GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HUMAN SECURITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper using desk research, argues that discrimination and restrictions are symptoms of both inequality and structural violence that undermines women's security. Despite the constitutional provisions and commitments to regional and international human rights treaties and conventions, the rights of women and girls are grossly undermined and under-valued, which is overtly evident in the overall low Gender Development Index for the country, and exacerbated in high rate of physical and sexual harassment and assault, trafficking, marital rape, early/forced marriage and various harmful traditional practices against women and the girl child. These practices have made development opportunities to continue to elude women. Worst still, the existing policy documents (e.g. the National Policy on Women) failed to challenge the structure, which continues to reproduce gender inequality and the overall dis-empowerment of women. The paper concludes that the insertion of the human security perspective into policies is essential for abolishing these practices.

Key words: Gender-based Violence; Human Security; Perceptions; Development; Women; Nigeria
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Introduction

Conceptualization of security has moved beyond preoccupation with the territorial integrity of nation states, and has been reinvigorated by the recognition that concerns for the individual – such as human rights, gender equity and a minimum social entitlement – have much to contribute to our understanding (UNDP 1994). Achieving human security therefore included not only protecting people but empowering people to fend for themselves that is, a concern for the welfare of vulnerable groups in society, particularly women and children. Human security is therefore: people-centred, multidimensional, interconnected, and universal (UNDP 2006). Human security involves focusing on individuals and recognising the diverse factors that pose threats of want and fear, which includes states, internal conflict, human rights abuses, environmental deterioration, poverty and oppression, and disease and malnutrition.

History has shown that women's experience of insecurity is fundamentally different from that of men. Gender-based violence (GBV) has long been a major component of warfare. According to Jolly and Deepayan (2006:7) "women are subjected to specific forms of violence in war because, as women, they are viewed as cultural bearers and reproducers of 'the enemy'. Rape, forced impregnation, sexual slavery and other forms of humiliation take on powerful political and symbolic meanings." However, women are also at risk within the domestic economy, having to endure discrimination in employment, marginalization in the eyes of the law, and the rigid frameworks of socio-cultural expectations.

The consideration of gendered insecurities necessitates a broadening of the concept of security, and human security lends itself well to this conceptual task. This is further corroborated by Jolly and Deepayan (2006:7), which states that "through gender, security becomes reconstructed on the basis of women's experiences of violence, interrelating violence on the local, national, and international levels, and eradicating structural violence instead of primarily focussing on the direct violence of war."

A gendered approach thus disaggregates the cultural, social, economic and political mechanisms for the distribution of power and control, and recognizes who is affected and how, and what specific forms of protection or assistance are needed by whom (Raven-Roberts 2001). Through the utilization of a human security perspective, it is possible to generate policies that are at once sensitive to the insecurities of vulnerable women and integrate these concerns into a wider narrative of human threats. Gender is therefore a vital component of the human security agenda.

The Problem

Hand in hand with the rising acceptance of human-centred approaches to security has come a begrudging acknowledgement that gender issues are relevant to security. African women and men have voiced their right to security and justice for decades if not centuries: the right to live without violence and oppression and the right to participate in decision-making. Women's organisations, as parts of liberation movements or political parties or as grassroots civil society organisations, have often led the way in advocating for the security and justice needs of marginalised groups. They have struggled to place vital gender issues such as violence against women (the focus of this paper), human rights abuses by security sector personnel and the impact of small-arms violence upon young African men on the national security agenda.

The concept of gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that mostly targets women due to perceptions about their gender in specific cultural contexts. Thus GBV is an attack on a person's identity, which has devastating consequences for its victims. Several reports have found that there is widespread acceptance of violence directed towards women (Scott, et al., 2013, Human Rights Watch, 2013). Sexual violence, although rampant in so many societies like Nigeria, has been labelled a private and domestic matter that falls outside of public

discussion and much of the human security discourse (Lewis 2006). Yet the most basic security, bodily and personal integrity, is denied to those women who are experiencing sexual violence. Guaranteeing women's human security requires that we be open about, and challenge, the many forms of GBV in Nigeria. It also involves rethinking the circumstances, practices and relationships that affect the human security of over half the Nigerian population.

