't practice any form of violence but got so much pain as the result of the conflict.

During this time it was a fact that women were certainly not the party to the cause of a dispute in an internal or external conflict of a country. Through what was experienced by Liberia women, the writer wanted to know the role of various individuals and women's organizations in the peace process from Liberia civil war. Who are the women that become as the peace actors in Liberia or who have a role as agents of change for the local community and participate in every stage in the peace process.

Method of Research

1. Kinds of Methodology

The author uses a type of descriptive qualitative research that intends to describe things that are considered relevant objectively and clearly based on facts and data available.

2. Method of Data Collection

Using secondary data collection i.e, retrieve data from various media, both print media such as books, journals, newspapers and various articles and also electronic media such as various electronic print media, online journals and so on.

3. Data Analysis

a. Data reduction

Have the understanding to summarize and choose the things that become important point and main.

b. Data Serving

This research uses qualitative method, that is data presented in the form of short description and is non-numerical.

c. Draw a conclusion

Provide verification of the entire contents of the writing in the study.

Result and Discussion

A. The UN Female Peacekeepers in Liberia as a Form of Peacekeeping

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is a Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia which found in 2003 after fourteen years of civil war. Under Security Council Resolution 1325 which emphasizes giving special attention to women victims of violence who encourage UNMIL and Liberian organizations to actively address the violence experienced by women during the

conflict and support women's participation in post-conflict peacekeeping and peace-building operations (Advisor, 2010). UNMIL has a multi-dimensional mandate that gives authority to provide security after the conflict subsides while helping lay the foundation for lasting peace for Liberia. The mandate given by the Security Council to UNMIL is to support the implementation of ceasefire agreements, develop and implement DDR programs, protect UN personnel and civilians under threat of physical violence, facilitate humanitarian assistance, support security sector reform, especially police reform, assist in reforming national authorities throughout the country, and assisted in national elections, held in 2005. As a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, UNMIL tasked with helping to rebuild the social, economic and political structures of the country left behind by conflict (Samii, 2018).

For the mission, the Security Council authorized 15,000 UN military personnel, including up to 250 military observers, 160 staff, and 1,115 UN police officers (Das, 2018). In 2009 UNMIL had 168 female peacekeepers in military forces and 53 police in the police component mission. There are also 130 women in the Formed Police Unit (FPU) of a total of 270 people. Women constitute 30 percent of international civil staff and 25 percent of national staff (Washington, 2009).

B. The Role of Women in Terms of Initiating Peace Talk as a Form of Peace Making

The first meeting of Mass Action for Peace starts with only four women then, soon grew to meetings of more than 500 women. They organized mass protests: they danced, sang, wept, and sat. They began a sex strike (refusing to have sex with their husbands). Lining the streets in bright white t-shirts, they sat through the rain, blazing sun, wind and sometimes with bullets or air raids whirling around them. They sat with only one simple message: "We Want Peace, No More War." Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace insisted on meeting with President

Charles Taylor. Finally, after weeks of protest, he agreed to see them. The result of this meeting is that President Taylor refused to meet with the rebel factions. He ignored the women's plea for peace, but this did not stop the women (Lederach, 2011).

The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace initially communicated their message through participation not only with religious activities and peaceful marches but also campaigned through locally relevant media of radio, television, and newspapers (Brysk, 2013). They went to the United States Embassy and the international press. The pressure mounted and the women did not stop until eventually, the day came when Charles Taylor could no longer ignore the power of the women who gathered. He agreed to meet for peace talks with rebel faction, Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement of Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). Those two rebel factions also agreed to meet for peace talks in Accra, Ghana. Despite their leadership, the women excluded from the talks. They not invited to the negotiation table. Their voices did not count, but they had found new power in their collectivity. Once again, they began talking and gathering. They spread their message throughout the marketplaces. One mother to another mother. Their message soon reached mothers in Ghana. The Ghanaian women began gathering in marketplaces, on street corners, in Churches and Mosques, and they, in turn, alerted their Sierra Leonean Ivorian, and Nigeria sisters (Lederach, 2011).

