

Coping With Life under Tension: A Case Study on Women in Conflict Areas in Ghana

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Abstract: The institution of chieftaincy is an organized system of rule in the Ghanaian traditional society with the chief as the symbolic head. It remains the focal point of the cultural identity of the people and plays a crucial role in their familial and economic development. However, this noble institution is without conflict among contenders of chieftaincy titles. Conflict is disruptive and can result in unanticipated consequences on the traditions and customs that serve as a channel to foster unity and development which in turn bring about family and economic disorganization. Besides, conflict may lead to displacement of most productive citizens including women and relocation of investors and businesses to other areas. Women displaced by conflict are not only poor but live in cash economy and have to buy to cater for their needs with limited or no livelihood opportunities and appropriate safety nets to reduce their vulnerability. This unfamiliar environment is frustrating and upsetting, therefore, the question of coping with it and coming up with initiatives is paramount. Thus necessitate the women's social and economic initiatives to mitigate the exigence of conflict. Therefore, this study examines the coping strategy employed by women after chieftaincy conflict in Ghana. To ensure a comprehensive analysis of data, a qualitative method was used. Specifically, a case study approach was used for it is capable of examining simple or complex phenomenon.

Keywords: chieftaincy conflict, tension, vulnerability, displacement, intimidation, sexual abuse, coping strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The institution of chieftaincy is an organized system of rule in the Ghanaian traditional society with the chief as the symbolic head who remains the focal point of the cultural identity of the people (Ray, 2003; Akrong, 2006; Ubink, 2008; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The traditional chiefs in Ghana claim legitimacy of the people as they are considered the embodiment of history, culture, laws and values of their people. Traditional leadership continues to exist in Britain, Canada and African countries including Ghana as such chiefs remain important political actors at the level of local government and governance (Ray, 2003; Braathen et al., 2000; Brukum, 2007). Chieftaincy which emerged from the social fabric of the land is the oldest political system in most African countries including Ghana. It is comparable to monarchical type of rule in Europe and some parts of Asian countries. Chiefs command respect among their subject, and have access to both human and material resources including livestock, water bodies and economic trees (Tona, 2012; Dankwa, 2004; Atteh & Tonah, 2007). Chiefs are influential with their subjects in terms of their abilities to mobilizes their people for development, to articulate their sense of public morality and to influence and shape public opinion as such they are needed by state to be involved in rural local government. The Houses of Chiefs system in the country has contributed to rural local governance. As a result both the royal and the commoners have a strong desire to become a chief even at all cost, especially both the urban elite and the rural people, which sometimes leads to conflict (Awedoba & Odotei, 2006; Lud, 2003; Bombande, 2007). However, the recent surge of conflicts changed the meaning of the chieftaincy institution and impacts negatively on the traditions and customs that serve as a channel to fostering unity and development. In Ghana the power of political and traditional leaders overlaps and interrelates, making direct competition over access to traditional state structures crucial to these conflicts. Conflict is seen as a period of intense pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups in a particular society. Whenever such differences appeared, the contending matter must be something parties involved have a common interest or desire. For conflict evolves in phases and it is inevitable in

social life process and even in well-developed countries like United States and Britain conflict occurs (Uzuegbunam, 2010; Sani, 2007). Conflict is seen as a situation between two or more individuals where they perceived each other as taking actions that adversely affects individual's interest. In such situation, those involved resort to force and armed struggle in pursuit of incompatible interest and goals (Oraeghunam, 2006; Bombande, 2007; Tonah, 2005).

2. BRIEF PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The Northern Region where the conflicts under study took place is the largest (70,384km) and most sparsely populated regions of Ghana with about 17 ethnic groups that perceive themselves as indigenous (Pul, 2003). Ethnicity in the area assumed groups with overlapping language, culture and indigenous groups to the territorial unit of residence (Nugent & Lentz, 2000; Jonsson, 2007; Brukum 2007). The relationship between chieftaincy and ethnic conflict is more complex, touching on issues of ethnic and clan identity, group history and rights in connection with status as well as economy and opportunities (Jonsson, 2007; Brukum 2007; Tsikata & Seini 2004; Tonah, 2012). The study was conducted in Kavilli in the Tamale Metropolis.

The Tamale Metropolis is located at the center of the Northern Region of Ghana. It lies between latitudes 9° 16' and 9° 34' North and longitudes 0° 36' and 0° 57' West. It is one of the 20 districts in the Northern Region and occupies approximately 750 km sq. which is 13% of the total area of the Northern Region. It shares common boundaries with Savelugu/Nanton District to the North, Kumbungu District to the West, Tolon and Central Gonja Districts to the South-West, East Gonja District to the South and East Dagomba District to the East. It is centrally located in the region and hence serves as a hub for all administrative and commercial activities in the region. The study area 'Kanvilli' shares boundaries with Kamina Barracks, Jisonaayili, Gumani and Tunaayili communities. Kanvilli was chosen because it has the total outlook of Dagbon in terms of culture. It is also one of the locations of the chieftaincy conflict in Ghana and therefore, its population is more exposed to the effects of this phenomenon.