Many of the practices that determine women's human security are connected to the private realm and to domestic and interpersonal relationships. For example, 'home` for many abused women is a site of profound insecurity, and violence within the home totally contradicts conventional views that associate danger and risk with public spaces. Those familial and marital relationships in which incest and wife-battering routinely occur (Jekayinfa 2012) must encourage us to rethink conventional assumptions about which actions violate human security, and the contexts in which these violations happened. Generally, holistic thinking about security requires us to consider safety within domestic spheres, safety from violence perpetrated by partners, husbands, uncles or fathers, safety at places of work, and the safety that allows women to participate as full citizens.

Nigeria is a signatory to most of the International instruments on Women's Rights, especially The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (hereinafter called African Women's Protocol). The country has also gone further to domesticate some of the provisions of the African Charter in the 1999 Constitution (Abdulraheem, 2010), and recently passed a bill to the parliamentarians on the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill (VAPP-BILL) for ratification since 2013. However, despite these provisions in our laws for the protection of women's rights, there has not been

commensurate improvement in the protection of the rights of women. There appears to be a gap between the existence of laws pertaining to the rights of women and their implementation in practical terms. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to provide answer to the following questions:

- Are the measures for combating GBV in Nigeria a sufficient response to ensure women's security?
- Has the National Gender Policy in Nigeria achieved its aim as regards GBV?
- If yes, to what extent?
- If no, why? What are still the constraints?

An underlying, normative assumption for this paper is that people have to feel basic security if they are going to be able to contribute to society. By this it is meant that by providing its citizens with basic human security from threats to their daily lives, the Nigerian State will benefit by getting trust from the citizens. My underlying interest is in the capacity of the state, to implement the constitutional rights of its citizens in cases of GBV. The incidences of GBV that are most commonly referred to in the case of Nigeria are rape, wife beating, abuse (human trafficking) and child marriage are used for this paper. These issues threaten the lives of young girls and women directly and as part of the surrounding structures.

To this end several instances of discrimination against women, which affect the development of the womenfolk, were examined in this paper. The paper is structurally divided into……………………

Conceptual issues

Gender-based violence (GBV)

Numerous international agencies have taken up the cause of GBV. It has gained increasing attention, but there is no consensus on definitions. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) GBV is defined as a phenomenon that:

> "...reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and several harmful traditional practices". (UNFPA, 2013)

It is evident here that UNFPA connects GBV to men and women as well as a range of specific issues. The definition is useful for setting some boundaries around the concept, but more information is definitely needed in order for their definition to be operational in relation to this paper. UNFPA does however further elaborate their definition by adding that:

> "Gender-based violence also serves – by intention or effect – to perpetuate male power and control. It is sustained by a culture of silence and denial of the seriousness of the health consequences of abuse. In addition to the harm they exact on the individual level, these consequences also exact a social toll and place a heavy and unnecessary burden on health services (UNFPA, 2013).

This definition in a way portrays GBV as stemming from patriarchy which is also based on the ideology and exercise of power. The definition identifies structures (culture) that perpetuate male power over women, which is in accordance with most research on GBV, and relates this to the (in) security of women.

Also, the organization United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) states in a summary report that they consider GBV to include: "…physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty" (UN Women, 2011). What this signals is that GBV is something that mainly concerns women, and that gender is a socially constructed concept to

which people connect certain positive or negative traits. While I agree with this interpretation and focus on women, it is important to note at this point that men sometimes are overlooked as objects of GBV. However, GBV is a structural and physical harm to a person due to socially constructed norms and ideas. The concept GBV is further based on the two concepts of 'gender' and 'violence'.

Human Security

Human security as a security perspective fits into the broader fields of social constructivism and liberalism, established in newer times as an opposition to Realism's view of international politics, emphasizing the individual as a referent object complementary to that of the state (Burgess and Jonas 2012). As Hough has pointed out "The meaning of 'security' is not just an arcane matter of academic semantics. The term carries significant weight in 'real world' political affairs since threats to the security of states have to be a priority for governments and threats to the lives of people are increasingly accepted as more important than other matters of contention" (2008:13). By this Hough refers to a switch in thinking from mere state politics to a concern with threats to the daily lives of individuals.

