Women, Peace and Security: Ethiopian Women Role and Participation in Peace-building and Conflict Resolution

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1.Introduction

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (BPfA) 1995, is the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights. The document identifies 12 critical areas of concern. In each critical area of concern, the problem is diagnosed, and strategic objectives are proposed with concrete actions to be taken by various actors in order to achieve those objectives (BPfA, 1995). In this way, the BPfA becomes a comprehensive guide to understanding and combatting the key barriers to gender equality. Among the 12 areas of concern one of them is women and armed conflict which is the focus in this assessment. Ethnic and other types of conflicts are an ongoing reality affecting women and men in Ethiopia. Armed conflict destroys families and societies and leave women and girls particularly vulnerable. Sexual violence is often used as a war tactic.

Different programmes on women, peace and security should engage women in all aspects of negotiations, peacebuilding, and reconstruction to build inclusive societies. Such as training both women and men peacekeepers to detect, address and stop conflict-related sexual violence, support the reform of justice and security institutions in gender mainstreaming and ensuring that public services are fully responsive to women's needs.

Participation of women in the promotion of peace through conflict prevention, management and resolution is essential not only to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security but also to ensure equal rights. The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Although women played an important role in conflict

resolution, peacekeeping and defense and foreign affairs mechanisms, they are still underrepresented in decision-making positions. If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making.

In line with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, actions are taken by government of Ethiopia since Beijing +25, towards the provision and strengthening of institutional structures for the coordination and monitoring of actions on gender mainstreaming. The concept of gender mainstreaming was first introduced at the United Nations Third World conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 but it was not until a decade later that it was further developed.

The 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women resulted in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The platform notes "governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men, respectively.

In Ethiopia practical commitments have also been made in putting women's issues part of the development plans. Ethiopia has registered a remarkable achievement in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality. Ethiopia managed to have 50 % of cabinet of women and a woman president, Along with a female President of the Supreme Court of Ethiopia, Women Minister, at Minister of Peace, at the new established Ministry of Peace and female Election Board Chair. Despite all these great achievements, women still lag in Ethiopia. Women still play minor roles in all major sectors of the economy and politics; gender equality is still elusive in Ethiopia. Ethiopia still lags on gender parity in peace security like other fields. Women are discriminated and disadvantaged compared to their male counter parts in various areas from social, economic, and political spheres, more specifically in peace process there is a huge gap in gender mainstreaming.

This assessment on women, peace and security explores on achievements and gaps related to women, peace, and security in Ethiopia context. It seeks to strengthen Ethiopia's capacity to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding processes and benefit from their views, insights, and ideas. It also recognizes women's agency, resilience, and their positive contributions as agents of change for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in their communities and finally the way forward and recommendations will be discussed.

2. Women, Peace and Security

Peace and security, when most people think of these terms and associated processes, people most often think of men. After all, it is mostly men who get into conflicts that start wars. It is mostly men who fight them. So, shouldn't it mostly be men who make peace and provide ongoing security? Though almost all armed conflicts are started by men in the world, women are most affected. This has certainly been the model in the past but, given that there are ongoing armed conflicts in the word and according to ACLED 2020 world report conflict data program, the group noted with concern that: Over the past few years the signing of peace agreements has become an increasingly rare phenomenon, while the number of armed conflicts has decreased worldwide.

Interestingly according to the Armed Conflict Location and Data Project (ACLED) report for 2020-armed conflict decreased worldwide in most countries and regions except Africa region. In Africa identity militia activity (by ethnicity, religion, region etc.) is on the rise and it increased the engagement in violence by 46% (ACLED Report, 2020). The

main reason for the global decrease is due to the global pandemic of COVID 19 crisis there was overall decrease of conflict by 22 % whereas demonstration increased in most countries of the world.

Similarly, in Ethiopia most of the armed conflicts were incited by men and its mainly men who go to conflicts. Though, Ethiopian women served as lead fighters, agents,

spies, cooks, nurses during armed conflict in the country's history at different times and periods.

Historically, women have been involved in conflict and peace-making in Ethiopia way before the landmark and historical battle of Adwa- the war arose due you to attempts made by Italy to invade and colonize Ethiopia. Empress Taytu Betul -the wife of Empress Menelik II played a big role in strategic advice and military intelligence. Adwa was perhaps the most important battle in the history of imperialism and worth to mention a bit here. As a result, Ethiopia's prestige was unique on the African continent. Ethiopia's independence was secured, and Italy was so shaken by the defeat that years later Italians could still hope for revenge. Moreover, every non- African oppressed people could boast of so successful an outcome after a military confrontation with a European power. The victory at Adwa called to the world's attention the promise of a new Ethiopia and a new Africa (Jonas Raymond, 2011).

