Women and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: An Appraisal of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in the Central African Republic

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Abstract: Over the last few years, women and girls have incurred the greatest casualties during armed conflicts. As a result of this, concerted efforts and extensive lobbying by international NGO, s and women activists urged the Security Council to adopt Resolution 1325. The adoption of this resolution in October 2000 served as the first international legal document that specifically focused on the protection of women and girls from violence during and after armed conflicts. Though the resolution called for the protection of women during and after conflicts and support their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict peacebuilding, it is imperative to state that very few countries, especially in the Sub-Sahara African region, have succeeded in translating the message of the resolution from word to practice.

The CAR found at the heart of the African Continent is often referred to as a paragon of political instability. The country became independent in 1960 from the rule of its colonial master, France and since then has been plagued by coups and counter-coups. In spite of the several Comprehensive Peace Agreements signed, women have hardly been part of the country's peace negotiations and hence found it difficult to translate the resolution from theory to practice.

Current literature on SCR 1325 in the Central African Republic (CAR) is still in its infancy. This thesis seeks to appraise the role of women in CAR's conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. This study further posits that there exist gaps between the aspirations of SCR 1325 and its implementation. Further, this research advances knowledge of the factors impeding the smooth implementation of this landmark decision. This thesis, therefore, concludes by developing recommendations on how women activists in the CAR can be fully engaged in the country's public decision-making and peace building activities.

Keywords: Central African Republic (CAR), peacebuilding processes.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS:

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PNU	Party of National Unity
SADC	Southern African Development Cooperation
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Cooperation
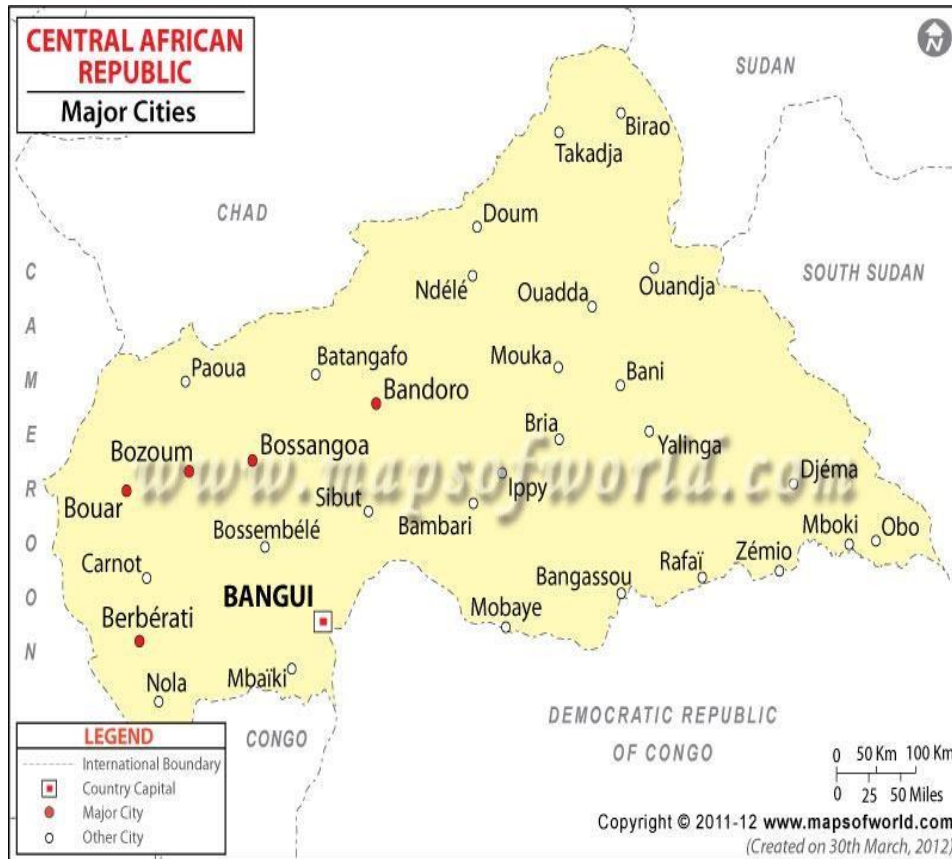
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1. INTRODUCTION

"Whenever we talk about women's roles in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, it means we want to repair a broken window. The starting point is the ability to identify that broken window. What is the broken window?"

-- Professor Pamela Machakanja

1.1 Background to the study:

Historically, during the cold war era, wars were fought between nations as a display of supremacy and a search for power and hardly ever were civilian populations the primary targets. However, with the state of the new world order marred by poor governance, lack of democratic institutions, unconstitutional change of government, the scramble for natural resources, and egregious human rights violations, there has been a paradigm shift from inter-state wars to intra-state wars in which the civilian population bears the brunt of the violence. According to Bellamy et al., (2004), a characteristic feature of contemporary warfare is that civilians are increasingly the targets of warring parties. This view is further elaborated by McCarthy (2011) who states that "the prevalence and virulence of intrastate conflict has had grave implications for women, most notably because there is no longer a clear distinction between the battlefields and the home front."

Though the civilian population has increasingly been targets of warring parties, recent studies have shown that women and children incur the gravest consequences of armed conflicts and sadly are often victims of rape and sexual abuse, which are increasingly becoming weapons of war. These acts of sexual violence are sometimes used as a means to threaten the existence of ethnic groups. For example, Chiseche (2008) revealed that during the Rwandan genocide, the Tutsi women were vulnerable because rape was used as a deliberate weapon to target women in their proactive role and to destroy the purity of their ethnic group.

Nevertheless, despite the victimization of women during armed conflicts, the role women play during and after conflicts has been a debatable topic by peacebuilding practitioners and scholars. It is established that women play passive and marginal roles during conflicts based on the fact that they by nature are primary caregivers and, therefore, have little or no

time to take neither arms nor engage in combats. McCarthy (2011) underscores the fact that women often do not retain their civilian status due to the changing trends in war and are heavily involved in combat by providing logistical and economic support for the fighters. From the assumptions, it can be evidently said that women play multiple roles during and after conflicts such as victims, perpetrators, survivors, peacemakers and peace builders.

1.2 Introduction to the research problem:

Over the years, the struggle by women activists, NGO, s and the international community at large in amplifying the voice of women on peace and security matters, showed that women are significantly relevant to promoting sustainable world peace and security. Turning to (Tickner 1992; Steans 1998; Karame and Prestegard 2005), there has been a widespread acceptance of women's rights within the global policy making framework due to the shifting trend from national security to human security. Despite the shared view of the above scholars, and the universal acceptance of women's invaluable contribution to maintaining peace and safety, it is important to note that, the intrinsic role women play in advancing peace, security and development, especially in the aftermaths of armed conflicts, has for long remained unrecognized, overlooked and, worse still, they are hardly invited to be part of formal peace negotiations and processes.

Following the global concern surrounding the elusive nature of women's role in promoting sustainable peace, women worldwide met in Beijing, to discuss better ways of strengthening and championing the vital roles of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding processes. This gathering produced the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action document that underscored the elemental role of women in improving enduring peace and provided three main strategic objectives specifically related to the role of women in resolving armed conflicts. Nevertheless, the outcome of this document has been criticized by some researchers who hold the view that the Beijing Platform was only declaratory and hence did not provide the requisite political and legal framework for robust implementation (Okeke & Ikeora;2011).

The widespread concern about the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and the continuous outcry of women to be formally recognized as pivotal actors of post-conflict peacebuilding and full participation in formal peace negotiations urged the UN Security Council to adopt unanimously Security Council Resolution 1325 on 31 October 2000 which served as the first UN resolution to specifically address the concerns of women during and after conflicts. Resolution 1325 preceded resolutions 1261 of 1999, 1265 of 1999 and 1296 of 2000. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (hereafter referred to as SCR 1325) served as the first international legal framework to exert pressure for greater inclusion and incorporation of women in peace processes.

SCR 1325, amongst other things, laid great emphasis on the need to 'ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.' However, despite the historical and practical value of the decision, there has been a dilemma surrounding its successful implementation. Ringera (2007) underscores the fact that women's exclusion from peacebuilding activities affects the society as a whole.

