

# Managing Intractable Identity Conflicts in Kenya: Need To Escalate the Women Involvement

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**Abstract**— The debate on gender role has been on universally for a while now. The background being that the women have been discriminated especially in a society ruled by men. The argument around the capacity and role of women is very complex. The original role of women in African set up were made to appear cheap/less than men role with the event of colonization and the consequence was to be a long period of struggle for space and recognition by the African women. Whatever it is, the role changed and the struggle to occupy the new spaces created by colonization is still ongoing. The contemporary African woman is so many things including; an Engineer, a politician, a doctor, a teacher and the list continues. All these have to be balanced with the original role of an African woman which includes; motherhood and home administration and creating the balance is a great challenge since the modern women have abandoned some of the original roles terming them primitive. Much of these roles have been transferred to the house helps including the Divine role of Motherhood. Kenya like many other African countries have been the arena of conflict before and after independence. There have been frameworks to address the conflict and such frameworks have failed in one way or another because of many reasons such as lack of political goodwill, inadequate involvement of key stakeholders such as the women. I am of the argument that despite the fundamental significance that women play out in peace and development, they have never been sufficiently involved. My proposal which is the theme of this paper is the need to escalate the involvement of the women in managing intractable identity conflicts (IICs) in Kenya.

**Index Terms**— gender role, Women Involvement .

## I. INTRODUCTION

The conflicts in Kenya are multiple and overlapping. The Rift Valley, Nairobi, the peripheral pastoralist drylands, and the coast are among the areas most affected. According to Rohweder (2015), The high levels of violence are a result of a range of factors including: i) ethnic intolerance;

ii) border conflicts; iii) political party zoning; iv) competition over land and other resources; v) proliferation of small arms; vi) weak security; and vii) poverty, underdevelopment, and marginalisation. Intercommunal violence risks being increased by competition over the fruits of devolution and elite manipulation of local communities. Violent Islamist activity has tended to be clustered in the North Eastern province which borders Somalia, the Coast province in the southeast, and Nairobi. Terrorist attacks have increased since Kenya's ongoing military involvement in Somalia. The bias for this paper is IICs, It is annoying how

the Kenya rich cultural identities in Kenya have been turned into a tool for political power and conflicts, that Kenya, rather than use their ethnic diversity to enrich the Kenyan economy the use it to tear each other apart. Efforts to curb inter-ethnic conflict have failed flatfoot due to many reasons. This paper focuses on how failure of adequate involvement of women have contributed to the failure and how the escalation of women involvement may improve the intervention process in conflict.

Identity refers to distinguishing character (feature) or personality of and individual or group of individuals. Social identity according to (Jenkins, 2015), is simply - and complexly - a process of identification, it is no more, and no less, than how we know who we are and who other people are, for instance Kenya has over 42 ethnic groups with key features that are unique to each of them.

According to the International crisis group (2017) report, Identities apply to individuals, but can also be collective, extending to ethnic communities and countries. In such cases, people feel injured when other person sharing their indemnity are injured. Ethnic identities in most part of the Country have always been used to galvanise political power which is later used for the benefit of the community whose leader is at the hem of affairs, for example, before and after elections in the 1990s, supporters of then-President Daniel Arap Moi's Kenya African National Union (KANU) targeted members of the Kikuyu, Luhya, and Luo communities in the area, who largely supported the opposition. These target ethnic identities felt that their very existence was being targeted resisted this through fighting for their spaces.

Identities are constructed on the basis of various traits and experiences handed down through generations. It can either be ascribe (traits fixed at birth, eg ethnicity, place of birth or skin colour) or achieved (traits acquired or modified later e.g., language, religion, clothing or food). Kenya is a large multi-ethnic country, with over 40 different ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group are the Kikuyu, who make up about 17 per cent of the population (6,622,576). Other large ethnic groups include the Luhya (5,338,666), Kalenjin (4,967,328), Luo (4,044,440), Kamba (3,893,157), Kenyan Somali (2,385,572), Kisii (2,205,669), Mijikenda (1,960,574), and Meru (1,658,108). The country is majority Christian, with a substantial Muslim population (4,304,798) (Rohwerder, 2015).

There are two broad categories of identity; personal identity or self-identity and group or collective identity. Each person's self-conception is a unique combination of many

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identifications eg family, clan, and tribe among others. A person does not have one personal self but rather several (multiple selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership i.e. different levels of self. according to Fearon (1999), Personal identity is a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways and that (a) the person takes a special pride in; (b) the person takes no special pride in, but which so orient her behaviour that she would be at a loss about how to act and what to do without them; or (c) the person feels she could not change even if she wanted to. Further to that, "the (a) meaning applies, so that for usage in ordinary language personal identity can typically be glossed as the aspects or attributes of a person that form the basis for his or her dignity or self-respect. Used in this sense, 'identity' has become a partial and indirect substitute for 'dignity,' 'honour,' and 'pride.'" (Fearon, 1999).

