

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN's ROLE IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LIBERIA

In this chapter, the author will discuss how the involvement of women in the Civil War that occurred in Liberia. As we know that women have the right to play a role in the peace process. The author wants to prove that in this case women in Liberia have a role in conflict resolution and participate in escorting Liberia from adverse peace conditions to real peace based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which regulates that women can participate in the peace process along with theories that previously described.

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

Peacekeeping operations are an integral mission of the United Nations or the efforts of the international community towards countries that experience a conflict that aims to stabilize and overcome development challenges in a situation that is prone to the conflict which may break again or even increase. Peacekeeping missions specifically carried out under the UN have traditionally focused on helping warring parties to implement peace agreements and maintain peace after civil war through mechanisms such as monitoring ceasefire agreements or regulating buffer zones between warring parties. From the operation, it hoped that it could also help build self-confidence and reduce problems from violations of commitments that have agreed in the country where Peacekeeping missions are carried out (Samii, 2018).

The Civil War that took place in Liberia directly affected women and children which implied reinforcing the existence of inequality and gender discrimination is an irony that is considered normal and continues to do. Endless suffering experienced motivates women to stop surrender to the misfortune that befell them. The movement of women by becoming agents of active peace in conflicts that occur is a role to prove that women do not create war but become victims but can become parties to spread peace. Unfortunately, women's

struggles through their role as key players and agents of peace change are mostly unrecognized.

Recognizing and integrating differences in women's understanding, experience and abilities into all aspects of UN peace operations is vital for the success of UN peacekeeping efforts and maintaining peace. The United Nations Peacekeeping Operation was mandated by the Security Council to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in all functions of peace. Women as agents of peace are a strategic role to support the immediate creation of peace in the ongoing conflict because women have traits that tend to refuse to solve problems through acts of violence (Nations, 2016).

The United Nations through Peacekeeping operations has committed to endorsing and addressing peacekeeping missions through various gender-balanced and timely initiatives. With the presence of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 encouraging women's participation at all levels of member states within the United Nations including the role to increase the number of personnel at the level of political leadership, recruitment of military or police members, and foot soldiers. Men as war makers and women as peacemakers because women genetically have a more empathetic attitude so women must have a role in the process of peacekeeping. According to UN statistics "Women's participation in peacekeeping missions is slowly increasing. Historically, female peacekeepers were introducing in 1957. There were only 5 out of 6,250 troops during the period 1957 to 1979. The number increased to 20 from 20,000 military personnel in 1989 Only 1% of uniformed female personnel were placed in UN peacekeeping missions in 1993, while 1.235 of 65,555 (1.8%) were women in the military in 2006. A total of 1,034 women out of 71,673 (1.7) were in the military in 2007. The UN is still a male-dominated organization with 13% of women in decision-making positions in the Secretariat at the end of 1994. Besides, UN sources indicated that 1% of military personnel deployed in international operations in 2004 were women. , women's peacekeeping forces have risen to 7% and in the military to 2%. In 2012, 3% in the military were women, and

10% are peacekeepers, the same figure continues until April 2015" (Ghimire, 2017).

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).



Figure 4. 1 The world's first all-women Formed Police Unit from India

Source: India Times - The world's first all-women Formed Police Unit was deployed from India to the UNMIL in January 2007. *Published online at www.indiatimes.com* Retrieved from <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/world/the-world-s-first-all-women-indian-police-unit-has-served-its-un-mission-is-now-coming-home-250177.html>

India sent the Women's Formed Police Unit (FFPU) to Liberia in the United Nations Mission in Liberia for the first time in 2007. More than a hundred female police officers trained in mass control and conflict resolution. FFPU is prepared to quickly respond to any conflict that might erupt in Liberia because it does not have a strong army or armed police force. FFPU is a symbol of progress for Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which stipulates that peacekeeping missions support women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding. India scored high for pioneering a police unit that was all women, serving with other female officers from Nigeria and elsewhere. The United Nations female police, known as "blue helmets," have inspired Liberian women to join the national police force. In 2007, only six percent of Liberia's police were women. Today, it has risen to 15 percent with roughly 600 female police officers. The Indian women also sponsor an orphanage, teach self-defense and computer classes

to local women, and reach out to survivors of sexual abuse (Allan, 2010).