Having examined the opinions of some scholars and researchers on the SCR 1325, the next question is to understand why, after fifteen years of its existence, very little has been achieved with regards to its implementation, especially in the Central African Republic. This, therefore, provides a lead into looking at the significance of this study as well as the guiding research questions.

1.3 Significance of the study and research questions:

In spite of the growing awareness over the past years on the SCR 1325, little success has been registered regarding its implementation, and very few women have had their voices expressed in formal peace processes. In the Central African Republic, the implementation of the SCR 1325 is still in its infancy. In light of the above assertion, this research aims at advancing knowledge on the SCR 1325 in the Central African Republic and the role of women in contributing to the country's conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding processes and the challenges faced in implementing this landmark decision.

The Central African Republic (hereafter referred to as CAR), is a landlocked country situated in the heart of the African continent. The country gained independence in 1960 from France and has since had a long history of coups and counter-coups. Like any other country which has been characterized by series of violent conflicts, many peace deals and agreements have been signed between the government and rebel groups under the auspices of regional and international bodies. In 2007, the Birao Peace Agreement was signed and a year later, the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed. In 2014, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed in Libreville, followed by the 2015 Bangui

National Dialogue and Reconciliation, which was the first of its kind in the history of the country. However, despite the numerous peace negotiations, why have few women contributed in the country's conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding phase?

This study shall answer a central question:

'What has been the role of women in the country's peacebuilding process and why has there been a gap between the aspirations of SCR 1325 and the reality of its implementation in the CAR?' In answering this above question, the following sub questions shall be addressed;

1. What has been the role of women in CAR's peacebuilding process?

2. Why has there been a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the implementation of SCR 1325 in CAR? And lastly,

3. What do women activists in the CAR require for the successful implementation of SCR 1325?

1.4   Delineation of the study and Thesis structure:

The consequences of war on women and the exclusion of women from formal peace negotiations and peacebuilding process are usually similar in conflict and post-conflict settings. However, the aim of this study is not to provide a generalization of the problems related to the implementation of SCR 1325, but the challenges specifically related to the CAR. Thus, the CAR shall be the geographical limit for the purpose of this study. Also, this study shall make use of the fundamental concepts relating to the maintenance of peace and security such as conflict resolution, peacemaking, peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding, and gender as defined below.

The first chapter of this study provides an overview of the background to the study, the research problem, the significance of the study, the research questions, and the delineation of the research and finally an overview of the thesis structure. The next chapter provides an overview of the literature review and advances with the definition of fundamental concepts relevant to the study. The chapter ends by providing an in depth knowledge on the role women play during conflict. Chapter three sheds light on the methodology used in collecting the relevant information for this study while taking into account ethical considerations. Chapters four and five address the SCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions and sets the stage for chapter five which answers the sub-research questions of understanding the political context of the CAR and the role women have played towards the country's peace building initiatives and the challenges that hinder the smooth implementation of the resolution. The findings in chapter five will be further analyzed in chapter six which aims at answering the last research sub-question by highlighting recommendations on how women activists and the government can support the successful implementation of SCR 1325 in the CAR. Finally, chapter Seven shall provide a general summary of the aim of the study, and a highlight on the various areas which the study examined.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS TO THE STUDY

Introduction:

In spite of the proliferation of academic writings and research conducted on the issue of women and peacebuilding, and the overall importance of implementing SCR 1325 in post-war settings, the same cannot be said of the CAR.Recent studies have shown that very little scholarly work has been documented on the role of women in CAR towards post-conflict peacebuilding nor their efforts in supporting the implementation of SCR 1325. In the process of implementing this landmark resolution, a substantial number of academic work and training kits have been put up by a myriad of actors such as NGOs and even the UN itself (Cockburn, 2007; Potter, 2008). Potter (2008; 107) goes further to argue that literature and case studies on post-conflict situations show "a depressing paucity of examples of implementation and, in particular, strategic and holistic implementation. This view is affirmed by Hendricks (2011; 22) who underscores that there are existing gaps in the explanation for the 'disjuncture between policy formulation, implementation and a continued patriarchal system in which women remain disproportionately affected by conflict and indiscriminate violence.'

2.1 identifying gaps in the literature:

The successful implementation of SCR 1325 in post-war transitions does not principally lay on advocating for women's inclusion in the peace process but to get a more in-depth understanding of the dilemma surrounding their continued exclusion from peace negotiations. Afshar (2004) elaborated more by stating that 'it is more important to move beyond

peace projects that involve women and look at the factors that contribute to their poor implementation.' This, therefore, serves as the rationale for identifying the gap in the literature in line with the implementation of SCR 1325.

However, though SCR 1325 is seen as a channel of strengthening women's active participation and inclusion in conflict prevention and peace deals, there have still been some controversies surrounding its binding legal nature. According to Reilly (2007), the SCR 1325 is more legally binding than the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action document. Okeke & Ikeola (2011) shared the same view as they upheld the fact that the SCR 1325 is more legally binding than the Beijing Platform for Action document since the later did not provide the requisite political and legal framework for a robust implementation. However, this view is contested by Anderlini (2007) who further elaborates that the SCR 1325 as opposed to other resolutions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, rather comes under Chapter VI of same charter and can therefore not be enforced, neither can non-fulfilling member states be penalized. This, therefore, underscores the legal limitation of SCR 1325.

The SCR 1325 is widely accepted as an essential legal framework that specifically addresses the needs of women during and in the aftermaths of conflict. It is of the opinion of Klot (2003), that even though the SCR 1325 serves as an important normative framework, its application in practice will continue to be voluntary. Furthermore, unlike through most Security Council resolutions that require annual reporting (e.g. SCR 1612 on the six grave child rights violations), the SCR 1325 does not have such follow-up time frames (Klot, 2003; Cockburn, 2007).

Another contention in the literature as pointed out by Deb and Ray 2013 (as cited in McCarthy (2011; 33) as mentioned in the work of Deb and Ray (2013) is the fact that though there exists a large body of literature on the relationship of women to civil war and post-war reconstructions, most research investigates the functions of women in the aftermath of conflict or the effects that peacebuilding has on women, rather than linking women's participation to a casual theory of how that participation works to prevent a relapse into conflict.

In the 1992 report titled "An Agenda for Peace," Boutros-Ghali, former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali first introduced the notion of peacebuilding within the UN system. Boutros-Ghali summarily referred to peacebuilding as those actions that are established and provide supportive structures with the aim of solidifying peace and preventing the recurrence of conflicts. Potter goes further to state that peacebuilding also 'includes constructing the conditions of society to foster peace through development and aid, human rights education, reconciliation and restoration of community life.' Potter's definition of peacebuilding provides a broader and more holistic approach as it sets the stage for the inclusion and recognition of the formal and informal role of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding process. Potter goes further to argue that the UN typically uses peacebuilding to refer to formal approaches to post-conflict reconstruction and this renders invisible the many women who are involved in informal practices that they believe are integral to peace' (ibid, 256). This view is evident in the fact that women's involvement in peacebuilding process usually stems from the community and grassroots levels and oftentimes, their contributions are not recognized neither are they do they get represented at formal peace negotiations. Applying the UN definition of peacebuilding becomes problematic in the implementation of SCR 1325 given the fact that the definition is too structured and tends to relegate the informal but significant contribution of women at the grassroots level since they are hardly ever part of formal peace processes.

Within the framework of this study, the stance of Potter (2003; 255) shall be taken into consideration than the formal UN approach to peacebuilding, since it provides a broader and more holistic approach.

2.2. Definition of key terms relevant to the study:

In the course if this study, the following concepts will be used. Therefore, it is imperative to define them to avoid confusion and to ensure consistency. Below are the fundamental notions of peace and peacebuilding and gender and gendered roles in the conflict.