Social identity asserts that group membership creates in-group/self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favour the in-group at the expense of the out-group in what is generally seen as the us and the others. There are several categories to collective identity and these include but not limited to ethnic group, cultural, religious, gender, clan, class. Social identities as Wendt posits, are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object [Social identities are] at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine 'who

I am/we are' in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations" (Wendt, 1994) Rohwerder (2015) inputs that the high levels of conflicts/violence in Kenya are a result of a range of factors including: i) ethnic intolerance; ii) border conflicts; iii) political party zoning; iv) competition over land and other resources; v) proliferation of small arms; vi) weak security; and vii) poverty, underdevelopment, and marginalisation. Intercommunal violence risks being increased by competition over the fruits of devolution and elite manipulation of local communities. Violent Islamist activity has tended to be clustered in the North Eastern province which borders Somalia, the Coast province in the southeast, and Nairobi. Terrorist attacks have increased since Kenya's ongoing military involvement in Somalia. Central to the conflict named above is the identity factor in these conflicts.

Identity is one of the several fundamental human needs that underlie many intractable conflicts. Behind every death in the whole world there is always an identity behind it. Such identities are built over the years. Kenya has over 42 ethnic groups, which have always been the basis of electoral violence in Kenya for example, According to the International crisis group (2017) report, the most serious clashes, which occurred after the disputed presidential election in 2007-2008, engulfed much of the Rift Valley region and took the country to the brink of civil war. Most of these violence pitted the Kikuyu and a few communities believed to have backed President Mwai Kibaki's re-election against the Kalenjin, Luo and Luhya groups that supported opposition leader Raila Odinga's candidacy.

Kriesberg (2003) rightly affirms that Intergroup conflicts are ubiquitous in organizations, these conflicts always involve but not limited to, disputes over interests and resources. Such inter-group conflict have been felt in most parts of Kenya since independence caused by diverse factors. Although causes of the Rift Valley's cyclical violence are diverse and its intensity varies area to area, virtually all conflicts are linked to land tenure and exacerbated by ethno-regionalist sentiments and politics. The perception that "outsiders" have usurped indigenous communities' ancestral land is the most potent perennial grievance politicians invoke to galvanise ethnic support bases, often with tragic consequences (International Crisis Group, 2017). Intractable conflicts infiltrate multiple spheres of life (eg work and non-work), weaving together identity and resource related issues (Rothman, 1997) some of which are not directly related to the initial conflicts. The initial cause of conflict in this region was land but over the years in has taken on a different dimension where land is attached to an ethnic group and taking it from them is seen as threatening their very existence. The Kenya identity conflict has always had a political dimension where an ethnic group uses political power for the benefit of his community at the expense of the rest of the other ethnic groups. According to the international crisis group report (2017), much of the discontent in Nakuru revolves around the manner in which President Jomo Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) dealt with land formerly appropriated by white settlers from local communities. European settlers had forced the pastoral Kalenjin, Maasai, Samburu, Pokot and Turkana out of land they historically occupied and set up farms, while Kikuyu, Luo, Kisii and Luhya were brought in as labourers. After Kenya gained independence in 1963, the Kenyatta government bought settlers' land and then redistributed it. The Kikuyu community benefited most, purchasing the choicest plots through cooperatives and land-buying companies. This facilitated the settlement of hundreds of thousands of Kikuyu in the Rift Valley, leaving the Kalenjin and Maasai feeling short-changed. Inter-ethnic identity conflicts is rightly ascertained by numerous scholars who posits that when identities are implicated, conflicts tend to escalate encompassing an ever-widening number of issues (e.g. Nothrup, 1989; Rothman, 1997; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998) in (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009). Parties then become trapped in and ongoing conflict spiral from which they have difficulty extricating themselves (Coleman, 2003).

The conflict in Kenya later took on revenge dimension bordering on ethnic identities when Moi (Kalenjin) became the president after the Kenya's first president, for instance in the later years, President Kenyatta picked Daniel Moi (a Kalenjin) as his vice president in 1967 and endorsed him as his eventual successor, a choice aimed at soothing Kalenjin land grievances. Moi took office when Kenyatta died in August 1978. Tensions in the Rift Valley grew when a movement that advocated expansion of the political space and introduction of multiparty politics gained steam in the late 1980s. Facing a stiff electoral challenge, the Moi government instigated violence against non-locals in the Rift Valley belonging to the Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya communities,

whose members were largely pro- opposition. This confirms what Rothman rightly affirmed, “when people’s essential identities, as expressed and maintained by their primary group affiliation are threatened or frustrated, intransigent conflicts almost inevitably follows, for such conflicts, conventional methods of conflict management are usually inadequate and may even exacerbated the problem (Rothman, 1997)”.