Human security as it is known today is basically centred on the individual's perception of threats and security and varies according to different social contexts (Burgess and Jonas 2012). Theoretically it stretches from scholars focusing on violent threats to individuals and communities that need immediate intervention capability, to scholars who emphasize a broader definition that includes human rights abuses, poverty and underdevelopment (Burgess and Jonas 2012). Empirically human security can be defined as both 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want', which quite clearly defines human security, as something subjectively perceived (Burgess and Jonas, 2012: 91-92).

Hoogensen and Stuvøy have emphasized that they understand security as connected to individual identity in "…an ever-changing process which makes theoretic approaches to

security to be susceptible to changing contexts and structures" (Hoogensen & Stuvøy, 2006: 214). By saying that security is connected to identity, context and structure they make a point of security and threats to security as being a part of our perception about how the world is and ought to be. As such human security can be said to be normative and at the same time applicable to a broad variety of events. So, if security is the goal we must analyze threats from the perspective which is most applicable to the level of analysis, the individual or small group.

Gender and Human Security as a Conceptual Framework

The nexus between gender and security can be approached from many different angles. There are a multitude of different understandings of gender issues, from liberal feminist theorists to self-identified womanists. This section draws upon the schools of post-colonial and post-structural feminist theory and the work of various African gender theorists. As such, 'gender' is understood as the socially constructed roles and relationships between men, women, boys and girls. We are often taught to act, feel and think differently depending upon whether we are born female or male (Nzegwu 2001; Oyewumi 1997). These social roles are fluid and vary depending upon the specific ethnic, religious, class and geographic community that we are born into. Context is everything. In contrast, biological differences between males and females, such as hormones, reproductive organs and genetic differences are largely fixed. When referring to biological rather than socio-cultural differences between women and men the term 'sex' is used.

These socially constructed gender roles have determined African women and men's differential access to education, employment, political power, etc., all of which influence the security threats that they face and their ability to access security and justice (Okome 2001; Amadiume 1997; Ezeigbo 1996). For instance, African women are much more likely to become victims of domestic and sexual violence, while men are more likely to suffer from gun and gang-related violence. Another example is that women are less likely to have access to formal justice systems due to the feminisation of poverty; women often do not have the resources to cover the necessary transportation costs, bribes or lawyers' fees (Hendericks and Valasek 2010). Gender roles are one of the key factors that construct the different security experiences, needs, priorities and actions of men, women, girls and boys.

In relation to GBV and Human Security, gender is an essential concept. This is because it is a perspective that focuses on people, their experiences, and why they experience

things the way they do. It is a bottom-up approach where people's perceptions are in focus (McKay, 2004). Some feminist approaches have focused mostly on the 'violence *against* women' and that the existence of a violent and oppressive patriarchy is taken for granted (Shepherd, 2008:37).

Shepherd says that theorizing women within this perspective has focused on addressing violence "…perpetrated against individuals who are socially identified as women, perpetrated as a result of this identity" by men towards women (Shepherd, 2008:38). By continuing to point the research towards 'violence against women' the focus is kept on the marginalized women and their stories, and the unveiling of their experiences, which has led to a focus on women as victims (ibid. 39). This is a very interesting approach as it is a focus on the structural violence that surrounds women in many societies and where women are struggling on a daily basis for their rights and freedoms as human beings. Violent structures have not only been addressed by the feminist scholars per se, but also by peace researchers such as Johan Galtung. He refers to *structural violence* as exploitation and repression by social and world structures where "patriarchy is then seen as an institutionalization of male dominance…legitimized by culture…often emerging as direct violence with males as subjects and females as objects" (Galtung, 1996: 40). This is not ignoring the possibility of men been victims of violence, but it is an inescapable fact that women are the most marginalized and more often than men are subjected to violence due to their gender.

Background Issues to the Development of the National Gender Policy in Nigeria

In the year 2000, Nigeria adopted and passed into law the National Policy on Women. The need for the policy was

> "to fulfil the yearnings as well as (promote) the efforts of Federal, State and Local Governments, Non-governmental Organisations, International Development Partners, the private sector, concerned corporate bodies and individuals **to integrate women** fully into national development, in order to remove those gender inequalities

that have evolved through structures and processes created by patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism".