During the Italian invasion between 1936-1941 women played significant role in mobilizing, Ethiopian women supported the military that had gone to the war front by preparing and supplying food, clothes, gas masks, bandages, and other necessary supplies. Women, especially those from the upper class directly participated in armed conflicts by fighting on the battlefield (Jonas Raymond, 2011). Further, women played a role in inculcating values in their children and families that promote peace and peaceful negotiations. Women are also involved in different customary peace-building and conflict resolution processes in their communities.

Despite the various ways in which women contribute to peace processes, women are often excluded from formal peace negotiations and traditional institutions. Women's contribution in peace-building and conflict resolution is not adequately recognized. Women's contribution has always been invisible in major books of history in Ethiopia. Peace processes are largely dominated by men as women have less access to and control of power and resources and decision-making power.

Women should participate on an equal footing with men in peace-building and conflict resolution processes. Women have unique capabilities to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution based on their experiences and values.

Hence, the women, peace, and security agenda has so many objectives among them are increase awareness of international instruments related to women, peace and security and try to integrate/ incorporate to Ethiopia context. Understand why women must be involved in peace processes though, most wars are started by men. In the below section why should women be involved in peace process and security operations will be discussed.

3. Why should women be involved in peace process and security operations.

Women suffer disproportionately during armed conflict and often advocate most strongly for stabilization, reconstruction, and the prevention of further conflict. Peace agreements, post-conflict reconstruction and governance have a better chance of long-term success when women are involved a great example is the Liberian women movement from the documentary movie pray the devil back to hell, 2008. The documentary fil documents a peace movement called women of Liberia mass action for peace organized by social worker Dr. Leyemah Gbowee (a Nobel peace prize winner) the movement started with praying and singing in a fish market in Liberia. Leymah Gbowee o did a wonderful job in organizing the christens and muslins women of Liberia, to pray for peace and to organize nonviolent protest. The women dressed in white to symbolize peace, and numbering in the thousands, the women became a political force against violence and against their government. The women active involvement and advocacy led to the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the first African women president in Liberia. The film has been used as an advocacy tool in post conflict zones like Sudan, mobilizing African women to petition for peace and security.

Furthermore, establishing sustainable peace requires transforming power relationships, including achieving more equitable gender relations. Since, gender equality is about power sharing, it is about equity, it is about human rights, its about dignity and respect. One way of entry point to correct the injustice to women is post-conflict and democratic transitional periods do provide strategic and unprecedented opportunities for women to gain a seat at the table during negotiations and to advocate for new forms of representation and policies that promote equality, as well as other issues of importance to them as members of society.

"The systematic exclusion of women from the negotiation of peace agreements and implementing bodies is one of the key reasons why so many of these agreements ultimately fail and countries return to conflict." Don Steinberg, 2011. In addition, involving women means that a broad range of issues that are important to the population are addressed, such as accountability for past abuses, psycho-social support for victims of violence, restoration of health and educational systems, reintegration of displaced persons and refugees and trafficking in persons.

It is very crucial to involve women in peace process and conflict resolution since:

- Transforming power relations is vital, women should seat at the table of peace processes and discuss the issues on the peace table. Women should have a say on their concerns and agenda.
- Women are not victims only, changing the narrative of women's perception is very key.
- Women are committed to peacebuilding work.
- Women have unique experiences and perspectives.
- Women are very good in inclusive-consensus-based leadership.
- Women work across divides (different sectors)
- Women can access and influence. For example, in Ethiopia we have the *Siqqua* and *Sinke* women in Sidma and Oromia respectively who contributed a lot in their local communities to resolve conflicts peacefully.

- Women suffer disproportionately in conflict.
- Peace agreements have a better chance of success when women are involved.

There is scanty data or information available regards to Ethiopian women's involvement in continental or global peacebuilding and conflict resolution process. Although worth mentioning is that Ethiopia deployed a significant number of women to peacekeeping missions in different African countries, currently about 600 women peacekeepers are deployed in different countries (BPfA Ethiopia report, 2019).