An unstable peace surrounded the 2013 elections. This arose from factors including: i) changes as a result of the new constitution; ii) a political alliance between former opposition groups; iii) peace campaigns to ease tensions; and iv) conflict memory. However future violence would remain a risk. (Rohwerder, 2015). According to many most political analysts, this would only suspend the problem since it never addressed the structural issues at the centre of the conflicts. In my view this is what was the most dangerous peace equated to mere silence that was brought forth through an alliance between the Nandi and the Kikuyu community in the Person of Uhuru and Ruto. There was completely zero framework that was initiated to address the underlying issues of conflict or the historical injustices and the fruit of that alliance has given birth to a new alliance in the name of “building bridges initiative (BBI) that has side-lined on key actor in in the conflict (William Ruto – the deputy president) Currently there is fear in rift valley and other parts of Kenya because of the change of the political alliance and new conflicts fault lines are slowly being withdrawn, what characterizes the situation in rift valley is well captured in the thoughts of many authors, “One central characteristic of intractable conflicts is that they are long-standing” (Goertz & Dehl, 1993) shared by (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998) and (Zartman, 2005). Intractable conflict are believed to be pervasive or chronically salient to those involved. Ever since independence Nakuru has never experienced positive peace. Most of the time it experiences relative peace and sometimes fear especially when election are approaching and depending on the political alliances. Researchers view intractability as a dynamic property of intergroup relations with conflicts becoming more or less intractable over time (Burgess & Burgess, 2006, Crocker et al., 2005; Lewicki et al., 2003; Putnam & Wondollock, 2003). Nakuru conflict has this tendencies whereby it is difficult to address current situation without going back to where it all started and the historical injustices that have been ignored over and over again.

There have been attempts at managing such conflicts to no avail for instance the setting up of District peace committees. While these committees helped diminish local conflicts, they were both underutilised and hamstrung by multiple challenges. The selection process, heavily influenced by political patronage, lacked popular legitimacy. Moreover, membership, which was short-term, voluntary and unpaid, was in constant flux. Government officials and local administrators also sought to undermine the committees, which they saw as threats to their power and influence. The difficulty in managing interethnic identity conflicts, asserts Friedman, creates serious challenges for

organizations/communities that serve as arena where these conflicts play out. Identity conflicts can alter the members’ attributions of behaviour and distort communications (Friedman, 1999).

Another setback into managing the inter-conflict in Kenya was the fact of inclusivity whereby key actors involved in the process. Women were underrepresented in formal peacebuilding institutions in the Rift Valley. In the ethnically mixed Nakuru County, Mombasa and other parts of Western Kenya which saw severe conflict in 2007- 2008, initiatives by state agencies are largely male dominated. Likewise, women are inadequately represented in District Peace Committees; during field research in the Rift Valley, Crisis Group (2017) reports that women were almost entirely absent in these forums. 41 Women leaders are, however, represented in civil society or community led organisations, especially those promoting health and education services for women and girls, inter-community reconciliation and peacebuilding. “If identity is part of the problem, it must also be part of the solution” (Kelman, 2006). This calls for proper analysis into the problem before attempting a resolution.

The relative absence of women in formal peacebuilding institutions means that their problems often are side-lined or neglected. It also deprives these efforts of actors who play an important role in their communities, especially at the grassroots. Women and girls experienced the 2007-2008 conflict differently from men. They were at greater risk of rape and other types of sexual violence, crimes which were seldom reported. Apart from being holders of their conflict issues, the women are key agents of conflict transformation through their very nature and failure to involve them only make the realization of positive peace impossible.

Intractable Identity Conflicts require a multi-faceted approach by which the conflicting parties identities shifts in order to permit eventual harmonious inter-group relations (Kilduff, 2006) and keeps key consideration to women. Peacebuilding solutions that do not include women may be harder to implement. Women are more likely to interact with members of other ethnic groups at shared facilities, such as water points, clinics or schools. These day-to-day interactions offer opportunities to build trust and reach agreements on sharing resources. A good model for addressing identity conflicts according Argyris, describes, explains and informs users not only about the what is likely to happen under the specified conditions but how to create the conditions and actions in the first place (Argyris, 1996).

Multi-facet approach because of the intractability of conflicts. Intractable identity conflicts are protracted and social conflicts that resist resolution (Burgess & Burgess, 2006). The political deal between Kalenjin and Kikuyu elites despite the fact that it diminished tensions, the peace remained extremely fragile, with myriad sources of potential conflict just beneath the surface. Ultimately, only enhanced grassroots reconciliation efforts and genuine steps to resolve historical grievances – notably those related to land

ownership and distribution – will help yield sustainable peace.

Research on intractable conflicts has tended to take one or two forms; an analysis of the characteristics and secondly a description of the techniques for managing them. Identity has been largely integral in the first perspective; it is largely absent in the second (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009). The Kenya inter-ethnic conflicts have not been sufficiently managed not because it has not been understood but because the facts of the matter have been ignored. The fact of historical injustices, the facts of the underlying causes, the facts political alliances and politicising of peace process. Kenya is best at putting up frameworks and analysis of conflicts and other situations but has a special gap in the implementation of the very frameworks. Added to women discrimination in most sectors only make positive peace harder and harder to realize.