2.2.1 Peace:

Defining the word peace has become a very complex and dynamic issue as peace has different meanings in different societies and cultures. This, therefore, implies there is no universally accepted definition of the word. According to the online etymology dictionary, the term peace originated from the old French word 'Paix' meaning reconciliation, peace, and silence. The word 'paix' itself originated from a Latin word 'pax'meaning peace, compact, absence of hostility, agreement, tranquility, and harmony. However, over the past years, the growing interest in the field of peace studies urged analysts and researchers to come up with varied definitions of peace. Johan Galtung (1967), a Norwegian sociologist and peace scholar highlighted the definition of peace which brings out two main ideas - negative and positive peace.

According to his research, negative peace refers to the absence of violence and other forms of violent human conflict while absolute peace is 'a pattern of cooperation and integration between major human groups.' This takes into consideration justice, equitable distribution of resources, freedom and power sharing.

Other scholars like Sandy & Perkins (2012) went further to reveal that peace does not only revolve around the standard definition of the absence of war but also includes issues like freedom, tranquility, happiness, justice and equity. Therefore, within the limitation of this study, the concept of peace will be understood as "the absence of violence and the cooperation and integration between primary human groups".

2.2.2 Peacemaking:

It is in the view of Fanta (2009) that peacemaking is the process that aims at resolving a conflict and states that it is 'the use of diplomatic means to persuade parties in a conflict to cease hostilities and negotiate a pacific settlement of their dispute. Peacemaking, therefore, includes a range of processes including mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlements, good offices and it is usually applied after a dispute has crossed the threshold into armed conflict.

2.2.3 Conflict Resolution:

Before arriving at the definition of conflict resolution, the term conflict shall be defined as " activity that takes place between conscious, though not necessarily rational beings" (Nicholson, 1992; 11).This summarily means conflicts occur between two or more states (intrastate) or within the confines of a country (inter-state).Within the framework of this study, the conflict shall refer to the definition of intrastate and shall apply to the CAR, s civil strife, coups, and counter-coups.

2.2.4 Post-Conflict Peacebuilding:

The term 'peacebuilding' was also coined in the 1970s by Johan Galtung who called for the establishment of structures to support peacebuilding as well as to 'address the root causes' of conflicts. John Lederach, an American Sociologist, was equally one of the peace scholars who went further to propose a different concept of peacebuilding by elaborating that peacebuilding should engage grassroots and local NGOs and international actors to create a sustainable peace process. In the 1990s, the term became familiar within the UN system following the report on the Agenda for Peace by Boutros-Ghali which defined peacebuilding as "an action to identify and support structures that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict". Potter (2003;255) expresses a similar view but goes further to elaborate the definition of peacebuilding by stating that it "includes constructing the conditions of society to foster peace through development and aid, human rights education, reconciliation and restoration of community life." Though Cousens et al., (2001; 5) argues that peacebuilding has been "variously and often confusingly defined," it is imperative to note that peacebuilding usually sets in after a conflict has been resolved. It moves into the post-conflict reconstruction phase, and the aim is usually to identify the root causes of the conflict and to prevent the re-escalation and recurrence of hostilities. Post -conflict peacebuilding activities include security sector reforms, facilitating dialogues and social healing, developing democratic institutions and improving economic delivery. Hazen (2007) is of the opinion that improving human security is central to all peacebuilding efforts.

Within the scope of this study, Potter's stance in the definition of peacebuilding shall be taken into consideration.

2.2.5 Gender and gendered roles in conflict:

Gender and feminism are not new concepts, but by the beginning of the early 1990's, more scholars began to shed more light on these concepts. Gender is an analytical category that is socially constructed to differentiate the biological difference between men and women. It is worth mentioning that gender is opposed to sex. Ramsbotham et.al, (2011; 305) refers to gender as "the historical and social construction of role differences between men and women." Recent studies have shown that more focus has been placed only on the effects of conflict on women without mentioning the fact that men too incur casualties during conflict and are sometimes victims of sexual violence. Potter (2008; 109) has drawn attention to the fact that 'the consideration of women's gendered roles in conflict and its aftermath is incomplete without the review of the gendered roles of men with whom they share and must rebuild their societies.' This, therefore, implies that gender should not be understood as a concern for women only, but should equally encapsulate the contribution of men to post-conflict peacebuilding.

Oakley (1972), pointed out that in Western culture, women played the role of the 'housewife' and 'mother' and any effort to change the traditional roles of men and women in the society is believed to cause damage to the social fabric of the

community. However, in my stand, in the aftermaths of conflict, there tends to be a shifting trend in the role in reconstructing the society as women emerge from conflicts with new mindsets hence often undertakes challenging roles unlike in the pre-conflict era. It is imperative to avoid stereotyping gendered roles as it significantly impedes women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding. However, as earlier mentioned, within the framework of this study, the term gender shall refer to the definition of Ramsbotham et.al, (2011; 35).

2.3 Gendered roles in conflict:

In the past, women have been considered to be passive actors of war and peace and have been deemed to play minor roles in the conflict. Referring to the research conducted by the Institute of Collaborative Learning in Columbia, "many people assume that since women bear children and are primary caregivers; they are predisposed to be peaceful and reject violence." McCarthy (2011) goes further to state that "women do not always retain their civilian status during wars as they are increasingly likely to participate in wars either as combatants or provide logistical and economic support to the fighters."

By the above evidence, it may be inferred that women play multiple roles during and after conflicts such as victims, perpetrators, peacemakers and peace builders. These various roles shall be examined below.

2.2.1 Women as victims:

Modern warfare has had devastating effect on the lives and dignity of women and girls. Recent studies have shown that the adverse impact of conflict hits more on women and girls than it does to their male counterparts. This is because deliberate gender-based violence and discrimination are rampant and usually the characteristics in these settings. The sensitive nature of women during armed conflict often exposes them as victims of rape and sexual violence which are increasingly becoming weapons of war and usually with the aim of dehumanizing women. The UN Secretary General expressed a similar view in his 2008 report where he observed that in many instances, sexual violence was particularly brutal both mentally and physically and often accompanied by other heinous crimes. It is also in the opinion of Miranda (2007) that beyond undermining the cultural identity of women and their ethnic groups, collective rape functions as an assertion of masculinity and can strengthen the sense of loyalty within groups of male fighters. Furthermore, women are usually not only victims of rape and sexual exploitation during conflicts but are often displaced, become household heads and often have the burden of catering for their dependents. Turning to Izabiliza (2005), it is estimated that 250,000 Rwandese women and girls were victims of some form of sexual violence during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

2.2.2 Women as peace builders:

To ensure sustainable peace and to avoid the relapse into conflict, women's groups often run workshops that require members of opposing parties to work together, creating a forum for cooperation. As cited in McCarthy (2011;34), Anderlini reveals that women are thought to undertake peaceful initiatives by engaging with both sides that allow women the opportunity to monitor warring factions on the ground and to engage them in meaningful dialogue that helps reduce fear and uncertainty. However, Afshar (2003) does not support Anderlini,s argument and further states that historically, constructions of nationhood and nationalism often rest on masculine foundations-particularly in post-conflict societies- and so their ideologies are not necessarily altered by conflict but are 'simply suspended.' This explains why peacebuilding has for long been considered a male domain.

However, the contribution of women in the consolidation of peace takes many forms. Women contribute to the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants, Anderlini (2001; 107) perceptively states that women contribute to this peacebuilding process by providing physical assistance and temporary housing, caring for child soldiers and offering counsel. This is evidently true, in the CAR, for example, one of the international NGOs train women to act as host mothers or host families to children separated from the various armed groups by providing temporary housing, care and counseling to former child soldiers before the actual implementation of the DDR program. Women as agents of peacebuilding equally foster peace education in the aftermaths of conflict.

In line with the above, Sorensen (1998; 7) correctly argues that many women's organizations also promote many peace education for women. The overall aim of this peace education is usually to raise awareness to women on alternative dispute resolution skills and to foster non-violent ways of dealing with conflict. In line with the economic recovery of post-conflict societies, women also play pivotal roles in reconstructing economies that were shattered as a result of conflicts. Their significant contribution has no doubt brought substantial changes and redefined their roles in contribution to lasting peace and reconciliation. To cite the example of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Izabiliza (2005) revealed that

women in Rwanda became a driving force of the socio-economic reconstruction of the country in the post-genocide period.