The majority ethnic groups in the area share certain characteristics which include history of empire-building and hierarchical traditional leadership structures. These structures were not straightforwardly apical, however, the politics being divided into units with different functions (Skalnik, 1987; Jonsson, 2007). For instance, the Mole-Daghani kingdoms, Mamprugu, Dagbon and Nanun are closely related through myths of common ancestry and language group. Their main oral histories claim descent from the warrior king known as Tohazee and his cavalry who entered Ghana from the North and conquered the indigenous people. They got their wives and spoken language from the Gur group and are known in Dagomba legend as the Black Dagomba' (Tamakloe 1931; Staniland 1975 Jonsson, 2007). Tohajiye's grandson of Na Gbewa, is said to have settled at Pusiga where the line split among groups of his 17 children. Na Gbewa's sons are said to have conquered and founded the different kingdoms following a succession dispute at his death. The eldest, Na Zirli remained at Pusiga, Mamprugu was founded by Tohagu, Dagbon by Sitobu (the study area) and Nanun by Ngmantambu. It is apparent from a historical perspective that major chieftaincy institutions have never functioned as a parallel system in isolation from the state structure, rather the way the systems have interacted has been crucial for the potential for intra and inter-ethnic conflict (Jonsson, 2007).

The weakening of the chieftaincy institution on a national level and the maintenance of working inter-ethnic relationships with regard to land-use minimized the potential for large scale minority-versus-majority violence in Ghana. For instance, the current highest chieftaincy institution, the National House of Chiefs, was created by the 1971 Chieftaincy Act and reaffirmed by the 1992 Constitutions with emphasis that came to have major consequences for the tensions in some parts of the country. It forbade the active participation of chiefs in party politics (Article 276, 1) and conferred on the National House of Chiefs the right of recognition of chiefs properly installed (Article 270, 3b). The role of chiefs is particularly complex as they are both ethnic leaders and important ethnic identity symbols in own right (Awedoba, 2003). Chief have come to mediate the relative status, material rights and the unity of an ethnic group.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted qualitative method. Data and information for this paper was initially collected in 2010 as part of a study into the familial and economic impacts of the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict on women in Kavilli, a suburb of Tamale. The unit of analysis of this study was married women in Kanvilli who are engaged in rice and groundnut processing as

well as petty trading. Out of 60 women only 20 were suitable for this research. The author conducted interview with respondents and key informants mainly chiefs, educators and social workers in Tamale. This was complemented with secondary materials from journal articles, books and the internet.

4. SOURCE OF CONFLICT IN GHANA

Violent conflict continues to undermine security in many parts of Africa including Ghana. The Ghanaian society has been characterized by various forms of communal conflicts which flare into serious armed confrontations resulting to loss of lives and property. It has been reported that there are over hundred latent and active conflict situations in Ghana (Tsikata & Seini, 2004; Atteh & Tonah, 2007; Tonah, 2012). These conflicts happen against the backdrop of deteriorating standards of living and abject poverty, hardship and deprivation especially among women. This continues to undermine security in society and pose a great threat to peace, human development and progress (ISS, 2008; Chinwokwu, 2015). Unfortunately, the states capacity to build synergies to address conflicts has been inadequate due to lack of political will and the existence of political interference. There are ample examples of ethnic, chieftaincy and communal conflicts in the country. Studies reveal that lives are lost and billions worth of properties are destroyed after conflict (Laden, 2012; Chinwokwu, 2013). For the enhancement of livelihood opportunities, rights to common property resources, peace and rights to common needs are necessary for the people particularly women (Haseena, 2015). Without these, there will be insecurity, lack of unity and development which mount tension on the vulnerable in society (Chinwokwu, 2015). There have been outbreaks of conflicts which are disputes over chieftaincy, natural resources, political interference, land use, destoolment (southern Ghana), desenskinment (northern Ghana) and succession rule (Brukum 2007; Tsikata & Seini, 2004; Tonah, 2012). The abuse of skin or stool property and the inability of the various Regional and National Houses of Chiefs (RNHC) to resolve chieftaincy conflicts are some cause of conflict in the country (Brukum 2007; Gyimah-Boadi & Mensah, 2003; Atteh & Tonah, 2007). It is also argued that the British colonialism and indirect rule which increased and enhanced the powers of chiefs partly contributed to conflicts in the country (Tonah, 2007; Braathen et al, 2000; Dankwa, 2004). Furthermore, the celebration of the Damba festival, the two *Eids*, particularly the *Eid-al adha* which is considered as the Big *Eid* It is observed that any paramount chief or recognized royal who wants to celebrate Damba festival in the traditional capital (Yendi) of Dagombas has to inform the Gbewaa Palace. So the other clan which does not recognize the legitimacy of the Palace sees no reason why permission should be sorted before they can celebrate Damba which normally result to conflict.