Many researchers view identity as being implicated in intractable conflicts. Specifically, intractable conflicts are characterized by simplifying stereotypes and zero-sum conceptualization of identity (Azar, 1986; Coleman, 2003; Kelman, 1999, 2006; Putman & Wondoleck, 2003; Zartman, 2005), the identities of parties in intractable conflicts are negatively interdependent such that a key component of each group's identity is based on the negation of the other group (Kelman, 2006). Furthermore, for one group to maintain its legitimacy it must delegitimize the other. Kenyatta regime side-lined the Kalenjin communities, Moi regime undermined the Kikuyu communities and the Kibakii regime exalted the kikuyu community and the Alliance of Kikuyu and Nandi (Uhuru & Ruto) brought a confusion into the peace process only for new tensions to emerge now with the new alliance between the Kikuyu and Luo communities in the name of Building bridges initiative, the BBI has marginalized the Nandi community in the alliance and these has raised new tension in some parts of Kenya.

In identification literature, defining who one is based on who one is not is called dis-identification (Elsbach, 1999) share by (Pratt, 2000). Groups are bound up in IICs are in a state of mutual dis- identification, which is strengthened because of cognitive simplification whereby parties ignore the potential plurality of outgroup members identities. In Nakuru for instance one is either a Kikuyu, a Kalenjin, a Kisii, a Luhya among others. The Kalenjin by referring to other community leaving in their ancestral land and therefore needs to be evacuated as not Kalenjin only mean making the identities of those ethnic identities a threat and a burden to their very existence so much so that when an opportunity arises for violence, the possibility for ethnic cleansing is an avoidable.

The foundation of degradation include not only descriptive mis-representation, but also the illusion of a singular that others must attribute to the person demeaned (Sen, 2006). In intractable conflicts, dis-identification is expressed in strong emotions, including hatred, pride and fear (Coleman, 2003).

During political campaigns Nakuru is always characterised by fear of what would happen. Currently, even with the new political alliance, the ethnic community of the Kikuyu in Rift valley fear what will happen with the new alliance being created for 2022 general elections. This is a peace process as usual being politicised.

The inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya has always changed with the change of time not because of the complexity around it but because of the failed attempts to address it. All the attempts to address it has always been politicised, has never address the underlying causes and has failed to address the historical injustices attached to it. it has become is both salient and emotional, “since attacks on identity leads to distortion of information, it becomes clearer why dialogue and negotiation often fails and why this conflicts is likely persist over time and becomes institutionalized (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009).

This conflict and failure to effectively intervene in them have led to labelling and name calling of the ethnic other and invalidating the ethnic other as Friedman (1999) rightly affirms in describing the process of on IICs, “Intractable conflicts often begin when groups of identity is invalidated by another party (Zartman, 2005), since identity is central to how people make sense of the world, this invalidation is followed by a distortion of information to fit prior beliefs” (Friedman, 1999) also in (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).

The communication is greatly affected as trust is lost between the identities in conflicts and as communication continues to deteriorate boundaries between “us” and “them” become more rigid. Finally conflict can become normalized and as the conflict parties begin to collude to continue the conflict (Crocker, Mampson, & Aall, 2004) also (Zartman, 2005). However the Nakuru conflict dynamics most often than escalate or de-escalate during the political seasons depending on the nature of the alliance during the political period. Intractable identity conflicts are difficult to resolve largely because parties are trapped in ongoing mutual dis-identification.

Human need theorists argue that conflicts over needs are fundamentally different from conflicts over interest because interest are negotiable whereas needs are not. Identity-based conflicts are based on people's psychology, culture, basic values, shared history and beliefs. This explains why the conflict in Nakuru that started as resource-based conflict and turned in identity conflict whereby one group always threaten the elimination of the ethnic other. Identity conflict may be expressed as material disputes, in an attempt to give focus to the parties concerns. Material dispute may evolve into identity conflicts as the disputants invest themselves in the dispute and come to identity with their positions.

According to Kabongah (2011), there is increasing acknowledgement that women play critical roles in a conflict. They are not only victims of violence, but can also be active participants in the violence, directly as combatants, or

indirectly, by facilitating violence through fundraising or inciting their male relatives to commit acts of violence. Women also often become heads of households during war; women and girls learn new skills and contribute to peace-making and rebuilding local economies and communities. These changes in gender relations, however, are usually short-lived and societies resort back to traditional gender roles after conflict.

The most important distinctions among peoples are [no longer] ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. New patterns of conflict will occur along the boundaries of different cultures and patterns of cohesion will be found within the cultural boundaries (Huntington, 1998). It is undeniably true that the division affecting the world are identity-based. The conflict between Christians and Muslims, between tribe among other are real in the society of today. If identity is the problem, probably identity could be the solution and central to other identities is the identity of a woman.