The document was therefore seen, in the main as a vehicle towards social equity, justice and an improved quality of life. The main guiding principles of the policy are the global instrument on the Convention of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocols as well as the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The critical section or constitutional principle which tallies with the core goals of CEDAW is that of achieving equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law for women through the application of the anti-discriminatory clause that stipulates that:

> "All citizens without discrimination on any group whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment"

The focus of the policy was therefore, to the largest extent, the pursuance of legal equality for women and men and the removal of all obstacles to the social, economic and political empowerment of women. The face, and indeed, the emphasis of the policy is women empowerment. Page 10 of the policy document, in articulating the goals of the policy, clearly states that it (the policy) draws heavily from national and international initiatives related to Women in Development. To this end, several strategic actions in different sectors were developed to create women-focused programmes in education, science and technology, health, employment, agriculture, industry, environment, legal space, social services, politics and decision-making and media relations (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2006). All these were geared to close gender gaps in the status of women and men in these sectors.

Overview of Policy concerns on Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence has become a major issue in recent times. It reflects the extent to which women's human rights are threatened thereby leading to the voicelessness of women in many

issues concerning and affecting their lives. Violence against women, particularly domestic violence and rape, is widespread which has increased the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS (Aluko 2015). In Nigeria, harmful practices meant to control women's sexuality have led to great sufferings. Notable among them is the practice of female genital mutilation which is a violation of basic rights and a major lifelong risk to women's health. Another major violence against women is the insalubrious attitude of wife-beating and women trafficking. The underlying force behind this behaviour is the wrong believe that women are inferior and are suppose to be treated as second class citizens in the society. In other to tap the potentials of women for development, gender sensitive policy that entrench equity between men and women is key.

Equal relationships between men and women in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the physical integrity of the human body, requires mutual respect and willingness to accept responsibility for the consequences of sexual behaviour, sensitivity and equity in gender relations enhance and promote respectful and harmonious partnerships between men and women.

Policy Goal:

Eradicate all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, and ensure that women and men enjoy the same rights irrespective of their gender, age, ethnicity, religion, and class.

Objectives and Implementation Strategies

Objective 1: Legislate against all forms of gender-based violence and discriminations

Strategies for Implementation:

- Enforce the Sexual Offence law defined in Section 357 of the Criminal Code against women or a girl. For effective implementation, the practice of requiring corroboration for sexual offences shall be amended.

- Enforce the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act (2003).

- Promote the awareness and enforcement of existing laws against pornography.

- Enforce legislation against child labour as contained in the Child Labour Act.

- Enact new laws to protect the rights of women, adolescents, and children in the following areas –

  - ✓ Right of women to secure international passport without permission from husbands or other men;

  - ✓ Citizenship rights to foreign men married to Nigerian women;

  - ✓ Women's right to bail;

  - ✓ Son's preference, which results in harmful and unethical practices as regards female infanticide and prenatal sex selection

- Increase public awareness of the value of the girl child, and concurrently, strengthen the girl child's self-image, self-esteem and status. This could be done through elimination of stereotypes in communication and educational materials, and make the school environment more gender friendly and responsive.

- Ensure the domestication of CEDAW and the AU Protocol on the Right of Women

Objective 2: Build the capacity of institutions and persons in support of transformatory change that will bring about a society free of all forms of gender-based violence

Strategies for Implementation:

- Advocacy for law and legislative reforms to include new forms of gender-based violence e.g. rape within marriage; harassment of men by ladies (reverse harassment) etc.

- Human rights education at all levels – Primary, Secondary and Tertiary; and within informal structures;

- Capacity building for the judiciary and the extra judiciary stakeholders

1999 Constitution of Nigeria – A source of security for women in Nigeria?

In the light of human security theory an inclusion of women's rights can be understood as aiming at ensuring women's individual security within the state, as it is making women visible as possible referent objects of security, which the state is responsible for protecting. The constitution through the National Gender Policy seeks to ensure women to be treated equally to men in many aspects of their lives. Like many theories related to the concept of gender have done throughout history, the National Gender Policy has included both rights and freedoms of women into current law, making it possible for women to seek justice on their own behalf for incidents that are deemed criminal by law. Women are ensured the right to participate in public life, which means they can hold public office or in other ways be a part of the public debate and express their opinions.