At the continental level AU appointed, Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in 2015. In fact, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) has a meeting that was convened on March 22, 2021 for its 987th session at a ministerial level. The agenda of this virtual open session was, 'women, peace, culture and gender inclusivity in Africa' which aimed to provide an open platform for discussing how to build a "gender-inclusive culture of peace in Africa". The session created an opportunity to discuss further mechanisms through which increased representation of women in peace support operations as well as in the prevention, mediation, and peace-making initiatives could be realized. This is the first time that the PSC convenes a ministerial-level meeting since it decided to have the women, peace, and security (WPS) theme as a standing agenda item in 2010 (MoFA, 2021).

As a matter of fact, globally, no women have been appointed Chief or Lead peace mediators in UN-sponsored peace talks, but in some talks sponsored by the African Union or other institutions, women have joined a team of mediators. Over 10 years ago there was positive case of Graça Machel, the wife of former South African president Nelson Mandela, who served as one of the three mediators for the Kenyan crisis in 2008.

See below diagram women's participation in peace processes.

Source: IPSS/AAU

In addition, according to UNwomen on average, women were 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators, and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes between 1992 and 2019.

4. Ethiopian Women's Contribution to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

When we come to Ethiopian women's role in peace and peacebuilding in Ethiopia context, women contribute huge role in their societies and communities locally. The meaning of peace in Ethiopia is a broad concept, in Northern Ethiopia in Amara and Tigray peace is expressed as *Sellam* which roughly translates "having the freedom to think and act peacefully". The Arsi Oromo people meanwhile hold slightly different views to what characterizes peace: they believe that peace is dependent upon the existence of *Neggengh,* which roughly translates as "the preservation of their cultural

values". The pastoralist Hamer ethnic group, which neighbors the Borana Oromo meanwhile, describe peace as a state wherein the social life of the group can flourish, the elderly may enjoy their retirement, children can play, and the livestock can be reared in peace.

The Dassenech, who are the largest pastoralist ethnic group in South Omo, describe peace as *Shimit,* which they interpret as a source of stability, the replacement of guns with cattle-herding sticks, and the shift of attention towards community development. The Nyangatom pastoralist group, meanwhile, refer to peace as *Excil*, which they equate to "wealth, health, rain, and satisfaction".

In Eastern Ethiopia, the Somalis define peace as *Nabadgalyo*, which means "peace". In Western Ethiopia, the Anyuwak define peace as *Beet Meer*, which roughly translates as "living in love". Nuer express peace as *Mal* which simply means "wholeness ", this are some examples of the meaning of peace in Ethiopia, that shows as peace is a very broad concept and its definition and methods of achievement vary from place to place. Hence, the state of peace means different things to different people. Its meaning is also dependent upon where they live, the problem they face, their gender and their religious faith." (IIRR, Culture at Crossroads P. 4-6, 2009).

Regarding peacebuilding the *Sinke* is the symbol of Oromo women's authority. The long stick of *Zigba (*a tree of the Podocarpus species), traditionally given by her mother to a woman on her wedding day, the *Sinke is* cut about the same height as the woman herself and traditionally carried in her right hand. The use of *Sinke* is many, for instance in case of conflict, particularly resulting from natural causes, the Sinke play a peacebuilding role by mediating the conflicting parties.

Similarly, the *Siqqua* the peace sticks of Sidama women have a symbol of peace. However, in Sidma case the stick known as *Siqqua* is used to celebrate female honor. The Use of Siqqua is also used combined with the formation of a women's group called

Yakka, it is an act of female conflict resolution tool (IRR, Culture at Crossroads p.12-13, 2009)

The above examples clearly show women play a big role for peace and peacebuilding in Ethiopia in their different comminutes with their culture and practice. Hence, it is very important to change the narrative of seeing women as victims of conflict only. Rather women contribute enormously for peacebuilding, mediation, and negotiation in their local communities. Please read further culture at crossroads: Ethiopian women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution work.

In addition, 'mothers for peace' established in 2018 with 21 mothers from all regions in Ethiopia who participated in different peacebuilding efforts specially with the University students when there was so many reported violence in few universities in past years, they work hand in hand with the different peace clubs and student councils in the universities. The other worth mentioning initiative is the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise Africa) is established in 2017 to boost women's role in peace processes, so far 14 Ethiopian professional women are trained and are accredited members representing Ethiopia at FemWise.