Mass Action for Peace got most of its funding from religious organizations. Other funding came from influential people who wished to remain anonymous, some from ordinary supporters, and some from influential people who wished to remain anonymous, some from ordinary supporters, and some from international non-governmental organizations (Stiehm, 2018). From the funding of Mass Action for Peace got enabled to them to send the delegation to travel to Accra, Ghana as the venue where the Peace Talks held (Theobald, 2014).

C. The Role of Women in Political, Economic, Social, and Infrastructure Reconstruction as a Form of Peace Building

The role of President Ellen Johnson in economic reconstruction in order to maintain peace in Liberia is quite significant. During the violence, Liberia had become one of the world's most impoverished nations with crippling levels of unemployment. Johnson Sirleaf immediately sought to debt amelioration and the lifting of trade sanctions from the international community. By late 2010, Liberia's entire debt had been erased (Elders, 2019). She successfully negotiated \$4.6 billion in external debt forgiveness and the lifting of UN trade sanctions, which have allowed Liberia to access international markets once again. She increased the national budget from \$80 million in 2006 to over \$672 million and an annual GDP growth rate of more than 7% in 2012. During her two terms, President Johnson Sirleaf has focused on rebuilding the country, attracting over \$16 billion in foreign direct investment (Nation, 2017).

Political reconstruction in the President Ellen Johnson office done through strengthened Liberia's democratic institution by enacting the country first Freedom of Information Act (Lloyd, 2018) and President Ellen Johnson also enforced equal rights for women, rights that were routinely ignored and abused during the chaotic years of civil war. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has appointed more women to positions in government than at any time in the nation's history. Women hold 31 percent of top ministerial posts, 29 percent of the Deputy Minister positions, and 25 of the Assistant Minister posts. These statistics contained in a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender and Development in 2012. The survey further reports that, in Liberia 15 counties, 5 of the Super intendants 33.3 percent are women, as are three of the 15 Assistant Superintendents, or 20 percent. Women head several of the critical governance entities, among them, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (Frances Johnson Allison); National

Elections Commission (Elizabeth Nelson); and the Public Procurement Concession Commission (Peggy Varfley Meres).

During the civil war, Liberia's healthcare infrastructure was severely damaged, with less than half of the population having any access to medical care by 2003. As the prove how is the effort from Johnson Sirleaf for social reconstruction through by helped rebuild the healthcare system through new clinics, schools, and training centers. Following the Ebola epidemic, she launched a national community health assistance program to serve more than 4,000 remote communities in the hardest to reach areas, recognizing that primary healthcare providers are the best positioned to spot the early warning signs of outbreaks of the spreading of Ebola (Elders, 2019).

Ellen Johnson in maintaining Liberia from the absence of negative peace into positive peace through building infrastructure. During decades of fighting for freedom, justice, and equality in Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has spent more than nine years rebuilding post-conflict for Liberia. For infrastructure projects, she managed to complete more than 800 miles of new roads and attracted a significant number of foreign investments in the mining, forestry and agricultural sectors during her presidency (Ngugi, 2018).

Conclusion

To realize the peace, the author sees that there will not be a case or resolution of a case if there is no political opportunity. Through this political opportunity, women can participate in becoming agents of change, whether they carry the names of individuals or in a non-governmental organization. This writer can associate with what has been done by LEymah Gbowee, LWI, AFELL, MARWOPNET, and WIPNET. Glancing at the role of the peace activist

as an agent of change in the case of Liberia is because they avoid using violence. Janan Women Activist in carrying out efforts to create peace in cases that occurred in Liberia assisted by the presence of regional-based women's movements in it.

The solidarity of all women in Liberia who are tired of endless war makes them very consistent with continuing to do mass action in Monrovia until the warring parties want to do peace talks. The female Peace activist always mobilizes various strategies no matter how the peace agreement reached. The amazing thing from Liberian women in their role as victims became peace agents because their movement strongly rejected violence activities even though they faced warring parties who always held weapons.

The success of women in Liberia in creating peace in Liberia is a turning point that women have never been a party to war and even become victims but, dare to take the initiative to stop the conflict. Johan Galtung's theory of Conflict Resolution through three stages, namely Peace Keeping, Peace Making, and Peace Building proves that women can be involved in each of these stages. Women become role models for the community because they have a significant influence on the peace process and lasting peace in Liberia.

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