I am not trying to suggest the women could fairly and squarely address identity conflicts. I want to support the complexity in managing IICs with Huntington (1998) when he asserted that cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones. In the former soviet union, communist can become democrats, the rich can become poor and the poor rich but Russians cannot become Estonians and Azeris cannot become Armenians. In clash and ideological conflict the key question was, 'which side are you on?' and people could and did choose sides and change sides. In conflicts btw civilizations, the questions is 'what are you?' that is a given that cannot be changed. And as we from Bosnia to the Caucasus to the Sudan the wrong answer to that question can mean a bullet in the head (Huntington, 1998). However wish to assert that every person has a role to play in end intractable identity conflict as you will see in the discussion about women role in the same.

Crocker et al. argues that while much analytical work has focused on the causes of these conflicts and the forces that contribute to their intractability, there has been much less research on ending the so-called conflicts in intractable cases (Crocker, Mampson, & Aall, 2004). That is why with proper research a solution may lie anywhere and a reflection on the women role could be equally effective.

Research has addressed the management of emotions through art, storytelling or joking (Maiese, 2007) also in (Retzinger & Scheff, 2000). Managing stereotypes through shifting conflict frames (Gray B. 2003. Framing of environmental dispute. In (Lewicki & Gray, 2002), (Lewicki, Gray, & Elliot, 2002) and (Shmueli, Elliot, & Kaufman, 2006). More general tactics have been proposed including delineation of the general skills e.g. listening and humility need by conflicting parties and their mediators (Portilla, 2006) along with specific suggestions on how to run a workshop for disputing parties (Kelman, 2006). Some fuller scale approaches or models have been developed largely to aid

third parties mediators in such conflicts in an attempt to embrace larger portions of the conflict management process. However these efforts in as much as they have been well researched, they have failed in addressing the problem because the women have not been sufficiently involved in the process.

#### 1.1 WOMEN BEAR THE GREATEST BRUNT OF CONFLICT

One of the reasons as to why there is need to escalate women involvement in managing IICs is because the women bear the greatest brunt of conflicts. That women have continued to experience the worst consequences of all types of conflicts is in no doubt going by results from numerous past research efforts. The case of the Kenyan woman is no different and the stark reality of the circumstances was brought into sharp focus in the 2007/8 Post Election Violence triggered by disputed presidential election results (Kabongah, 2011). The women suffered in their numbers both during the violence and in the post violence. Failure to involve the women in the intervention of the conflicts only mean that their issues remain buried in them.

Women, children, the youth and disabled bore the harshest consequences from the conflict to an extent that for a very long time many languished in IDP camps dotted in several counties, unable to return to their former homes or simply too traumatized to contemplate doing so. It is all too evident that women experience conflict differently from men (ibid). The pain that they suffer sometimes are shared to the children and because of the bond they share with their kids, the kids grow up with pain and bitterness of their perceived perpetrators and begin in most cases to develop the desire for revenge. Failure to support the affected woman means that the kids are affected emotionally, their husbands and the whole society.

From Garissa to Marsabit, Uasin Gishu to Mt. Elgon, Nakuru to Migori, women suffered the greatest repercussions of the post-election violence of the 2007. In the most violent types of conflicts such as in Upper Eastern, Uasin Gishu and North Rift, many women lost their lives in worst case scenarios, while thousands have been uprooted and displaced from their homes. The worst case in all these, is that they never received any proper address since there is no platform that support the women who have gone through such ordeal

Widowhood exposes them to other challenges arising from cultural practices such as disinheritance and being chased away from their matrimonial homes and for some who lost their breadwinner they had to wake up to the new occasion of breadwinning and schooling of their kids from nothing. They have to live with the trauma of the violence even as they brace for hard times ahead.

Conflict is not necessarily negative force but a natural expression of social differences in human's struggle for justice and self-realization. There are different forms of conflict; we have social conflicts which defined economic scarcity that manifest poverty that impairs human existence. There is also armed conflict that is defined by socio-political differences over territory and mineral resources which manifest in political assassinations, violent confrontations and low intensity warfare. We have inter-gender conflict which is manifested in male violence against women or the

other way round. The consequences of all these form of conflict resulted to the breakdown of social relations between individuals and groups in societies. Conflicts are inevitable and are rooted in relationships, said Lederach (2005).

There is no gainsaying the obvious that women have played leadership roles in the development of various African societies from pre-colonial days till now. Even though the patriarchy system in Africa cannot be denied. Yet the African woman possesses power that binds the society together. In traditional African society, the survival of the family and the future marriage depended a great deal on the African woman (Taiwo, 2010). This is undeniable fact even in the contemporary society and there are a lot of expressions in the street that seem to exalt the position of the woman in the society for example, 'behind a successful man, there is a woman.' Not every woman though because there are women who have turned their husbands into beasts. Different stakeholders (NGOs, Governments, and Churches) have contributed to community empowerment especially bringing women to the centre stage in peace development process.

The leadership roles of women have played in the development of various African societies cannot be under-estimated. The contribution of women towards social, economic, political and educational developments of Africa societies cannot also be gainsaid. In fact, traditional African society attached no importance to gender issues because of every individual had a role to play both in the family as well as in the larger society (Taiwo, 2010). In Kenya despite great odds and challenges women play an important role in the prevention and management of conflicts (Kabongah, 2011). Women in Kenya are active in activities of the fledgling District Peace committees and many women organizations including Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization and other civil society organization. They actively participate in peace building and conflict management activities such as inter-community Dialogues, mediation, dissemination and civic education as well as helping the women to start income generating projects to cushion them from the repercussions of conflicts.