It also important to take note women are also instigators and fighters of conflict. In most parts of Ethiopia women encourage men and boys to be warrior, brave, aggressive and promote toxic masculinity by singing, chanting and through different poems. Due to the socially constructed gender roles through masculinities and femininities.

4.Gaps, Challenges and Opportunities on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Major gap and challenge regarding to Ethiopia status of National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. In the past over 20 years Ethiopia did not prepare National Action Plan regarding UNSCR 1325 due to reservation, arguing Ethiopia is not in conflict. The Beijing +25 is prepared by government of Ethiopia in May 2019, it is only 2 pages that tried to cover women, peace, and security issues. It does not mention UNSCR 1325 at all.

The mandate on UNSCR1325 is now at Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, The Ministry oversees preparing National Action Plan (NAP). In addition, UNwomen in Ethiopia is doing currently mapping and assessment on UNSCR 1325 to complement the Ministry's work on women, peace, and security.

4.1 Challenges

- It is a UN document, its clear but then its highly technical if you want to work with women's group on the ground, it is quite advanced for local women on the ground. Its not only translating into local languages from English is enough, it is also important to simplify the concepts, without losing the contents. Like by using infographics, diagram, poster at the local level in Ethiopia context.
- Conflicts and war make it difficult to monitor the behavior patterns of parties in conflict, it is extremely difficult to monitor. In addition, as UN document its yet to fully implemented, for example in paragraph 3 which calls for women's appointment in senior positions 4 years ago, in 2017 Antonio Guterres – Secretary General of the UN make his commitment on gender parity which is 50/50 both women and men in senior positions at the UN, he has appointed six senior positions of women since then.
- Ethiopia do not have convincing numbers of women in decision making positions at different levels. By enlarge the women leaderships must trickle

down. Albeit Ethiopia manages to have formation of 50% of women cabinet, appointed women president, and first women supreme court president, appointed women Minister at the Minister of Peace all of this are commendable steps taken by Ethiopia to implement political reforms.

- Lack of awareness on the existence of the resolution specially on women amongst on the ground. Women are the beneficiaries of this resolution, but women are aware of it, so they are not benefiting from it.

- Absence of strategy holding national government accountable is also challenge or problem of this resolution. In addition, there is no monitoring mechanism whether government of Ethiopia is complying to this resolution.

- The other drawback the resolution does not acknowledge rape as a weapon of war,

- The resolution is seen as women's issue and as result civil societies are not properly coordinated around the resolution, this also a key challenge that needs mobilization and work around.

4.2 Opportunities

UNSCR 1325 is the first United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) to link women to peace and security agenda. Adopted unanimously in 2000 by UNSC. 1325 calls for the participation of women at all levels of decision-making, including: In national, regional and international institutions; In mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police and civilians; as Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General and for protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including: in understanding the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, 1325 states "effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security."

Increasingly, anecdotal evidence from the field has justified the connection between the role of women and successful peace building missions. The need to increase women's participation in peace talks since war impacts women differently.

In emergency and humanitarian situation such as, in refugee camps; through developing and delivering pre-deployment and in-theatre training of peace operations personnel on the rights of women and girls and effective protection measures, 1325 calls for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including: In emergency and humanitarian situations, such as in refugee camps; Through developing and delivering pre-deployment and in-theatre training of peace operations personnel on the rights of women and girls and effective protection measures UNSCR 1325 calls for the prevention of violence against women through the promotion of women's rights, accountability and law enforcement, including:

- Prosecuting those responsible for war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and other violations of international law.
- Respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps.
- Excluding sexual violence crimes from amnesty agreements, as they may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide.
- Strengthening women's rights under national law.
- Supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes
- UNSCR 1325 calls for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in peace operations, including by: Appointing Gender Advisors to all UN peace operations; Considering the specific needs of women and girls in the development and design of policy in all areas; Incorporating the perspectives, contributions, and experience of women's organizations in policy and program development.

Subsequent Resolution adopted by the UN Security Council are: Resolution 1820 (2008) recognizes conflict-related sexual violence. Resolution 1888 (2009) strengthens implementation of 1820. Resolution 1889 (2009) addresses obstacles to women's

participation in peace processes and peace building. Resolution 1960 (2010) provides accountability for implementation of1820 and 1888.

In addition to 1325, the UN Security Council subsequently adopted four resolutions on women, peace and security mentioned above. Taken together, the resolutions represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries. Passed in 2008, resolution 1820 was the first Security Council resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security. It calls for armed actors to end the practice of using sexual violence against civilians to achieve political or military ends, and for all parties to conflict to counter impunity for sexual violence and provide effective protection for civilians.