Dialogue and reconciliation are also one of the peacebuilding areas in which women actively participate to promote sustainable peace and development. Porter (2001) is of the view that women often exhibit the ability to 'dialogue across differences'. It is, therefore, no doubt that women are not only victims of conflict but are at the forefront of promoting peace. Women's voices must be amplified if there is to be lasting peace.

2.2.3 Women as perpetrators:

During and after conflicts, the issue of females as perpetrators of violence has been almost completed ignored. A study by Cohen (2013; 383) shows that much of the current scholarship on violence in conflict setting assumes that women are victims and men as perpetrators. One question that peace scholars and researchers need to always ask is to know what roles female combatants serve in armed groups and to what extent do female warriors participate in perpetrating violence against non-combatants. Carpenter (2003) indicates that in conflict settings, women are usually not perceived to be combatants. Men are often viewed as 'presumptive fighters' while women are seen as 'presumptive non-combatants.'(ibid)

Wood (2009) argues that the presence of women in armed groups diminishes the 'need' for the rape of non-combatants, this argument is founded on the assumption that male combatants require sexual gratification through intercourse with women, and this desire overrides all other factors that might serve to prevent rape. This is because, with the presence of female combatants, they may be raped or forced to marry male fighters as in the case of the Lords, Resistance Army in Uganda and The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. Mckelvey (2009) pointed out that recent literature has rejected the notion that women are inherently nurturing and grapples with the reality that female combatants may be equally be prone to brutality as men. As cited in Cohen (2013), interviews in Sierra Leone reported that women were rumored to be especially vicious fighters and had a reputation for encouraging excessive violence. As one ex-combatant reported "we would sometimes put women in front when we are attacking villages because they could be the fiercest fighters." Restraining victims during gang rape appeared to have been the most typical way for women to be involved as perpetrators, and female combatants went as far as raping other women with objects, such as bottles and sticks. In June 2011, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the former Rwandan Minister of Family Affairs, became the first female found guilty of rape by an international tribunal for her role in encouraging attacks.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In social studies, a methodology comprises those rules that specify how social investigation should be approached; it sets out the relationship between the process and the product of research (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). For the purpose of this study, my methodology is outlined below.

3.1 Research Methodology:

Qualitative research methodology describes and analyzes the "culture and behavior of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied" (Bryman, 1998:46). I made use of this research methodology because I found it most appropriate to investigate the research question that spanned around understanding "why" and "how" women have been involved in the country's, conflict resolution and why there has been the slow implementation of the resolution in CAR. In order to justify this, I referred to Mack et al.(2005:2) who argued that the strength of qualitative research lies in obtaining "a rich and complex understanding of a particular social context or phenomenon" and in investigating the " behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals". In line with the above, I could answer the 'why' and 'how' of my research topic by interviewing different informants to get their beliefs and opinions on the subject matter. Letherby (2003) perceptively states that qualitative research methods allow for greater expression and insights that aim at achieving depth rather than breadth. This is again justifiable as to why I used this research method because the objective of this study is to get an in-depth understanding as to why there has been the slow implementation of SCR 1325 in the CAR and the role of women. Applying this research methodology provided me with the opportunity to understand the reality of the factors impeding the successful implementation of the above resolution.

Furthermore, I used a qualitative research methodology because the data I needed for this study could only be obtained by directly talking to informants whom I found relevant to this study, and through this method, I was able to speak and listen to the participants as they shared their view on the subject matter. The data collection process included interviews and the

use of questionnaires. The above research method was further used because, as perceptively stated by Letherby (2003), it limited the means of generalization. Therefore, I engaged the informants to focus on the questions and limited only to the plight of women in CAR.

3.2 Interviews and observations:

It is imperative to note that this study will not exclusively be a literature survey but will be based on interviews and comments of informants in the CAR which I deemed helpful to the study. Harrison (2011) defines an interview as "an encounter between a researcher and a respondent where the respondent's answers will provide the raw data". I had the opportunity of interviewing state employees (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender/Women Empowerment) because one of the institutions is involved in promoting the implementation of legal instruments and the other is focused on advocating for the inclusion of women in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and women's rights. Secondly, I interviewed representatives from of two women's organizations who are both involved in influencing and lobbying for legal reforms to increase women's quota in the various state institutional structures as well as women's involvement in the country's peace processes. The third group of people I interviewed were academicians who had extensive background knowledge on women, peace and security. Furthermore, I got in contact with activists (freelance journalists, Imams/priests,) who provided me with a "layman's" view and perspective on the plight of women in the CAR and to what extent women have been involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding process in the country.

The essence of interviewing informants from different backgrounds is supported by the opinions of Rubin and Rubin (1995; 74) who reveal that when people with diverse backgrounds in various situations express the same values, one can be more certain of the credibility of the information. The aim of this technique will be to maintain balance, in the range of points of view and diversity (Rubin and Rubin 1995; 65-74). A semi-structured interview method was utilized. Rubin and Rubin (1995) argue that the semi-structured method allows for clarification and elaboration of answers while aiming at keeping the focus of the interview at a certain level of structure to avoid the totally free flow often seen in the unstructured interview form. Thagaard (1998; 77) believes that a combination of methods is usually applicable to gain holistic knowledge on a particular issue. Therefore, bearing in mind that CAR is the case study and for the purpose of supplementing the interviews, I made use of existing data such as retrieving official documents from the former UN Peacebuilding Support Office in the CAR as well as other official reports, journals, articles and scholarly work on conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. Each interview lasted for 40 minutes. I had a gender balance for my participants because I considered the fact that the SCR 1325 is not only for women, but takes into consideration the joint efforts and opinions of both men and women. The informants were very much collaborative in responding to the questions and the general discussions we had. They expressed the fact that they had been longing to have a forum where their views and opinions could be voiced out on the situation of women in CAR. The research was conducted between 16 October to 5 November 2015 with frequent visits to Bangui, and other parts of the CAR.

In the course of the interview, and in my interaction with my informants, I found it very paramount observing the interviewees. I was able to retrieve very relevant information through the observation of the body languages; I realized though the women were responding to the questions, there was lack of eye contact. When I asked one of the informants why it was that way, she explained to me that culturally, women were not allowed to have direct eye contacts when interacting with people. In my opinion, it was a sign of timidity, fear, and intimidation. Linking it to one of the sub-research questions that aim at understanding the challenges faced in the implementation of the SCR 1325, I concluded that the fact that women adhered so much to this traditional belief. Their expression of fear and timidity have for a very long time played a role on their seclusion from peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes as they have been too timid to express their views and have allowed themselves to be intimidated by their male counterparts.

3.3 Ethical Consideration:

Finally, as part of my research, I seriously took into account ethical considerations by safeguarding the anonymity of my informants. At the beginning of the interview, I asked my informants a pre-knowledge question to understand if they had any prior knowledge of the resolution. After which, I shared out the informed consent form and the participant information letter and made known to the informants that I am a student, and any information received from them would be solely used for scholarly work and not commercial gain. The members were informed of the data storage method and the destruction of the data once the thesis is submitted. I equally informed them that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the interview. This is supported by Thagaard (1998; 22) who indicates that informed consent is essential to respect informant's control over information on themselves which they share with others. Wood (2006;379) further

reveals that it is the researcher's responsibility to inform the participants and respondents about the objective of the interview, the respondent's risks and benefits from participating so that they can make an informed choice.

As earlier mentioned above, ethical consideration and anonymity of my informants was highly taken into consideration, as I found it crucial to protecting the privacy of those I interviewed. I will highlight some of the experiences shared by my informants, but I will not disclose their identity. To achieve this, I will make use of the two methods as suggested by Thagaard (1998; 201-202), where no reference is made to anyone and no disclosure of data by informants. During the interview, I listened with keen attention as the informants narrated the ordeals they went through especially in December 2013 when the country was at the brink of a genocide. The interviewee made mention of the fact that she was a victim of gang rape and since then had dedicated herself to providing psychosocial support and counseling to other survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. One other informant highlighted the fact that, ignorance of the resolution was not an issue but their greatest frustration stemmed from the fact that no state institutions were existing to support the efforts of women.