In the traditional African society, there was non-existent of gender inequality. Each role, regardless of who performed it was considered equally important because it contributed to the fundamental goal of community survival. What this implies is that indigenous people in Africa performed varying roles to maintain the efficient functioning of their society, prior to colonialism. The claim therefore, is that gender inequality came with the advent of colonialism (St. Claire, 1994). it is worth stressing that the fact that because most women were not involved in income generating projects, whenever conflicts erupts and take their male counterparts, they remain vulnerable and it happened in most part of Kenya in event of the 2007 postelection violence.

In spite of the complementary role women played to men, the dynamism that prevailed ipso facto, was that there existed the patriarchy system where men were still seen as the head of

the family and leader of society. This therefore shows that traditional Africa was not based on gender inequality but a complement of gender, because each gender had a role to play in contributions to societal development. The contemporary Kenya has to be many things and in as much as the distinction in roles is affirmed, the issue of complementarity must take centre stage.

According to Leith (1967), women are teachers. Culturally, African women were the transmitters of the language, the history and the oral culture, the music, the dance, the habits and the artisanal knowledge. They were the teachers and were responsible for instilling traditional values and knowledge in children (Leith, 1967). The contemporary African woman in most African culture have become educators not only in schools as professional teachers but also in the families, churches, in the community and in different local groups initiated by the women. The woman has the capacity to form the shape the population. The challenges that Kenya women faces in terms of the formation of children is that because of this most important role has been left to the maids and television and peers, the women have failed in helping their to interpret their world or have transmitted pain, hatred and negative ethnicity deep in the hearts of their children.

Olasukammi supports the position above saying that women's role in traditional Africa is synonymous to societal development. The impacts of the women were felt in every aspect of life of the society. African traditional societies assigned to women the role of educator. African woman played a key role in the education and the teaching of children social, ethical and moral values which were part of the cultural standards for evaluating proper societal behaviour (Olasunkanmi, 2014). Such values and norms have so far been eroded as the roles have changed with women joining the industries and the upbringing of children is left in mercy of technology and house helps. Even in most churches children play outside as their parents pray. The women in Kenya in as much as they have to support their husbands in breadwinning, they must never forget the Divine calling to raise, nurture and educate their children.

Leith further argues that the formation, upkeep and upbringing of children rested in the shoulders of women when she asserted that the woman had extensive knowledge of the natural environment; they were gatherers, which meant that their communities depended on them to provide nourishment or they would face starvation. Indigenous women in Africa held vital knowledge of herbs and medicines that also ensured the survival of their communities, they were the healers (Leith, 1967). This ability to heal the wounded world ought to be cultivated not just by Kenyan women but by all the women in the world so that tension, bitterness might be addressed permanently Women were treated with unparalleled respect because they were seen to be closer to the creator than men ever had the potential of being. This is because women themselves had the ability to create due to the fact that they were able to give birth. As creation of life, they were charged with the sacred responsibility of caring for the needs of the next generation, and because of this, they can be regarded as the originations of the idea that is

now known as sustainable developments. According to Chitando There is an argent need for research on how different groups conceptualized the woman as a core creator of different communities endeavours before western intervention whether she is the hunchback Sogolon the mother of Sundiata of the old Mali or the beautiful Mumbi who is the favoured mother of the Agikuyu, all the African communities place her at the beginning and end of life (Chitando, 2016). God did not just create but sustains creations, the women in Kenya have to wake up to the occasion and not only create a peaceful world by also sustains the peace-filled world According to Tawiah (2018) Women are important agents for creating stability in the lives of their families and to promote reconciliation and peace even under very difficult and traumatic situations, yet violence has had disproportionate effects on their lives. Often as targets of extreme forms of violence, women in Africa experience the full impact of violent conflicts in the region as civilians and combatants. However, women's peace building potential have had no significant impact on policies and decision relating to conflicts because of their absence from the decision making processes and bodies in the region. Most peace processes do not include women, civil society and youth Kabongah (2011) asserts that there are many hurdles thrown across the way of women regarding their full participation in peace activities. They range from cultural dictates which exclude women from decision making processes in many communities to illiteracy and lack of empowerment, be they material, moral or financial. Women are also prescribed by cultures some roles that restrict their participation in other activities due to time and clashing of roles. Jolly (2017) Insists that, despite the challenges all over the world the women are defying the odds to make meaningful contributions as peacebuilders and peacekeepers (Jolly, 2017). In Kenya for instance, as Ndung'u (2016) opines that the participation of women in peace committees and in peace processes, is quite low, for example – particularly at the county and sub-county levels. Of concern is that the few positions that are occupied by women are mostly supportive, with few women holding leadership positions Kabongah (2011) asserts that in addition to the above challenges are the prevalence of rape and sexual assault, as in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kashmir. This form of abuse generates fear and helps to silence campaigns for social, economic and political rights. Representation does not mean meaningful and recognized participation that has an impact on substantial inputs in peace agreements. In addition, because they are compelled eventually to return to more traditional activities, women lose their gains and space when the peace process is over. This makes it very difficult for them to return to the public stage later, when the reconstruction begin.