Figure 4. 2 Medical Specialist within The FPU Provides Free Medical Care To A Local Family

Source: Heric. C. - United Nations Peacekeeping. *Published at [www.flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/unpeacekeeping/5709782005/in/photostream/)*. Retrieved <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unpeacekeeping/5709782005/in/photostream/> [online source]

FFPU gave specific tasks in guarding the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Monrovia, providing security at local events, drug raids, and riot control. However, they also started community-focused programs to empower local women and girls. The strategy of this unit is to support local women who are victims of sexual violence to rise to life again making it easier to build trust and mutual support between the police and the local community. The second Indian FPU deployed in January 2008 in Liberia. In addition to their work, they developed community outreach projects to provide medical services, clean drinking water, and installed lights in public areas for nighttime. They taught self-defense, first aid, and Indian dance to the local

female. The third Indian FPU was deployed in February 2009 and began their work. This unit starts computer classes and provides education about sexual violence and HIV / AIDS. FFPU focuses on women and girls but also changes men's perceptions. After placing FFPU in Liberia, local people began to feel safe and secure. This unit was able to reduce crime rates compared to armed robbery, which was reduced by 65%, while reported cases of sexual violence declined.

The most significant achievement was that Liberian women were motivated to join the Liberia National Police and United Nations missions. Female recruitment in Liberia National Police remained high and increased every year to 10% by the middle of 2008 and 13% by middle 2009. There are numerous positive results from female contributions to peacekeeping missions. The UN has presented "the Indian unit I Liberia as a role model for women's involvement in security" as the best practice in peacekeeping missions, inspiring Liberian women. Ban Ki-Moon also noted, "the conduct of the FPU its efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse" (Ghimire, 2017).

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

During the heightened civil war that brutally hit Liberia, the women began the movement to initiate peace among the warring parties. Women in Liberia have been unable to endure the suffering of witnessing their brothers, husbands, their daughters being killed and even raped. Many lives have been taken away for an unreasonable war (Lederach, 2011). Leymah Gbowee (a peace activist) and Asatu Ben Kenneth (the President of Liberia's National Law Enforcement Association) together they create the Liberian Women's Mass Action for Peace (Brysk, 2013). They met Liberian women in the fish market, refugee camps, homes, street corner, Christian women in Churches and Muslim women in Mosques. Slowly the barriers of religion, class, age, and ethnicity shattered in the common desire to end the war. The women were refugees, educators, politicians, police officers, and market women. They were the creators of life.

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).



Figure 4. 3 The women of Liberia mass action for peace

Source: Gil, L. - The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace: Women can make the difference. Published online at www.culturaldiplomacyinafrica.wordpress.com. Retrieved from: <https://culturaldiplomacyinafrica.wordpress.com/2013/05/23/the-women-of-liberia-mass-action-for-peace-women-can-make-the-difference/>

Women of Liberian Mass Action for Peace dressed in white t-shirts and head-ties were a compelling symbol of unity and increased their visibility. White is a global symbol of peace and purity (Brysk, 2013). They circled the building, holding hands and dancing. Unshaken in their message, "We Want Peace, No More War." While the women gathered outside the building of the peace talks in Acra, the war in Liberia continued to spread. They received a devastating call that all-out war had

erupted in Monrovia. President Charles fled the talks, but the women held the doors, refusing to let men out. They would not allow anyone to leave until the peace agreement was signed and threatening to undress unless significant progress was made (one of the greatest taboos in West African culture). From that moment, the men went back to the negotiating table and constructing the terms of the agreement. Two weeks later the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia and warring parties was signed (Lederach, 2011).

Women were well represented and played a prominent role in the peace process. They were influential in lobbying the armed actors to end violence. In total, 17 percent of the witnesses who signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which included all formal observers from political parties and civil society were women (Zanker, 2018). Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace became an effective political force, acting to bring an end to the civil war as victims of the war women understood the complexity and gravity of disarmament. As mothers, they understood the suffering and needs of their children who had become machines of war. As women, they knew much more needed than the signing of an agreement and the promise of money to sustain disarmament. Because of that, they also helped to bring to power in 2005 the country first woman Head of State, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the effort to maintain peace in Liberia (Richards, 2018).

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

Two years after the Liberia bloody civil war ended, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf elected as the President of the Republic of Liberia in 2005. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the world's first elected black female president and Africa's first elected female head of state (Editors, 2014). Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is not a new actor in the Liberian political leadership in Liberia. She was involved in political stages in Liberia since 1972, and she became Liberia's first female Minister of finance. Her journey in the political arena was full of challenges and threats. Even though, with everything she already gets through

she can prove that women can be a leader of a state and she can be maintaining peace for two-term as president of Liberia from 2006 until 2018.



Figure 4. 4 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was inaugurated the 24th president of the Republic of Liberia

Source: Boulin, O - Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Published at www.blackpast.org Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/johnson-sirleaf-ellen-1938/> [online source]

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).