It also calls on the United Nations and peace operations to develop mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including through the training of personnel, the deployment of more women to peace operations, the enforcement of zero-tolerance policies and strengthening the capacities of national institutions.

Resolution 1888, adopted in 2009, strengthens the implementation of SCR 1820 through assigning leadership and establishing effective support mechanisms. It calls for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to coordinate UN efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence, as well as for the rapid deployment of teams of experts and advisors to situations of concern. SCR 1888 also calls for the inclusion of the issue of sexual violence in peace negotiations, the development of approaches to address the effects of sexual violence, and improved monitoring and reporting on conflict trends and perpetrators.

6.Global Indicators for Implementation

In a global world, it is important to think globally and act locally. There is concept called Glolocally, there are global indicators are signposts of change their 26 indicators around 4 pillars to assess the achievements and changes on women, peace, and security:

1.Prevention

2.Participation

3.Protection

4.Relief and recovery

As mentioned earlier, UNSCR 1889 called for the UN Secretary-General to submit to the Security Council a set of indicators for use at the global level to track implementation of UNSCR 1325 at the country level. Indicators are signposts of change – a means for determining progress towards an intended goal. A technical working group under the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security elaborated these indicators. The group developed 26 indicators around 4 pillars:

i. women's participation in conflict prevention and peacemaking.

ii. prevention of violence against women.

iii. protection of women's rights during and after conflict

iv. Women's needs in relief and recovery.

When we take a closer look at the indicators under each of the four pillars, Ethiopia has still a long way to go despite some of the achievements mentioned above. Still women's participation and peacemaking are low, protection of women's rights during and after conflict is very little. It is very difficult to find sex disaggregated data, there is no data base in in all the four indictors mentioned and there is no published work in Ethiopia.

7. Recommendations

lots of awareness work on resolution 1325 on women and peace and security to different stakeholders working on women, peace and security is very crucial. Since UNSCR 1325 begins by saying it reaffirms where Beijing declaration left off. It reaffirms the important role of women in the resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of equal participation, full involvement all efforts for the

promotion of peace and security. And the importance and need of women's role in decision making regarding conflict prevention, and resolution that is the basis on which the resolution is built.

With regards to way forward and recommendations gender mainstreaming in peace and security is crucial. Some principles of gender mainstreaming will be discussed as way forward for the implementation of women peace and security agenda are below such as:

- Gender-specific data collection and analysis.
- Equal access to and utilization of services for both women and men
- Making sure women and men are equally involved in decision making.
- Ensuring equal treatment is integrated into steering processes.
- Gender-sensitive language: not to label our language based on sex such as, women are weak and soft, men are brave and aggressive etc.

Gender mainstreaming entry points could be:

- Institution level
- Policy level
- Program/Project level

- Mainstreaming at the institutional level is ideal because if gender is mainstreamed at this level, then all the institution's policies and programs will integrate gender. That said, changing institutions can be very challenging and often happens gradually unless you really have the commitment of the leadership, clear policies that are enforced, and the necessary human and financial resources.

- Gender mainstreaming at the policy level is the next best option as programs that support these policies will, by extension, integrate gender.

- Gender mainstreaming at the Program/Project Level: This is the most common entry point for gender mainstreaming and the easiest to implement.

Gender mainstreaming in program design should: Involve both women and men in project design consultations and analysis. Include sex-disaggregated data in the background analysis and the justification of the program. Formulate gender-sensitive and/or specific objectives, indicators, and activities. During project implementation and evaluation: Strive for gender balance in staff/experts in recruitment in representation in institutional structures set up under the project. Enable women and men to participate equally and benefit equally. Include an impact assessment on gender equality in evaluations. Strive for gender balance in the recruitment of project staff and experts and in representation in institutional structures set up under the project. Enable women and men to participate equally in and benefit equally from program activities. Include an impact assessment on gender equality in evaluations and be sure that there is someone with gender expertise on the evaluation team.

During implantation and evaluation women and men should be in Zebra lines-meaning men and female should be equally represented. Moreover, strengthen customary/ indigenous local based women peacebuilding works, strengthen women's networks/ institutions among the regional states and at the national level. Increase women's participation and role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and leverage international standards and norms to advocate women's rights in peace and security. Finally, lots of advocacy and lobbying work needs to be done.

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