Furthermore, I received a positive attitude from the informants and to get to everyone I wanted to interview, I had my trained local interpreter with me, who helped in translating the questions to one of my informants. It was at first not easy when I started interacting with this informant, but when the interpreter stepped in, the informant became more confident to speak out and this made the session more friendly, relaxed and informal and I got very vital information.

3.4 Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have outlined my research methodology and advanced a few reasons as to why it is the most appropriate research method. I have also explained the use of interview and the number of informants I sought information from and why I considered them relevant to the research. Finally, I pointed out the need to respect ethical considerations.

4. THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 AND WHY WOMEN NEED TO BE PART OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

4.1 Background to SCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions:

The SCR 1325 is often dubbed as the 'women's resolution', is the first and foremost about women's contribution to international peace and security. The resolution is not all about the inclusion of women for the sake of political correctness but is rooted in the premise that women's inclusion, their participation, and contribution to the process and substance of negotiations will improve the chances of attaining viable and sustainable peace (Anderlini, 2010).

The birth of SCR 1325 was as a result of joint efforts and concerted commitments and support of civil societies, NGOs, and governments that led to its final adoption in October 2000. The periods 1976-1985 was declared the UN Decade for women, and this witnessed the organization of three historical world conferences with a focus on issues concerning women and international peace and security. The first conference took place in 1975 in the city of Mexico, 1980 in Copenhagen and 1985 in Nairobi. Cockburn (2007;139) correctly argues that it was at the 1985 third world conference in Nairobi that the issue of women, conflict and peace received intense debate. Ten years later, as part of the follow-up of the 1985 conference, the Beijing Platform for Action conference was convened in Beijing. Turning to Cohn (2004), the Beijing conference had the biggest impact on the development of the SCR 1325. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action served as one of the most significant outcomes of the conference because it identified women and armed conflicts as one of its twelve 'critical areas of concern' (UN Women, 1995). The platform for action addressed the effects of armed conflict on women and girls and identified six strategic objectives as well as proposed some concrete measures to make peace and security practices more gender sensitive (ibid,1995).

After years of lobbying and advocacy on amplifying the voices of women in the peace and security platform, the SCR 1325 was adopted unanimously on 31 October 2000 by the UN Security Council. The resolution underscored women's rights to political participation and their involvement in public decision making, participation in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. Aroussi and Somerville (2013) point out that the adoption of SCR 1325 on women, peace and security was hailed as a historical event and turning point for women in conflicts, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. The landmark resolution gained prominence in academic literature as many scholars have expressed their views about this resolution in articles, documentaries and other forms of scholarship. It is imperative to note that SCR 1325 had its roots in other international conventions promoting and protecting the rights of women such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

and its Optional Protocol of 1999, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 1993 Vienna Declaration.

Furthermore, it is pivotal to state that the adoption of this landmark resolution was not just appreciated at the universal level but was equally welcomed by regional bodies such as the African Union (AU), Africa's continental organization that equally had the promotion of gender parity in peace and security as one of its primary areas of concern. At the 38th AU Ordinary Session of Assembly of Heads of State/Governments that took place in Durban, South Africa in 2002, the AU declared that policies on gender mainstreaming were binding and should be realized at all levels. The AU's normative framework on women, peace and security is guided by the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa which was adopted in 2003 in Maputo known as the Maputo Protocol, as well as the Southern African Development Cooperation Protocol on Gender and Development, (SADC) which was adopted in 2008. Therefore, SCR 1325 served as a springboard for the AU to orchestrate its commitment and drive towards attaining gender parity on the peace and security platform at the global level.

As earlier mentioned in the introductory chapter of this study, SCR 1325 was adopted due to the growing concerns about the plight of women during and in the aftermaths of armed conflicts. After the adoption of this resolution, six other resolutions were subsequently adopted by the Security Council and includes Resolution 1820 (19 June 2009), resolution 1888(30 September 2009) resolution 1960(16 December 2010), resolution 1989 (5 October 2009), resolution 2106 (24 June 2013) and resolution 2122 (18 October 2013). Though acting in solidarity and strengthening resolution 1325, the subsequent resolutions adopted championed different causes. Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960 and 2106 focus on the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Resolution 1820 called on armed actors to end the practice of using sexual violence against civilians and provide protection to civilians while 1888 established the effective support mechanisms for the operationalization of resolution 1820. It further called on the Special Representative of the Secretary- General (SRSG) to coordinate UN efforts to address the issues of sexual violence during peace negotiations. Resolutions 1889 and 2122 strengthened the participation pillar of resolution 1325 by calling for the greater involvement and empowerment of women.

In solidarity, these six recommendations increase the objective of Resolution 1325 as they all build the bridge in improving the situation of women in conflict and post-conflict periods. What are then the operational pillars of SCR 1325?

4.2 The Operationalization of SCR 1325:

The SCR 1325 is structured in 18 paragraphs and operates on four pillars -participation, protection, prevention, relief, and recovery. The 18 paragraph document addresses different issues. The four pillars of operation shall be examined in the sections below.

Participation is one of the greatest demands of the SCR 1325. It called for the increased participation of women in decision-making and involvement in conflict resolution, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives. Much has been witnessed in the increased participation of women in some post-war countries though the same cannot be said of the CAR. In Uganda for example, women comprise 33 percent of the Members of Parliament, while, in Rwanda, women constitute 49 percent of the legislature, while women in South Sudan occupy 30 percent of the seats in the Regional Legislative Assembly. This shows a significant advancement of women's participation in the political space in post-conflict settings. In the study of Abdullah and Lahaina (2011; 3), in Sierra Leone, a remarkable progress has been achieved in the participation of women in decision making. For example, out of 107 women candidates who contested the 2004 Local government election, 57 were elected, and in 2008, the number of female candidates doubled that of the 2004 figures from 107 to 225.

However, a UN Women (2012) review identified that out of 31 major peace processes conducted since 1992, only 4% of signatories to peace agreements were women, 24% of chief mediators were female, 3.7% witnesses or observers were women, and 9% of negotiation team members were female. It is still, therefore, apparent that though the SCR 1325 calls for greater participation of women in peacebuilding initiatives and conflict resolution, very few women peace builders and mediators are engaged in formal track I peace processes. Nevertheless, it is important to advance knowledge on the fact that though women keep being secluded from participating in formal peace processes, they still participate in informal track II and III peacebuilding initiatives by undertaking community-level reconciliation efforts, addressing questions of social justice, partake in DDR programs, though their efforts often go unrecognized. In the CAR, women have over the past years raised concerns about their exclusion in peace negotiations. During the 2015 visit of the UN

OCHA Deputy emergency relief coordinator to the CAR, while meeting with women leaders and grassroots women, she highlighted the fact that women in CAR expressed their grievances at having been left out for too long in the country's peace building process and though the Head of the Transitional Government was a woman, yet women were still largely left out from participating in the country's conflict resolution nor peace building initiatives.

Prevention and protection pillars are all focused on advocating for the consideration of particular needs of women and girls during and in the aftermaths of conflict and to ensure the prosecution. SCR 1325 has had a firm grip on international law, and the protection pillar goes further to ensure that sexual violence is excluded from amnesty agreements because war crimes including rape are liable to prosecution by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In a bid to strengthen the prevention of sexual violence, in 2009 the UN Secretary-General launched the global campaign against violence against women in conflict situations which mandated all UN offices and agencies to support initiatives and campaigns that help women in violent conflicts.