There are limits to the extent to which the people acting separately within a wider community can be marginalized or developmental needs must be satisfied and catered for by institutions. If these institutions are to be stable and if societies are to be significantly free of conflicts. The conflict theory sees the economy as the infrastructure in which the superstructure of the society is based. According to Marx the struggle for survival or domination of one group over the other is a historical one and this is true because of the scarce resources in the society which triggers conflict between the individuals in their struggle to have it all (Alexander, 2014; Bartos, & Wehr, 2002; Ritzer, 2008; Breckman, 1999; Chinwokwu, 2015). This struggle for scarce resources often leads to conflict resulting to insecurity in the society. In the context of Durkheim theory of social solidarity, point to the fact that poverty, resource control, unemployment, marginalization, human basic needs, and even environmental pollution which are basically associated with the economy are major causes of conflict and insecurity in Ghana. As such any attempt to address conflict without looking at the causes and how the vulnerable cope in such conflicts will be a mirage. So Durkheim recognized the part played by the economy and came out with the theory of Division of Labour (Alexander, 2014; Durkheim, 2014, 2013; Chinwokwu, 2015). He inquired into the question; how does society hold itself together despite the contradictory differences of individual or group interest? He was therefore interested on what keeps society together especially when it is made up of people with specialized roles and responsibilities. The result of his inquiry led him to the theory of social solidarity which according to him is made up of mechanical and organic solidarity (Tiryakian, 2005; Durkheim, 2010; Wilson, 2006; Chinwokwu, 2015). For him mechanical solidarity was associated with small societies that have religion as its unifying force while organic solidarity is common with complex society which is secular and individualistic with higher division of labour. He argues that as society progress from mechanical to organic solidarity through division of labour, competition for available resources began to mount (Lincoln & Guillot, 2005; Chinwokwu, 2015). In the struggle for available resources unhealthy competition emerged which resulted into violent conflict. However, if the crisis is not properly checked and brought under

control it might generate into uncontrollable situation or anomie. The implication is that conflict in the society especially as exemplified by that communal violence has resulted from the struggle for economic space and 'struggle for existence. The search for sustainable coping strategy must be based on getting the root cause of conflict and violence in the society by using the mechanisms of solidarity to restore peace and order. It must be looked at in the area of consensus and ideological basis for organic solidarity.

The gates (Dagbon Royal Clans) are at the center of every relationship and events which alter the meaning attached to family life. This has strained relationships thereby causing dissolution of marriages, break-up in family and friendship ties as well as single parenthood and declining fathering or parental roles. To get chieftaincy title in Dagbon is a contest which is competitive and each contestant is backed by the family members of the family, lineage, clan as well as friends and well-wisher (Tona 2012; Hagan 2006; Mahama 2009). As such, the basis of social relations in Dagbon is currently tied to the chieftaincy gates. It is conclusive that Dagbon has experienced indiscriminate divorce over the past years and the current trends cannot be sustained for another years without profound loss and damage to families, children and the society. The Dagbon conflict had equally broken down business ties as such the economic activities were affected due to the emergence of new forms of economic behavior as well as emerging patterns of economic relationships. This has led to the displacement of most productive women and the relocation of many businesses to other areas. Conflict in every society including Dagbon is disruptive and can result in consequences which bring about family and economic disorganization. As such conflict is frustrating and upsetting, the question of coping with it and coming up with development initiatives is paramount. Besides, it has a devastating effect on the lives and dignity, health and education of women and girls who are essential to the survival of the family and community (UNIFPA, 2002). These necessitate the women's social and economic initiatives in Ghana, to mitigate the effects of the conflict.

It is clear that violent conflict and insecurity pose a great threat to socioeconomic development of the members of communities. When it comes to chieftaincy title that has many contenders, little misunderstanding is immediately perceived wrongly with intense acrimony resulting to tension and insecurity. In other words, there is too much hatred filled with suspicion of one another making every member of contending factions to be on the look-out to avoid being suppressed. Without peace there will be no security, unity, development and progress which affect women and children.

5. WOMEN AND CONFLICT

The problems women often face after conflict are basically socioeconomic in nature, mainly around their living condition, particularly those who migrate to the southern part of the country. In some instances conflict leads to loss of lives and properties (Davis et al., 2002). For instance, Amnesty International Ghana reported in 2008 that ten women were killed in the Bawku chieftaincy conflict and during curfew hours (Osei, 2010). The women also suffer violation of human rights, loss their children, husbands, close relatives, friends and as internally displaced. Better still they may lack proper places to sleep after day's work, face harassment from men, engaged in difficult task originally men's, poor health care, low incomes if engaged in any job and disrespectful treatment from people around (Kwankye et al., 2007; Carpenter, 2005; Davis et al., 2002). Because most of the women are with little or no education or any skills, they cannot look for any decent jobs and end up in the *kayaye* business.