Ndung'u (2016) described that, in March, Kenya became one of 60 countries to have developed an action plan to support the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), on women, peace and security. Besides the principles of the 2010 Constitution, the action plan – like the resolution – focuses on four pillars, namely prevention; protection; participation and promotion;

and relief and recovery. But even as the country celebrates this milestone, the engagement of Kenyan women in the security affairs of the country remains mixed. This is particularly evident in addressing challenges surrounding radicalisation and violent extremism and intractable identity conflicts.

Kabonga (2011) added the issue of culture that works against the women when he opined that cultural pressures against women putting themselves forward, which pressure women to refrain from travel, and not to engage in important public arenas. Where women do participate, they may not have the required education or training. Since most of the affected communities adhere to rigid cultural beliefs which, among other things, do not allow women to venture into the public sphere, women found it very difficult to come out and openly speak for peace, firstly because they were regarded as children, and secondly because they feared they would be divorced for having gone against the prescription of culture of not being allowed to speak before men. Managing intractable identity conflict has remained a challenge because the women are culturally marginalized in most ethnic communities especially the pastoralist communities in the northern Kenya.

A lack of resources such as a lack of access to employment opportunities and to productive assets such as land, capital, health services, training and education. Women peace builders faced the problem of lack of transport and finance to enable them to reach some areas affected by the clashes (ibid), For example Due to the lack of finance, they found it difficult to organize seminars and workshops or buy flipcharts and provide the victims with the basic needs they required Jolly (2017), however believes that the biggest challenge is that women and civil society actors are excluded from pre-negotiation talks and agreements, which are also highly secret. As a result, women and civil society are unable to introduce their needs and concerns during pre-negotiations when the agenda for the formal talks and the root cause are set. Most peace processes focus on ending political violence but fail to acknowledge the different forms of violence experienced by women and minorities, like Indigenous peoples, leaving these forms of violence in place and failing to address the security concerns of half of the population (Jolly, 2017).

Women's conflict-resolution activities are confined to the informal sector, very often at the periphery of official peace negotiations; in addition, even if women contribute to the promotion of peace, they are not invited later on, when informal negotiations start (or they are notified at too short notice and have neither the resources to participate nor the time to find new sources of funding) (Kabongah, 2011). Added to this is the fact that, Women's movements do not have established mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the gender agenda in post-conflict settings. For example, in Somalia male-dominated structures have not seen the need to implement agreed affirmative action.

Olasunkanmi (2014) is of the argument that feminist

studies in Africa have a number of limitations. One is their one-sided emphasis on the theme of woman subordination in Africa. They failed to give account of the positive aspects of women in traditional Africa. And also fail to draw out the immense contributions of women in peace building and conflict resolutions in African societies. This act creates the unnecessary impression that African woman as victims rather than givers and builders of culture within the society. And the result is the prevailing opposition that now exists between women and men in contemporary Africa. Were the positive contributions of women in African societies to be seriously reviewed and noted, both groups would have seen the indispensability of the other in the arduous task of nation building and harmonious living in contemporary African societies.

Thus at the end of 2000, the U.N. Security Council in Resolution 1325 reaffirmed the important role of women in peace building and resolution of conflicts and called for “their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.” Woman possessed the power to organize the family and the society at large. There was an enormous task and responsibility conferred on womanhood. In fact the responsibility of both men and women were seen as complementary to one another “there was a co-dependency and a balance that existed” (St. Claire, 1994). In the modern society, the women (Kenya women in this case), manage homes and therefore involving the women in the peacebuilding process would improve how the societies are organized and managed better and by extension help in the management of IICs.

It is clear, given the acknowledged importance of both democratic elections and the role of women in peace-building, that enhancing women’s participation in elections in post-conflict countries is essential to building peace and democracy and advancing the equality of women and men. Elections can provide the best possible opportunity to ensure women’s voices are heard, their concerns are addressed, and their potential contributions to peace and democracy are maximized (United Nations, 2004). Kenya still struggles with the 2/3 majority rule regarding women representation in elective posts but I am of the view that the more the women representation, the more the issues concerning the women and IICs Would be raised and resolved thereby creating and peaceful and harmonious society Women must be involved in conflict prevention, resolution and management efforts at all levels. When they are not active participants, the views, needs and interests of half of the population are not represented, and therefore interventions will not be as appropriate or enduring. Because the consequences of war weigh so heavily on the lives of women, they naturally show great interest in peace processes (USAID, 2007). According to Kenya demographic profile 2019, the percentage of women against men is 53.32% and in Nakuru according to County statistics 2019 is Nakuru is the third most populated county with 2,162,202 of which 1077272 were male and 1,084,835 were female. If this large number of people and their views are side-lined in the peace and development process the realization of a harmonious society that is not torn by IICs, would be compromised

Sustainable development depends on a solid family structure. The women are often the backbone of the family in traditional Africa. The African family has always been characterized by strong women who usually held pertinent positions in the family (Agarwal, 1970). In as much as peace is a prerequisite to development, peace needs development to be sustainable. Both peace and development process have side-lined the women especially in African countries and the end result is a crawling economy and violent inter-ethnic conflicts in many parts of Africa, Kenya included. Involving the women in the process of peace and development in my argument would go as far as promoting peace and development in Kenya and beyond.