4.3 Why do women need to be part of peace processes?

"Is carrying a gun the only way of getting women to the peace table?"(Kuehnast, 2011).This question asked by the author looks provocative but truthful since most peace negotiations are dominated by men, many who were once active combatants. Though the SCR 1325 called for the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, this has not been the reality, for the majority of the peace deals that have been signed, have hardly had the contribution of women nor registered their concerns when signing peace agreements. The question as to whether only those who took up arms should be part of the peace deals has for long been a debatable topic amongst peace scholars. In my point of view, it is apparent that peace negotiations typically set the stage for the cessation of hostilities between belligerents but may not be sustainable, if it is purely male dominated. Anderlini (2007;112) reveals that the peace table is not a single event, it spans the entire process of negotiations often beginning in the midst of war and continuing through the various phases of transition to peace. The peace process is not a one man show, thus sidelining women from a formal track I peace processes may not only hinder the smooth flow of the negotiation process but grossly leaves out addressing the most pertinent issues that affect women during conflicts. In the paragraphs below, knowledge will be advanced on why it is imperative to have women brought to the peace tables.

From Kosovo to Sierra Leone, from East Timor to CAR, women often experience the same plights during and after conflicts. There is significant evidence that women are massively raped, sexually violated, abducted and often have to provide basic amenities for the entire household that is often cumbersome on them. It is, therefore, necessary to bring them to the peace tables especially when formal peace deals are being negotiated. Their participation offers them the opportunity of addressing the pertinent issues that women face. Touhy (2011) reveals that women have different experiences of violence and peace, and can bring unique insights to the peace building process. The consequences of armed conflict on women and girls are usually unbearable and often immeasurable. Thus, it may seem unfair to have them excluded from peace negotiations and the entire peacebuilding phase. It is, therefore, necessary to have the voices of women registered and their participation highly considered during peace deals since their shared experiences can mitigate the damage caused by the conflict. Women's involvement in peace negotiations does not only seek to address issues of sexual violence which are very recurrent during armed conflicts but to deal with other issues such as social injustice, discrimination, and advocate for the involvement of women in decision-making, and their participation in all phases of post-conflict peacebuilding. Bearing in mind that peacebuilding processes are all about understanding the root causes of conflict and taking steps in preventing the reoccurrence, involving women in the peace table equally gives them the opportunity to address the causes of conflict.

Furthermore, women have the ability to lobby for socio-economic reforms. During peace processes, women often press for legal reforms that strengthen protection against gender-based violence and support gender equality (Bouta et al., 2005; Cahn, 2006). One of the primary concerns of SCR 1325 is to 'mainstream' gender, but this cannot be achieved if women do not push for it during peace negotiations and incorporating it in peace building activities. These legal reforms could include advocating for policies that strengthen support for increasing gender quotas in transition and post-conflict government institutions as well as promoting women's political mobilization and inclusion. According to UNECA (2006), since military conflicts and diplomacy have traditionally been orchestrated by men, there has been a failure in a reliable system to safeguard peace. Thus, the inclusion of women in all stages of peacebuilding process becomes imperative. Though women are naturally known to provide for the family and hardly have a say in family decision-making, in the aftermaths of conflict, rarely do they emerge with a sense of their worth, thus need to press hard to be part

of peace negotiations so as to lobby for reforms on those critical factors that affect their lives. Turning to Anderlini (2007; 80), in Northern Ireland the women delegates of the peace process were 'respected for their commitment to getting to the peace table and taking every step necessary to get there regardless of their personal status'. However, UN Women (2010) disagrees with Anderlini (2007;80) by stating that though the all-female negotiating party approach was once formally applied in Northern Ireland, it can be difficult to replicate in other contexts due to the very particular circumstances of the 1998 Northern Ireland Peace talks.

Nonetheless, the Burundian and Kenyan cases serve as classical examples where the participation of women in the respective peace processes accommodated and addressed specific issues about women. In the year 2000, Burundian women participated in the Arusha peace negotiations that ushered in the ceasefire and brought an end to the conflict in Burundi. Furthermore, Burundian women who took part in the peace talks equally carved out recommendations that addressed gender specific concerns that were included as part of the reconciliation and reconstruction process, and in 2010 this yielded fruits with 30 per cent representation of women at all public decision-making levels. Turning to the Kenyan case, though women were not formally invited to the peace negotiations, they, with the use of track II diplomacy, were able to influence the peace process. After several consultations with the mediation team, women finally joined the peace negotiation as representative of both the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Raila Odinga and the Party of National Unity (PNU) directed by Mwai Kibaki. The contribution of women in the Kenya peace process influenced the success of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation.

Whatever be the case, one will evidently state that it is paramount for women to be part of negotiations and part of all peacebuilding activities as it offers them the opportunity of raising those concerns that are critical to them but irrelevant to their male counterparts.

4.4 Conclusion:

Summarily, in this chapter, knowledge has been advanced on the genesis of the SCR 1325 and the adoption of subsequent resolutions which acts as catalysts in strengthening resolution 1325. The four operational pillars of SCR 1325 have been examined and lastly why women need to be part of peace negotiations and in all of the peacebuilding phase. Instead, there has been a lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes (UN Women, 2010). This chapter will assist in setting the stage to answer the research questions by having understood the expectations of SCR 1325 and the extent to which women in the CAR have contributed to the country's peace building process and why there has been the slow implementation of this landmark resolution.

5. WOMEN AND POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter sets out to answer sub-research question one on what has been the role of women in CAR's peacebuilding process? And sub-research question two on understanding why has there been a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the implementation of SCR 1325 in the CAR. To respond to the above two questions, the chapter will provide a detailed appraisal of the role CAR women have played in the country's peace negotiations and peacebuilding process and examining why there has been the rhetoric between the aspirations of the resolution and its actual implementation. A brief background shall be made on the genesis of the country's crisis before delving into the roles and challenges women have played and faced in the course of supporting the implementation of the landmark resolution.

5.2 Background to the conflict in the CAR:

The CAR is a small landlocked country found in the heart of the African continent. Often referred to as one of Africa's poorest states, this volatile country has never enjoyed an atmosphere of peace since it gained independence from France in 1960. It is commonly described as a paragon of political instability with frequent coups and counter-coups by the government and rebel groups which have disintegrated the country. According to the UN Development Program Human Development Report (2013), the CAR was placed in the 'low human development' capacity and ranks 180th out of 187 countries where the studies.

The crises which broke out in 2003 continues till date with continuous skirmishes between the administration and the rebel groups (the Ex-Seleka and the Anti- Balakas). From 2003 to present, many peace negotiations and reconciliation forums have been concluded such as the 2007 Birao Peace Agreement, the 2008 Libreville Peace Agreement, the 2013

Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the 2014 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and the 2015 Bangui Reconciliation Forum.

With the escalation of the crises in December 2013 where there were reprisals and egregious human rights violations and other conflict-related sexual violence especially against women and children, the international pressure mounted on Michel Djotodia led to his resignation in January 2015 and the country handed over to Catherine Samba-Panza as head of the Transitional Government. It is imperative to note that in spite of the many peace deals signed between the government and the belligerents, women were hardly ever part of these negotiations. This serves as a springboard towards a proper understanding of the role of women in CAR, s peacebuilding process, as well as the factors contributing to the slow implementation of SCR 1325 despite its call for greater participation of women in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and public decision-making.

5.2 The role of women in CAR, s peacebuilding process:

Though studies on the role women in the CAR play in the country's conflict resolution and peacebuilding process is still in its infancy, it is worth mentioning that women have not been peripheral but have in little ways contributed towards the country's peacebuilding process. This dates back to the days of old where traditional peacemaking was very much relevant, unlike today where there have been changing dynamics in peace processes. Shukria Dini (2007) states that "women's peacebuilding initiatives remain invisible to policy-makers and development institutions, as well as their societies." This holds very true in the CAR. The assumption of the role of women in conflict resolution and peacemaking in the CAR is not a new phenomenon. In traditional Central African society, women were seen as peaceful beings who personified gentleness and goodness, thus justifying the mission of peace to which they were assigned. As bearers of life, they never carried weapons and this open nature of theirs facilitated the interposition and mediation of women during armed confrontation. To raise one's weapon against a woman was considered one of the most abominable acts. During punitive expeditions and pillaging, women's lives had to be spared. A fundamental fact of traditional Central African societies was the sacred character and the respect given to elderly women who played significant roles in crisis management, conflict resolution and the restoration of peace within the family cycle and social fabrics. Hence, when a conflict degenerated into armed violence, an appeal was made to the third party who was usually a woman to calm down the tension and reconcile the combatants.