Cases of GBV

According to *Demographic and Health Survey 2008*, the percentage of women who have experienced violence was around 30% in 2008. The percentage is higher in urban area (30.2%) than in rural area (26.3%) and higher in the South South region (52.1%) than in the North West region (13.1%). It is acknowledged that it is natural for a husband to beat/commit violence against his wife in Nigeria. A husband beats his wife over domestic disputes such as burning food, arguing with him, going out without permission or neglecting the children. Much of the blame is placed on the plural legal systems.

The law as currently constituted does not offer women and girls adequate protection from violence (Mahdi 2011; Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 2008). Although progress has been made (for example, the Violence against Women Prevention, Protection and Prohibition Act 2002), only four Nigerian states (Ebonyi,Jigawa, Cross Rivers and Lagos) have enacted domestic violence laws, while just six (Enugu, Edo, Bayelsa, Delta, Cross Rivers and Ogun) have passed laws against female genital mutilation (FGM).

The literature identifies statutory, religious and customary laws in Nigeria that permit violence against women. The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition report (2008), for example, identifies the penal code (section 55(4)), applicable in the Northern regions, that legalises 'corrective' beating of a child, pupil, servant or wife, as long as this does not cause grievous hurt. For some, this is the root cause of violence against women.

Wife Battery

The law on domestic violence is clearly inadequate, particularly regarding wife battery. Domestic violence is currently classified under common assault, which down plays the seriousness of this crime. According to section 55 of the penal code, wife beating is allowed as long as it does not amount to grievous hurt. As defined in section 241 of the penal code "grievous hurt" include emasculation, permanent loss of sight, ability to hear or speak facial disfigurement, deprivation of any member or joint, bone fracture or tooth dislocation (Imam, 2000). This means that a man who beats his wife short of inflicting the above injuries is acting within the law. How then is the woman's fundamental right to dignity is protected under such circumstances? Section 353 of the criminal code makes an indecent assault on males punishable by 3 years imprisonment. A similar offence of indecent assault on females is treated as mere misdemeanour punishable by a maximum of 2 years imprisonment (section 360), clearly a discriminatory provision.

Rape

Similarly, marital rape is excluded from the definition of rape in penal legislation in the North and under the criminal code in the South (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 2008). An Amnesty report, "Rape: The Silent Weapon", makes the point that differences in the definition of rape in federal, State, Sharia and customary legal systems create a plural justice system that potentially will undermine women's rights to seek legal redress in such cases. Indeed, current legislation may penalize the victim rather than the perpetrator. Muslim women can face particular problems when they seek justice and redress for rape under Sharia

law, because the need for a witness makes successful prosecution more difficult (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition 2008). What this seem to mean is that the state is protecting its individual citizens from specific GBV cases such as rape, as long as they are not married. Within marriage, it seems, the individual woman's value changes and the state is no longer willing to extend its human security to her. What this means in practice is that security only applies to one group of women, and that women who are married do not have the state's support to bring their case in front of a statutory court, if they are raped by their own husband. The Constitution thus seems to ensure the security only of women who are not married, as they distinguish so clearly between the two groups, but there is no explanation of why this clear distinction is made.

Looking at this from the perspective of Laura Shepherd (2008), the language used to describe women's position as different within a marriage and outside a marriage, has an impact on the formation of ideas about threats and security in a society. There is a clear disparity between what the constitution says about women's value (equal to men) and the praxis described in the Penal Code Act. Thus although the Constitution looks, at first glance, as ensuring women's security, the whole picture is not visible until the Penal Code Act is examined as well as the Constitution in its entirety. By Shepherd's standards this use of language confirms more profound beliefs in the local context. The Constitution is mostly written by men, and women have to a great extent been excluded from the process, which is evident in the way women within the marriage is considered something 'less' than those who are part of a family unit.