African women need to be made aware not only of the negative aspects of the trammels of African culture and tradition in their lives, but also of the crucial role that women had played in the past towards the promotion of the culture of peace and conflict resolution in traditional Africa. For example, some conflict resolutions rituals engineered by women in traditional Africa contain important psychological/spiritual healing powers (Ranger, 1992). If the women are involved in conflict intervention process in Kenya, it will heal for its division and ethnic propaganda and peace will reign. Women can employ their unique skills of healing to address IICs in Kenya. My only fear is that some of this innate healing powers that the women possess is most cases are considered primitive by the modern woman. In my view, there is need to integrate the traditional knowledge with the modern knowledge so as to have fuller capacity to deal with societal challenges like inter-ethnic conflict.

In view of the innate qualities of women and thanks to the position they have occupied and the part they have played in the traditional society, African women can and must be actively involved in conflict prevention and resolution. In this regard, modern African countries can no longer afford to exclude women in important peace process. This must be done not only when working for peace within, but also between nations. Women had in the past played important roles in the membership of peace envoys. That role can no longer elude them in our time. They deserve to be made part of the delegation that is seeking for peace in any part of the continent (Olasunkanmi, 2014), involving women as delegates in peace would enhance friendship, trust, and motherhood across the different countries that borders Kenya like Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and South Sudan among others. This enhanced exchange of cultures will improve women capacity in managing IICs and other conflicts

Olasunkanmi (2014) insists that Women are possible and preferred agents of change, but as long as we see these women in the region as vulnerable, we cannot see them as agents. The contributions and roles of the women and women’s organisations to the process of conflict resolution and peace building have often been neglected in discussions of war and peace. Due to the multifaceted roles that women play in the region, it is imperative that as active actors, women and gender issues should be addressed in peace



building and security issues of the region. It is impossible to see the change especially those that support conflict intervention structures if women are not part of the change. There is need to start seeing the Kenya women not as victims of conflict but as agents of change to the IICs and other conflicts.

According to USAID (2007) report, Women often play decisive roles in negotiating the peace process. However there is a gap due to lack of empowerment. To intervene more effectively, women must be empowered politically and economically, and must be adequately represented at all levels of decision-making. Despite the difficulties conflict affected women face, their role in peace making has steadily grown over the past several years. In Liberia, the Women's Peace Initiative made major strides towards a peaceful resolution of the 14-year conflict by pushing for disarmament of the fighting factions before the signing of a peace accord. In Kenya especially after the 2007 post-election violence, the women played a significant role in the post-conflict process at the grass roots that contributed in managing the inter-ethnic violence across the Country.

Understanding the culture and currently prescribed role of women in a society is absolutely necessary when working on gender-specific programs. This remains true during conflict and in its aftermath. Women's role and status in society will determine best practices and the appropriate means of intervention in order to empower – rather than endanger – women. While in some cases women's position in society is relatively strong, in other cases religion, tradition, legal status or other issues may present substantial obstacles to program implementation (USAID, 2007). In Most parts of Kenya, the role of women not been clearly understood especially regarding conflict and peace and in other palace there is limited knowledge of the power of the women especially in managing IICs. Cultures that demean the women must be discouraged so that the women capacity can be enhanced.

While conflict inflicts suffering on everyone, women are particularly affected by its short- and long- term effects. Sexual assault and exploitation are frequently employed as tools of war; victimization leads to isolation, alienation, prolonged emotional trauma, and unwanted pregnancies that often result in abandoned children. As culturally designated caregivers, women must struggle to support their families and keep their households together while the traditional breadwinners – husbands and sons. 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. However, the determined efforts of women to bring an end to fighting is usually behind the scenes.

## CONCLUSION

Conflict is a normal and even healthy part of relationships. Two people cannot be expected to agree on everything at all

times. Conflicts are inevitable, learning to deal with them in a healthy way is crucial. When conflicts are mismanaged, it can harm the relationship. But when handled in a respectful and positive way, conflicts provide an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people. Conflicts exist in all countries and in every level of society, it is an unavoidable component of human activity (Brahnan, Sheryl; Hignite, Michael A.; Margavio, Thomas M.; Barrier, Tonya B., 2006). Even though it is both a call and an obligation to everyone to contribute to peaceful society, women remain better placed at the managing IICs in Kenya and beyond because of their unique disposition and resilience.

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