However, with the violence that characterizes the CAR society, the sanctity and respect accorded to women as peacemakers and conflict resolvers have been relegated and replaced by hatred and violence against them especially during armed conflicts where they have become victims of violence, rape and sexual assault. With the changing trends in armed conflict, the traditional roles women played in peacemaking and mediators has significantly diminished. The experiences of ordinary women at the grassroots and community levels have been largely omitted in the analysis of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Notwithstanding the shift in the treatment of women from the protected to targeted, women still continue to strive to contribute to the rebuilding of this fragile state. It is relevant to mention that although women have incurred the brunt of the conflict, they have emerged with a change in mindset and tend to develop alternative strategies aimed at transforming violent structures. During the research, one of the participants made mention of the fact that women at the grassroots levels carried out massive campaigns for democracy and good governance and advocated for the inclusion of women at the formal level. They advanced the fact that women were credible and relevant actors in rebuilding the CAR society. The advocacy no doubt led to significant gains for women at both governmental and non-governmental levels. At the political level, women participated as observers in the 2008 Libreville Peace Agreement, which was concluded between the belligerents and the government at the grassroots levels, which was the first in the history of the country's peacebuilding process

Furthermore, women's continued advocacy and lobby for legal reforms yielded fruits as the government put in place the National Plan of Action whose aim was to address issues of women's rights, sexual and gender-based violence as well as the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence. This led to some reforms such as the government ratifying the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and in 1997, the Family Code was adopted. In April 2014, as a way of supporting the implementation of resolution 1325, the Human Rights section of the then African Union-Led International Support Mission in the CAR (MISCA) in collaboration with the then UN Integrated Office in the CAR (BINUCA) organized an open forum for women leaders in the CAR under the coalition of Central African Women for Peace and

Reconstruction, the women's delegation represented a cross section of women and the aim of the forum was to appreciate the efforts women had been making in helping in the peace process and to strengthen the capacity of women to undertake leading roles and responsibilities in the society.

Moreover, during the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed in Brazzaville in 2014, it mandated the organization of a national dialogue forum at the capital Bangui as a step towards the reconciliation process. Women actively took part in the National Reconciliation Forum, which was conveyed from the 4-11 May 2015 under the watchful eyes of the international community. The forum served as one of the spheres in which women could voice out their concerns after a long period of waiting. The conference brought together representatives from various women organizations such as the women's network OFCA (Organization of women in the CAR), Association of Female Lawyers, the Association of Muslim Women in CAR and hosts of others. Before the forum, women from the various grass root organizations carried out massive awareness raising campaigns in the rural areas sensitizing women on the purpose of the Bangui Reconciliation Forum and interviewed women in the rural communities to get their views on the issues they wanted to be addressed in the forum. At the conference, women leaders called for the greater commitment on the part of the Transitional Government in ensuring that the rights of women and girls were promoted and protected as well as the inclusion and participation of women in the country's peacebuilding process. The forum equally served as a platform where women from both the Muslim and Christian communities could contribute in telling the truth and collectively seeking, better solutions to address the common issues that beset women in spite of the difference in ethnicity.

One of the Common agreements reached was the participation of women in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process as peace could not be attained if people were still in possession of arms and ammunitions. To this effect, women fighters began to surrender any weapons they had with them to the disarmament unit of the UN peacekeeping mission in the CAR.

What should be noted in this section is the fact that although women have actually contributed to the country's peace process and helped in rebuilding the war-torn and fragile state and most importantly supporting the implementation of the resolution, they have faced substantial challenges given the fact that the social fabrics of the society are in shambles, and nothing really seems to be working. To have a perfect understanding of why the resolution is still at a crawling stage, some of the challenges faced in its implementation shall be examined below.

5.3 Challenges in the implementation of SCR 1325 in CAR:

Though women make up a vast majority of the population of the CAR, their views are hardly considered when it comes to taking important decisions that affect their well-being and lives. In spite of the clarion call of resolution 1325 to have women participate in all conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and public decision-making, this still looks like a far-fetched aspiration in the CAR. Women's participation is more often smothered, and their voices hardly heard during peace negotiations and even when they are invited, their views and contributions are hardly taken into consideration. According to Ferris (1993:34), "one problem in analyzing women's political actions is that the term 'political' has been largely defined by men. Women's activities in community or church groups, for example, are often labeled 'volunteer', 'charitable', or 'social' even though they have a political impact. Lack of political will and accountability, deeply entrenched patriarchal system, high illiteracy rate and lack of awareness of the resolution and the low representation of women in public spaces are some of the factors impeding the successful implementation of SCR 1325 in the CAR as will be discussed in the proceeding paragraphs.

Lack of Political will and accountability mechanisms:

Firstly, the lack of political will on the part of the government of the CAR and the lack of accountability mechanism for the resolution itself have served as impeding factors to the successful implementation of the resolution. Fifty-five years after gaining independence, it is worth mentioning that those who for the past decades ruled the country, controlled and shaped the processes of ceasefire agreements and other peace negotiations by skillfully precluding women to the background. Women were never considered as important contributors to the numerous peace deals that were signed between the government and the various warring factions. With this historical seclusion, it has been difficult for women in the CAR to successfully amplify their voices or contribute effectively to the country's peace building process as a result of a lack of state institutions to support their cause.

In line with the above, though the resolution calls on all UN member states to protect and promote women and girls during and after armed conflicts and strengthen the participatory role of women in all public decision-making spheres, it

is paradoxical that Member States cannot be held accountable for not implementing the provisions of the resolution given its quasi-legally-binding nature. In a country like CAR, where due to continuous violence leading to the breakdown of state machinery, implementing this decision remains very dim based on the fact that there are no state structures to follow up or monitor the progress of its implementation. It is therefore apparently clear that the lack of political will and the lack of accountability significantly slows down the implementation.

Low representation of women in Public Administration:

Another finding in this study showed that despite women constituting a majority of CAR's population, they are unfortunately often found at the lowest ranks when it comes to employment, income, status and representation in the country's public sphere. The democratic constitution of 1995 provided for decentralization, separation of powers and political pluralism, the democratization process has hardly benefitted women regarding either political representation or of their participation in the administration of the country. Women in the CAR are very much poorly represented in political and administrative bodies. According to UNDP (2003), before the dissolution of the National Assembly in 2003, there were only ten women in a total of 89 deputies, while, in the judiciary, they make up fewer than 12 percent of the judicial services, and under three percent of the judges and 3.2 percent of lawyers. In public administration, women hold less than one percent of senior managerial posts. There has however been a slight increase in women's participation. In my recently conducted research, there has been an increment in the number of female lawyers to 5.2 percent while, in the Transitional National Assembly, there are 19 women in a total of 105 deputies. However, this is only a small increment as women still continue to be largely left out in public decision-making bodies hence difficult to translate SCR 1325 from words to action. This absence of women in most public administrative structures has significantly hindered their ability to participate fully in decision-making to voice out their needs and have their concerns addressed as part of the country's peacebuilding and reconciliation process.

Deeply entrenched patriarchal society:

The adherence of women to conventional rules and traditions in the CAR stands out as one of the impeding factors to the smooth implementation of this resolution given the fact that this firm clench on customary practices usually accords women separate and lesser roles in the society. It is imperative to note that the SCR 1325 does not deal with structural issues that undermine gender mainstreaming. The deeply entrenched patriarchal values in the CAR hence makes the applicability of the resolution difficult. The firm adherence to the cultural norms of women being primary care givers has, in fact, served as a determinant towards their exclusion and marginalization in public decision-making. Turning to Tripp (1988;93), women have been forced to remain in the quasi-political spaces of women's clubs and civil society as these are perceived to be safer "alternatives to the exclusions and marginalization they face in the more conventional political arena." Tripp's assertion is entirely applicable in the CAR   because women continually remain at the grass roots levels and involved in Tracks II and III diplomacy that sometimes play microscopic or no influence on formal peace processes. Again turning to Edward (2011) in the South Sudanese case, when women proved to be politically active, they are sometimes labeled as 'unfeminine' and 'irresponsible wives and mothers'. This is relevant in the case of the CAR, as the fear of being labeled unfeminine and irresponsible has caused many women to shy away from the political life of the country and hence the strong dominance of their male counterparts over them. Since the adoption and before the passage of the resolution, women's participation in formal peace processes in the CAR have always been peripheral due to the strong bearing on patriarchal roles. It is therefore evidently clear that though the message in SCR 1325 calls for greater participation of women in all decisions, this can however not be effective if women continue to live within the cycle of patriarchy.