The displaced women are not only poor but live in competitive cash economy in which they have to buy all their basic needs with their meagre earnings or with no livelihood opportunities. Financially, women rely on a variety of sources for monetary support during and after conflict. Their earnings as well as donations from family, friends and philanthropist are crucial sources of capital which underpin their livelihood after conflict. Their earnings as primary source of livelihood cushion the exigency of conflict, even though it fluctuates with the fortunes of business. They do not also have any appropriate safety nets to reduce their vulnerability within the conflict environment and new place of residence (Carpenter, 2005). So to survive in these unfamiliar environments they ought to adopt some necessary strategies. For instance, some of them revealed that they eat three times a day when they have money; otherwise they eat ones in a day when they do not have enough money. They sometimes team up with other friends to contribute food items or money to prepare food. Generally most of them satisfy their hunger by buying food from street vendors with fewer choices. Their vulnerability arises from the food they buy as they are likely to get infections like typhoid, cholera, diarrhea and other gastro-intestinal disease which they are not aware (Carpenter, 2005; FAO, 2005; Davis et al., 2002).

In Ghana, the income distribution among the people favours males as they earn higher incomes than their female counterparts in every sphere of life. This becomes worse during and after conflict due to their existing social and economic status. They seem to be disproportionately burdened by conflict and socioeconomic conditions because of differential access to resources and their significant heavier household responsibilities. Women and men have different experiences of conflict whether as combatants or civilians because of these existing gender inequalities. Women are responsible for care and nature of the family, collection of firewood and water which puts them at risk of being kidnapped and sexually abused. Sometimes nursing mothers are often left behind as the rest of the family flees with the wrong assumption that she and the baby will not be harmed by opposing combatants. In certain situations, they have been killed and targeted as victims of rape during and after conflict. Besides, they are the most vulnerable and the most threatened in the event of conflict as they have to contend with social dislocation, abductions, sexual violation, intimidation, sexual slavery, sexual infections and added responsibilities in the face of the resultant economic instability (ABANTU 2004). In such situations, coping strategy is based on nonmaterial asset like accrues benefits of reciprocity among individuals, households and within communities. These nonmaterial assets include exchange of information, childcare under tension and financial support through contribution *susu*. This type is most of the time drawn from family and friends within and outside the conflict area. These informal collaborations are usually based on reciprocal relationships which dependent on social relations access both economic and household resources (Davis & Joel, 2002; Carpenter, 2005). The feminist conflict theory argues that women have been systematically browbeaten in society because they control limited natural and man-made resources. For instance, wealth, power/position and status are valuable resources so the inherit nature of men and the scarcity of these resources turn to domesticate the role of women in society especially in conflict situation (Skjelsbaek, 2001; Dahlerup 2001). In this case, patriarchy refers to the genealogy, gender and generation omission of the kinship relations, factual or fictive that exists between older and younger men and women (Miller 2001).

Several scholars have written extensively on women and conflict. Stensrud and Husby (2005) examine the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo and the opportunities to improve its implementation. Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998) examine victims of rape in the Rwandan conflict and the plight of women in the aftermath. These scholars found that conflict has created female-headed house thus giving women extra responsibilities and suggested that women should come together to form associations to promote peace and unity for their own betterment. Padarath (1998) examine the extraordinary power, strength, endurance and sexual brutalization of women in South Africa and brought to light the efforts to reconcile issues of human rights abuses with nation building, forgiveness and women's human rights issues which demand ideological and individual evolution. De Abreu (1998) examines the situation and testimonies, preventive and supportive measures to help women and victims of rape after conflict in Mozambique. She reveals that conflict has long-term effects on women even after restoration of peace and suggested that there should be an improvement in addressing the problems of women after conflict. Bouta and Frerks (2002) look at women in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and also suggested that women must not only be seen as passive victims of conflict but capable actors as well. The paradoxes and complexities of women's involvement in conflict were done in Sri Lanka which highlights the contradictory position of women in society (Samuel, 2001). The study revealed that the death of men led to an increase in the number of female-headed household where the traditional role of women as wives and mothers are still held in high esteem (Samuel, 2001).

In Ghana, studies have been conducted on chieftaincy succession disputes and conflicts between indigenous people and recent settlers as well as among clan members in the Northern Region of Ghana. For instance, the chieftaincy institutions, the causes and effects of conflicts among the Ga of Greater Accra was done and called stakeholders for intervention to resolve conflicts and suffering of the people particularly women (Atteh & Tohah, 2007). These studies indicate efforts of various governments to limit the role and power of chiefs which is still held with high esteem and that colonial government is responsible for the conflicts in the country (Tonah, 2007; Brukum, 2007). The twists and turns in government-chieftaincy relations and the impact of the 1992 Constitution and role of chieftaincy institutions in Ghana were also investigated. This study found that chieftaincy is central to the administration of the country especially at the local level (Boafo Arthur, 2002; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). All of these have direct or indirect effects on the contribution of women which calls for coping initiatives to counteract the negative impacts on their lives. As such they came up with coping initiatives to avert the negative repercussion of the conflict. According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (2005) women have increasingly become targets of attack and sexual violence as a method of waging war in order to destroy communities and families.

6. IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON WOMEN

It appears the destructive effect of conflicts on people in any community is nothing good to write home about. For instance, when the social fiber that supports women, children and the elderly breaks down after conflict, could expose them to the long and short-term consequences. As women, they are often made widows and single mothers as well as divorcees. Besides, their businesses collapse and incessantly been at the mercy of armed combatants at the classroom, hospital, farms, markets places and even their homes. Skjelsbaek (2001) thinks that the prevailing conflict determines the experiences of women during and after conflict in addition to the society's perception on the women and the nature of the gender culture in which they live. There are situations where husbands fled and left their wives, sisters and mothers to their faith and they may be killed or wounded (Thomas & Eric, 2006; Grace, & Danfulani, 2015; Ghobarah et al., 2003). The effect of conflict on welfare include change in economic, social and political life (Stewart & FitzGerald, 2001; Bruck and issue of rape, famine and destruction of properties as well as social infrastructure, displacement and unemployment. Women are culturally designated as caregivers and caretakers of the household. The husband is supposed to provide subsistence for the family so when the husband dies, the women take up the task of providing subsistence for the family. Quite apart, the bereaved woman undergoes some the compulsory shaving of hair and being secluded in the room for days or weeks because of the death of the husband. Many women flee with their children because of insecurity and the increased fear of unexpected attacks (Thomas & Eric, 2006; Grace, & Danfulani, 2015). The majority of internally displaced persons reside in neighbouring communities with relatives. There are some who will not stay but travel to Kumasi and Accra to work as head potters *kayayei*. Where they are assumed to be living under poor health conditions and exposed to criminals. Stensrud and Husby (2005) indicate that violence targets individuals or group on the basis of their gender which normally happen to women in conflict zones.

Conflict has also brought health problems as the majority of women in the area show signs of trauma in the form of panic and paralyzing fear, shock, mental injury and lives in a constant atmosphere of insecurity (Carpenter, 2005; Thomas, & Eric, 2006; Grace, & Danfulani, 2015; Davis, & Joel, 2002). And when there is chaos, health workers are withdrawn the hospitals closed for the fear of being attacked. In such situations pregnant women who need their service might die due to long hours of labour before being attended to, if doctors and nurses are present. The economic activities of the women are also affected due to the conflict as most of the big businesses were relocated to neighbouring region. Besides, local and foreign investors feel reluctant to invest in the area due to the protracted nature of conflicts. The education of the women are worsened during protracted conflict especially areas where preference for education of children is always the boys. However, in the study area, none of the side of the conflict has used rape to prove superiority over the other side or as a weapon of fighting.

7. COPING INITIATIVES AFTER CONFLICT

The Dagbon chieftaincy conflict is one of the most staggering conflicts in Ghana and its persistence involving the two gates (royal clans) is well-known. Even though the gates might have their own perspective in relation to the cause of the conflict, the people of Dagbon are in dire need of social and economic developments considering the years of conflict without any positive achievement in them. In many instances, conflict in every society is disruptive and can result in unanticipated consequences which in turn bring about family and economic disorganization. As such, conflict is frustrating and upsetting; the question of coping with it and coming up with development initiatives is paramount. The ongoing mediation and reconciliation efforts by the eminent chiefs can be used to set the derailed development of the community back on the right track. However, this approach alone is inadequate in bringing sustainable socio-economic developments to the people. There is a need for alternative and more people-centered initiatives to enhance the socio-economic life of people amidst the conflict. It is a fact that vibrant social and economic developments of the women of Dagbon would not only improve their lives but might infuse spirit of reconciliation and harmony among them. This section discusses the themes that emerge out of the informants' responses on the initiatives that they introduced to mitigate the effects of the Dagbon conflict. The themes include social initiatives and economic initiatives.

7.1 Social Initiatives:

Women are often the sole providers of their families during and aftermath of conflicts which leads to an increasing number of female heads of households. This can be attributed to the demographic changes caused by the conflict which in

turn further impoverishes women in Ghana. For instance, it is believed that assistance from the public sector would not suffice nor provide enough for sustainable development of Dagbon in new emerging forms of social and economic activities.

One of the common initiatives generated by the women is the formation of community-based organizations (CBOs) to supplement the inadequate external support through mobilization as a development strategy aimed at self-reliance. This organization is supposed to be the foundation on which all social and economic development initiatives generated will be built upon. Abiriwa told the researcher the aim for these initiatives is:

The idea of us coming together, developing initiatives is not for only economic reasons like to contribute and help one another; we want to bridge the communication gap created by the conflict. We can coexist as we use to, have truce; avoid isolation...the bad thinking. We no longer mix well in social gathering like wedding; funerals...even if you mix at all some will not eat from there. Can we ever trust one another? Yes we can if we communicate well

An organization is made up of women who possess a sense of identity so that the collective interest registers emotionally in the consciousness of members as part of their individual interest; thus realization of the collective objective gives them direct fulfillment. Their needs are both material and emotional, as such they urge one another to cultivate a sense of purpose for one's existence, a place of respect and affection in the community, a sense of sharing life with others and working for common social commitments based on their own resources in a way that will not endanger future prospects. They mobilise for purposeful social development and for resistance against external forces that divide them essentially on dominant dependent relations; thus depending on others for their livelihood. The women took it upon themselves to create the awareness of their creative assets, mental resources as confidence in their ability to solve life problems, the courage to take on challenging tasks and the stamina to make sustained efforts to accomplish them.