Abuse

Corporal punishment, bullying and physical abuse can cause girls to drop out of school (ActionAid, 2011). One study suggested that abusive behaviour may be learned in teacher training establishments where the opportunity for sexual favours is regarded by male teachers

as a privilege of their position (Bakari and Leach 2008). Student teachers in this environment learn to accept sexual violence against women as normal. It is perhaps unsurprising that in this situation violence against women is also regarded as acceptable by a relatively large proportion of the population. While we focus here on physical violence, the literature acknowledges that verbal abuse or the threat of violence can also effectively exclude, inhibit or deter girls and women from seeking services or contributing to society.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is also a serious social problem in Nigeria. The government statistics in 2004 and 2005 reported that about 80 percent of victims were girls and more than 300 children had been forced into the sex industry and domestic labour in 2005 (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2008). In all age groups, twice as many women as men are victims of trafficking (NBS 2009). More worryingly, vulnerable young and adolescent girls in the 6-15 age groups are most likely to be trafficked. Reported cases in this age group show a rise from 12 in 2004 to 353 in 2007, almost a thirty fold increase. Reported cases of trafficked adult women increased eightfold during the same period (from 44 to 368). It is not clear which groups are most likely to be victims of this practice or what their relationship is with the perpetrators, but trafficking was mentioned as one reason why girls dropped out of school in specific areas in the South (Mahdi and Asubiaro-Dada, 2011).

Female Genital Mutilation

Traditionally also, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is carried out although the percentage has gradually declined to a national average of 32.6 percent in 2008 from around 40 percent in 1998. FGM presents not only a physical but a mental danger to females. The risk of bacterial infection is high since FGM is usually conducted at the time suckling. Educational/advocacy activities for the abolition of FGM still needs to be conducted for parents/ adults with the long term view of abolishing FGM despite the willingness of girls.

According to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2008), FGM is not so popular in the North East and the North West regions but it appears to be common custom in the South West and the South East region. In those two regions, 50.4% and 60.7% of women are reported to be victims of FGM (NBS 2009). At a state level, Edo state of the South region established a law to prohibit FGM in 2000 and it burdens the FGM conductors with the fine of 1,000 Nairas (about 6.5 U.S. dollars) and imprisonment for six months. Ondo state, which is in the South region, also has a law that prohibits FGM.

Widowhood rites

In addition, there is a social custom where widows according to Sharia law (Islamic law) can fall into economical poverty when the husband passes away because they traditionally have no right to their property (UNHCR 2000). In the Northern states where many Muslims live, many laws are mixed up such as Sharia law (Islamic law), the federation law, the state law, and traditional customs. As a measurement of protection for widow's human rights, the Prohibition of Infringement of a Widower's and Widow's Fundamental Human Rights Law, No.3 was enforced in 2001 in Enugu state (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2008).

Early marriage

Also, in Nigeria women tend to get married at the early age. Almost half of women get married before 19 years old (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2008b). This early marriage might affect the low school enrolment and school attendance rate, as well as the increasing rate of population. Several measurements are taken by states such as Kebbi and Niger state to ban early marriages, and the state of Edo ensures school attendance of the girls (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2008). The United Nations recognises that this grim situation will not be wished away by mere agonising and rhetoric. It can only be changed through the targeted actions of individuals and

institutions; men and women from across all walks of life and endeavour who are courageous enough to persistently stay on a worthy cause such as the fight to end violence against women.

Implications

To this end, the issue of human security for women has not been given the adequate consideration it deserves even though the constitution provides a protection. Nigerian women are not secure and they are constantly living with threats of GBV, despite the fact that they have a significant amount of rights on paper, which are supposed to ensure security from such threats. The ever-present spectre of violence, threats and hatred against women is clear evidence that new options in the quest for security for women are long overdue. The above cases have shown that women were marginalised in the domains designed to guarantee the security of the human person. It can therefore, be said that the inferiority of women and their oppression, exploitation and subjection constitute the basis for the denial of personhood to them and thus also of their insecurity. Most of the cardinal problems confronted by women in the arena of security arise due to the flux and tensions emanating from the construction of sex and allied sex roles in the constitutional framework. Violence in the domestic sphere is tolerated, if not positively accepted. It is therefore clear that the insecurity of women arises not merely from the natural hostile features of the external environment, but, more importantly, through the wilful and socially constructed acts of men.