Illiteracy and lack of awareness of resolution 1325:

Lastly, the findings of this study showed that the high illiteracy rate amongst girls and women, and lack of knowledge of the resolution, have been impeding factors towards the implementation of the resolution. Article 6 of the amended constitution of 2004 provides that parents with the support of the state have the prime responsibility to educate children so as to develop their moral and intellectual aptitude. This is however not the case as the illiteracy rate amongst women and girls is still very high. The role of women in the CAR constitutes that of raising up children and taking care of other domestic family needs. Thus, little importance is attached to fostering girl child education or adult literacy. Most often, even young girls who complete the primary education, are immediately forced into early marriages. The government of CAR in 1997 adopted the Education Policy Act, which provided for free and compulsory education for all though the Act was further on supplemented by an Order promoting school attendance by girls, the enrollment ratio of girls to boys

remains significantly low. Research shows that the disparity in enrollment between girls and boys is due to the social roles that impose on girls a daily burden of work that limits the possibility for them to attend school regularly. In a UNICEF report (2013), with the resurgence of the conflict in 2102, close to 70 percent of primary students did not return to school mostly because of fear of the cycle of violence which loomed in the country, and also because a majority of the schools had been destroyed and some occupied as military bases by the non-state armed groups that seriously threatened the access to education by children. The lack of knowledge coupled with ignorance was the primary concerns as stated by the interviewees towards advancing women's participation in the country's conflict resolution and peacebuilding process.

Similarly, the high adult illiteracy rate, especially among women, poses a grave threat to achieving sustainable peace and development. Paradoxically, even the few women who are positioned in public decision–making spaces and are supposedly more aware of the resolution do not adequately promote it. It is, therefore, evident that these factors significantly hinder the implementation of the resolution.

5.4 Conclusion:

This chapter has critically analyzed the role women have played in translating the message of SCR 1325 to practice though they are faced with several challenges. The chapter has equally brought out the difficulties encountered in implementing this resolution based on the findings of the study through the interviews conducted as well as from secondary sources. However, the results of this study should not imply that all hope is lost in the CAR towards implementing this landmark resolution, if the recommendations provided below can be taken into consideration by the government of the CAR, then the implementation will be more efficient

6. DISCUSSIONS, FROM THE RHETORIC TO THE REALITY OF IMPLEMENTING SCR 1325 IN CAR

The preceding chapter has appraised the role women have played towards supporting conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes in the CAR. However, women face immense challenges as per the findings of this study. This chapter seeks to answer the last sub-research question on what women activists require for the successful implementation of SCR 1325 in the CAR. The above question shall be answered by providing an insight of some of the issues to be considered by women and government of the CAR to implement successfully this landmark resolution. These few points shall be examined in the paragraphs below.

To successfully implement SCR 1325 in the CAR, women activists should lobby and advocate for the implementation of National Action Plans by the present Transitional Government of the CAR. The implementation of National Action Plans (NAP) is still not very prevalent in developing countries, the CAR inclusive.

Presently, only 11countries, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Ivory Coast, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have developed NAP. The NAP serves as a road map for the successful operationalization of SCR 1325. Women activists should ensure that the four operational pillars of the resolution should be incorporated in the plan. Moreover, the NAP will serve as a springboard of promoting dialogue amongst the various stakeholders relevant for the success of the resolution in the CAR.

Furthermore, there should be the high participation of the civil society as they play multiple roles in supporting the implementation of the resolution. Research from this study showed that the lack of political will and the absence of accountability mechanisms were some of the factors responsible for the poor and slow implementation of the resolution in the CAR. To ignite the transitional government's political commitment, civil society will act as watchdogs and play the monitoring role of ensuring that the Government is committed to supporting the implementation of the resolution. Turning to Cabrera and Popovic (2010), involving the civil society can be much instrumental as they can significantly observe and monitor the government to ensure that the government sets up national institutions and structures that will support the full operationalization of this resolution in the CAR. Civil Society organizations can equally carry out massive awareness raising campaigns on   SCR 1325 especially at the grassroots levels. This can be done by disseminating the resolution and other subsequent resolutions(1820,1888,2122) in the local language (Sangho)to the grassroots communities so that women are not only aware of the existence of the decision but equally strive harder to be included in all decision-making and significant involvement in the peacebuilding process..

Lastly, women activists should lobby and advocate for the recruitment of more women in the security sector. This study revealed that there was less than 2 percent of women in the FACA (National Armed Force of the CAR). About this,

women in the CAR have never participated in any UN peacekeeping mission, whereas one of the key messages of the resolution is the involvement of women in UN Peacekeeping Missions. Since 1948, there have been 71 UN peacekeeping operations with 16 current peacekeeping operations, the small percentage of women in CAR's Police and armed force significantly impedes women from implementing one of the pillars of the resolution. This, therefore, implies that women activists should lobby for more women to be recruited into the national police and armed forces and give them the opportunity of participating in UN Peacekeeping missions. According to the 2010 Gender Team progress report, it is pivotal to have women in all areas of peacekeeping so as to help in interviewing and counseling survivors of sexual violence, assisting former female combatants in reintegrating into civilian life and undertake critical tasks that men cannot.

In conclusion to this chapter, it is quite coincidental that the study was conducted in the same year that the SCR 1325 turned 15.Although the urgent message underpinned by the resolution lays on the fact that to attain sustainable peace and development, there must be gender parity in matters relating to international peace and security. In the CAR, women have been faced with so many challenges that have impeded their contributions towards conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. The above recommendations, if taken into consideration by women activists in the CAR, could be a step towards the successful operationalization of the resolution.

7. CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

As guided by the central research question, the primary objective of this study has been to understand what has been the role of women in the country's peace building process and why has there been a gap between the aspirations of SCR 1325 and the reality of its implementation in the CAR. The central question, therefore, relates to why there has been the slow implementation of SCR 1325 in the CAR despite its 15 years of existence. With the high proliferation of academic work on the resolution and its implementation, it can be inferred that scholars have identified that there exists a gap between the aspirations and the actual implementation of the resolution, as many countries including the CAR have not yet met the targets of the resolution.

Firstly, the study showed that the CAR is a peculiar country on its own, given the complexities surrounding the nature of the armed conflict. Chapters four and five have been very instrumental in laying down the groundwork for the better understanding and appraisal of the central research question. Chapter Four focused on providing a detailed understanding of the historical background of the resolution, the subsequent resolutions adopted later to reinforce the message of SCR 1325. With regards to its operationalization, the chapter brought out the four operational pillars within which the decision revolves, and lastly the section laid emphasis on why it is imperative to have women brought to the peace table as negotiators and mediators, and not just as observers.

Having established the historical background of resolution 1325, the interest of the study was to critically appraise the role women played in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In this study, researched showed that not so much had been documented on the contributions women made in the above targets. It was revealed that women's significant contribution in mediation and resolving conflicts predated the adoption of SCR 1325, and these roles were prominent as a result of the cultural norms and values that placed some degree of sanctity and reverence on women where they were looked upon as agents of peace and natural mediators. However, with the violence that has characterized the country over the past few decades, these same women who were once protected have now become victims with the heavy effects of the conflict heaped on them and their contributions in influencing decision-making substantially ignored. This study also examined the challenges women incur towards implementing the resolution given the unstable political nature of the CAR.

Notwithstanding, like any serious scholarly research, after the findings of the study on the challenges women face in implementing the resolution, the study through chapter six discusses some of the recommendations which if taken into consideration, could lead to the effective implementation of the resolution in the CAR.

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