On the individual level, the women developed a set of rather versatile psychological defense mechanisms like denial, dissociation, and suppression that can be relied upon in case of threatening developments. The informants indicated that these defense mechanisms can be used to facilitate adjustment and coping. In the case of certain personal problems, it is more to live with them than to resolve them. This is particularly true in the case of adjusting to typical problems such as divorce. Coping is required in situations of fairly drastic change that defy familiar ways of behaving and require the production of new behaviour that likely gives rise to uncomfortable effects like anxiety, despair, guilt, shame or grief, the relief of which forms part of the needed adaptation. They further responded by identifying several behavioural responses common in traumatic experiences including proactive, reactive and passive responses. Those who are proactive often overcome trauma and are more likely to be able to cope well with unexpected situations. As part of this, they urge the application of defense mechanism like denial in situations of divorce, single parenthood, discrimination, mistrust and social isolation – when a spouse, friend or business partner violates fundamental traditional ethics of relationships — and to remain unaware of the trauma; not to reduce suffering but rather to promote well-being and survival. The defense mechanism developed is useful because the research reveals that divorced persons exhibit higher levels of depression and anxiety, tend to have poorer self-concept and exhibit more psychological distress compared to those who are married.

Another initiative is to provide greater support for single parent families as the number of single parent increases as a result of economic and cultural trends that are not easily reversed. This analysis of social trends leads to a pragmatic argument for assisting low income single parents since they are here to stay and withholding assistance from them would only hurt their children. As such, the women are able to identify those who are in dire need and provide this support through their welfare fund instituted by women groups and associations in the community. It is a fact that single parents and their children face challenges which require empowerment, skills training and better community understanding for them to cope with their exceedingly difficult conditions. This programme leads the community in efforts to promote responsible single parenthood and to provide services that encourage stable family life. This development initiative aims to restore hope for single parent families which have been devastated by divorce, separation and neglect.

In the quest for amicable and feasible solution to strained relationships, the women have designed their initiatives to enhance relationships on a long term basis. The respondents indicated that there is a build-up of mistrust, social isolation and discrimination in Dagbon as a result of these strained relationships which emerge after the conflict. As indicated, long term initiatives like revamping the indigenous industries will increase the opportunities for effective development because the women involved will get to know one another over time, developing the relationships and trust necessary for restoring

normalcy in Dagbon. Furthermore, the long term development initiatives will allow the time necessary for members to develop trusting relationships. Good personal relationships and high trust are important, even at the basic information sharing level of coordination of social activities. The victims of strained relationships like the divorcees, single parents and their children experience social isolation and have smaller social networks. This is explained in terms of them having less in common with married friends following divorce or single parenting. The women develop some sort of networking among members of this community-based organization in order to heal the social strains which emerge after the conflict.

7.1.1 Rebuilding of Family Values:

The study noticed a deeper change in traditional family values, which affects a wide range of social and economic aspects of life as the people of Dagbon are divided. The women recognized that it is important and appropriate to set aside personal interests and get back to the customs and tradition handed over by the ancestors. To this far, they encouraged one another and commend for the rebuilding of traditional family values. The people, especially the leaders were reminded to reaffirm Dagbon's enduring spirit and carry forward that precious gift and noble idea of chieftaincy, passed on from generation to generation from the ancestors. For everywhere in Dagbon, there is work to be done. The state of the Dagbon economic and social life calls for bold and swift action. It is high time leaders are reminded to act not only to abide by traditions and customs, but to lay a new foundation for growth in social and economic life for the benefit of the people especially women. The research clearly revealed that the family in Ghana is the primary socialization agent within which a healthy child is bred. The need for rebuilding the important traditional and cultural values of the family is laudable. To enhance family values, the women doubled their efforts towards strengthening, improving and rejuvenating of the family in Ghana and Dagbon in particular. As a first step toward achieving this goal, the women tried to correct the negative attitude noted among the people which reflect in their tendency to underrate the significance of the traditional family life.

7.2 Economic Initiatives after Conflict:

Dagbon is not only full of natural resources but also a repository of human resources. Many people in Dagbon, especially women, are engaged in spinning cotton which is used in weaving traditional clothes. The informants revealed that another area in which Dagbon has its niche is that the people are well adept at knitting and weaving of cane baskets as well as leather bags and they could be used to boost the economy if managed properly in the long run. The women in the study area have tasked other colleagues who have the skills in knitting to train those who are interested so as to empower them. As such the women mobilise resources from their financial contributions in various women associations to renew the indigenous industries as well as explore new areas like the clay deposit in Jakarayilli. They are relying heavily on their welfare fund to motivate colleagues who volunteer to train interested members of these groups. This development initiative is to empower women to assert control over the economic and social aspects of their lives. This can bring economic prosperity to the people of Dagbon and women in particular, since the commodities and resources remained unexplored.