Gender still addresses the normative expectations concerning appropriate masculine or feminine behaviour in Nigerian culture. These 'normative expectations' stretch across security, justice, independence and the violation of rights, liberty, peace, etc. These norms and rules hinder the upward mobility between the sexes on an equal basis. Along the pattern of the normative micro-politics of national expectations and attitudes, there is a dichotomised empowering of agents and agencies along gender lines (Adadevoh 2007).

The heightened degree of privacy accorded to domestic violence maintains the culture of victim-hood, simply because a flimsy sentimental approach to the issue, either by the family members or by the police, makes the offender unaccountable to moral or legal sanction. The reason why aggressors elude justice and the victims remain insecure can be traced to an interface of factors. For instance, apart from the emotional, marital or social problems arising from such violence, there are also financial problems, and a lack of resources and decision making powers for community groups and statutory bodies to detect and intervene in family violence which perpetuates the whole cycle. It is for this reason that we contend that the spectre of insecurity looms large in the lives of women and it unleashes debilitating effects on their total well-being. Women's value is strongly connected to their family and husband. In itself that is something which has a negative impact on the life and security of women across the whole state as women are not able to be independent or empower themselves, thus they are deprived of the power over their own lives.

Many women tolerate such abuse because they fear retaliation by their spouse or extended family or both. If they protest, the women's vulnerability to domestic violence is reinforced by their economic dependence, and worse still, upon men's widespread cultural acceptance of domestic violence and a lack of laws and enforcement to effectively combat it. Therefore, the reality of violence and the pervasive feelings of fear and anxiety are vitally linked to the sustenance of the regime of insecurity for women. The rights and dignity of women have not been adequately guaranteed because they have consistently been molested and brutalised. They face greater insecurity even from within those spaces where it was thought that their safety and sanctity could emerge.

Thus, given that women remain a group that is dominated, marginalised and subordinated, the central feature in the quest for human security cannot just be concern for the mere survival of individuals. The questions therefore are: Do we require that individuals

survive as mere stooges or acolytes, without developing their own sense of proportion and well-being? Do we require that individuals unquestioningly accept their oppressed existence and thank their detractors and taskmasters for a job well done? The answer certainly must be in the negative. Rather, genuine human security should focus on the concern for the peace and progress of individuals and groups in society. The idea is to devise a conception of inclusive security that can operate on the principles of justice and dignity for the female sex.

Recommendations

It is very much in the interest of Nigerian State to focus on improving the situation of women as a strategy for development and human security. Protection and empowerment of women and girls is an area where the quantitative work done so far in relation to the MDGs can be very helpful to future analysis and comprehension in the field of human security. Millennium goals 2, 3 and 5, which aim to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, and improve maternal health, are explicit on this, and many of the indicators for measuring success in relation to other goals are appropriately disaggregated by sex. The following are recommended:

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by adopting legislation and establishing administrative procedures to widen women's access to social and economic institutions.

- Increase girls' and women's access to education at all levels, including through quotas, and encourage science and technical education.

- Integrate lessons about respect for women and combating gender-based discrimination and violence in the school curricula.

- Protect women and girls from sexual offences through punishment of perpetrators and education programs for men and boys.

- Give special attention to women's health, especially reproductive health.

- Make available trauma counselling and put into place programs that help the community accept children born as a result of rape.

Summary and Conclusions

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a complex matter which is specifically evident in Nigeria much because of the very clear differences in how women are perceived in the two legal systems. In Nigeria, as in many other African states, despite the constitutional provisions and commitments to regional and international human rights treaties and conventions, the rights of women and girls are grossly undermined and under-valued. This is overtly evident in the overall low Gender Development Index (GDI) for the country, and exacerbated in low participation of women in paid employment, politics, leadership and decision-making, and an equally high rate of physical and sexual harassment and assault, trafficking, marital rape, early/forced marriage, and different phases of harmful traditional practices against women and the girl child. In the absence of Equal Opportunity Commission in the country, and weak legislative structures to protect the rights of women, development opportunities continue to elude women. Worst still, the existing policy documents (e.g. the National Policy on Women) failed to challenge the structure, which continues to reproduce gender inequality and the overall dis-empowerment of women. Human security is a perspective which seeks to uncover issues of GBV and I believe an insertion of such a perspective into policies is essential for abolishing these practices. We cannot expect human security to flourish where GBV is so highly prevalent.