The economy of Ghana, for that matter Dagbon, is highly dependent on agriculture. The traditional staple crops of Dagbon are corn, wheat, millet as well as commercial crops like groundnut and rice. This area provides the women with the needed raw materials for their economic activities as rice and groundnut processors as well as petty traders. Through the economic activities women are able to earn income and urge one another to reinvest the profit generated from the sales of their produce. The idea of reinvesting is to keep them in business all the time and to provide job opportunities for those who are directly or indirectly involved in the agricultural sector. The women have also thought of pulling the resources of various groups and associations together for diversification of income activities by venturing into the cultivation of vegetables. Considering the growth prospects of this sector, Government needs to plan for higher and better production. Azima indicated that:

To increase production and supply of the raw material is for the government to give subsidies to local farmer, shift its agriculture development strategy from food security mode to that of value addition by growing certain products like high value fruits, vegetables and cash crops that can give high returns to women in Kanvilli

Another initiative done by the women is to encourage potential investors to join the mission of economic reconstruction of Dagbon. The important initiative for the development of Dagbon is to engage the private sector at the local levels. As a

first requirement, they have identified the potential investors, financial institutions and donors. Furthermore, the women have also identified the potential areas of investment such as Shea-butter and groundnut oil extraction, maize processing for domestic use, *dawadawa* processing, weaving and dress making as well as pottery and an integrated course of action to achieve economic empowerment. They form associations in which they contribute money monthly, educate members about the effects of conflict and the need to coexist peacefully just to win the confidence of the potential investors who want to invest in the area. Gaaziya indicates that:

Everything has gone bad...it was normal in this community for an individual to get economic assistance from his extended family like paternal and maternal uncles, aunts or cousins. Things have change, so we have to come together, we have to mobilise...contribute money and help ourselves (bori-man noo kumya) the cock for self-help program has crown. Two heads are better than one, in a group we can do better.

As indicated by respondents, the conflict has affected the development of Dagbon as it discourages private enterprises to invest and this creates obstacles in its economic enhancement. So the women invite women welfare NGOs and financial institutions like Bonzali rural bank into the community to partner with the associations and groups they have established for this purpose. This partnership would steer the ongoing process and assist in getting a peaceful solution to the Dagbon issue which is a three-way process, that is, by addressing the underdevelopment and involving women in the development process in the area by bringing empowerment and its benefits as a deterrent against the resurgence of the Dagbon conflict. As a result, women exhort one another to proper behaviour and impress on one another the importance of values such as honesty, uprightness and the necessity to compromise. The aim is to promote harmony in the community to demonstrate their readiness to potential investors to have confidence in partnering with them.

The women also suggested that the government's policy on women's education should be enforced and women-friendly projects designed to raise awareness about the importance of education. These efforts will encourage female education in Dagbon. This is important because the bias in favour of men has not been erased despite the efforts made towards equal opportunities in education; as such boys are always preferred to girls when it comes to who should enroll in school. Even where girls are enrolled, they do not complete the elementary level of education and those who continued stop after getting the basic education certificate. The data indicates that the rate of education for women is low due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of most parents. As women are required to be pious, domestic and submissive, local parents believe that none of these ideals would be achieved through education. So education for girls is not encouraged by the locals for fear that they would cease to fulfill their traditional roles in the family. Thus educating them would lead to break down of the traditional social system. The alarming dropout rate among girls at the elementary school level coupled with traditional beliefs cause great concern based on which the Government needs to remedy the situation. Therefore, educational campaigns were intensified by the women to sensitize the people to the dangers of conflict, its negative repercussions and the urgent need to live harmoniously together while dialoguing to iron out their differences. One does not have to look far to see what disastrous impacts conflict can have on the social and economic fabric of women in Dagbon in particular and Ghana at large. Women already form the most marginalized group in the society and further erosion of their families and homes because of the ongoing conflict would only worsen their situation. Furthermore, investing in human capital by expanding education to build a pool of educated women, build solid economy and making available health care services is the best way to build a strong civil society in general and Dagbon in particular as advocated by the women.

Women serve as the forerunners of peace movements that have ended conflicts, but their efforts to bring an end to conflict are usually behind the scenes. For that matter women should be more involved in conflict prevention, resolution and management efforts at all levels. Their needs and interests are not incorporated when they are not active participants so interventions will not be as appropriate or enduring as they should have been. Women normally or naturally exhibit great interest in peace processes because the impacts of conflict weigh more heavily on their lives. Despite the difficulties women face in conflicting situation, their role in peacemaking cannot be ignored. They often play decisive roles in negotiating the peace process but continue to be poorly represented in formal peace processes even though they contribute in many informal ways to conflict resolution. Therefore women need to be empowered economically, be adequately represented at all levels of decision-making in the family so as to be efficient and effective in coping under tension.

8. DISCUSSION

Conflict is seen as a situation between two or more individuals in which one individual observes that the other has negatively affected or is about to take actions that will adversely affect his interest. It is therefore described as the resort to the use of force and armed struggle in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interest and goals by contending groups or individuals. For conflict to occur, individuals must perceive a situation against each other or among themselves irrespective of the accurate or inaccurate nature of that perception of the situation. Whenever such perceptions are held, there are usually negative and the contending matter must be something parties involved have a common interest or desire. In the words of Sani (2007) conflict is inevitable in social life process, even conflict occurs in well-developed societies like US and Britain. Every human has basic needs which he seeks to fulfil and failure caused by other groups to meet these needs could lead to conflict. So it is opined that whether the need is solving group interest or basic needs of life, failure to address such exigencies of life leads to conflict (Chinwokwu, 2013; Faleti, 2006). Uzueghunam (2010) conflict evolves in phases; as early conflict indicators, conflict resistance, explosive or exhaustive conflict and the most deadly spiral and the highest level of violence. This presents a period of intense pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups. This means that conflict is not static but dynamic and its intensity changes over a conflict cycle understanding of how, where and when to apply different strategy and methods to cope with it. As such, the women adopted activities, efforts and interventions to alleviate their sufferings due to breakdown of social structure caused by conflict. It is an attempt made by the women to overcome the structural, relational and cultural challenges after conflict. This strategy aimed at engaging multiple agencies and organizations for interaction towards solving socioeconomic challenges in order to have enabling environment for sustainable development. Such strategies are actions aimed at supporting structures which tend to strengthen and solidify social and economic progress in order to free them from hardships and to avoid conflicting situations.

The research shows that the chieftaincy conflicts impede developments such as provision of education and recreational facilities in Ghana, particularly the Northern Region due to women's low income levels which deny the children access to quality education. They also indicate that health facilities were negatively affected as in many cases workers refuse posting to the Northern Region and those already there run due to the insecure nature of the place (Andani, 2015). This corroborates with (GSDRC, 2009) findings that existing health services and structures are destroyed, health personnel fled or killed while both local and international aid not able to reach the affected population within conflict zone. It is further opined that in such situations access to health care facilities that meet reproductive health care needs and others are often not there and when available, the needs of men and combatants are the priority at the expense of the needs women and children (GSDRC, 2009; Davis et al., 2002). In the report of Plan International (2008) when families face difficulty in making a living after conflict, women and girls are forced into the labour market such as unsafe paid work, commercial sex or joining the combatants or forced into early marriage which often leads to health problems when they become pregnant too young for their immature bodies, thus drop out of school. Again, the provision of adequate utilities such as water, electricity and other development projects was inadequate in most parts of the area because funds meant for development were channeled into conflict management and peace keeping in the area at the expense of development. The women in those areas suffer as they have to go far distance before they could get water putting their life in danger.

Women are affected in different ways in conflict situations as the existing violence and brutality, changes in gender roles and in family status demand a high degree of energy from them to ensure their own mental stability and emotional survival. As expected, it is their duty to care for the husband and children as well as the elderly members of the family. In support of this, ICRC (2001) states that after conflict women and girls take on tasks previously meant for their male relatives which take them outside from their traditional environment and put unnecessary stress on them. In another development, the World Bank (2005) stress those women's household tasks become more complex during and after conflict, but they are still responsible to provide health care to the sick members, old and injured family and community members. In addition, some women also provide childcare and home schooling for their children during and after conflict. As a result of nobody to share the responsibility of raising children in single parenthood or provide any break when the parent is tired of attending to the children's care, attending to her emotional needs, being sick or emotionally drained. As such women have to find the strength to live on in an altered family structure after divorce and during single parenthood after conflict. For the majority of women, the family is likely to be their principal arena of responsibility. Women in Ghana thus define themselves chiefly in relation to family members, as mother and wife. For Neubeck and Glasberg

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(2005) human nature contains a tendency towards irrational behaviour that must be kept in check otherwise it is likely to depart from shared values, rules and practices that are highly disruptive to stability and harmony within the family. In such situations, important positions and social roles are not adequately performed which can interfere with family function economically, emotionally and socially thus there are unending housework, maintenance and repairs that women have to do alone. Acock and Demo (1994) indicate that economic hardship has dire consequences for parents and children because parents, especially women become depressed, irritable, hostile and punitive as such the children suffer distress because parents are less nurturing, supportive, responsive and consistent in disciplining.

As revealed from the respondents women were challenged in terms of social, economic and emotional support as well as experience of great deal of loneliness and isolation in relation to their spouse and relatives. A non-threatening and accepting environment is vital to promote personal self-esteem and reaffirming identity of women in such circumstances. BRIDGE (2003) reports that conflict disproportionately disadvantaged women as it results in reduced access to resources to cope with household responsibility and increased physical and emotional violence, thus imply social exclusion and poverty. Cherlin (1992), a developmental psychologist, suggest that the first two years following family disintegration constitute a 'crisis period' and that during this difficult time adults, particularly women and children face intense emotional upset, continuing family conflict and adjustments to new living arrangements. This is one in which women can survive.

The problem of chieftaincy conflict as indicated in the study suggests far-reaching impacts on the economic lives of the people in Ghana in general and women of Dagbon in particular. The conflict leads to the breakdown of economic systems rendering productive women in the area idle and redundant, a process that heightens their vulnerability as they move out to fend for themselves. There is a complex relationship among the women with regard to their economic behaviour (Andani, 2015). The modes of marketing and distribution become increasingly unstable because of competition between different resource users turning the situation to a struggle for integrity and survival of gates (clans). The Dagbon conflict has destroyed the ways in which women earn to care for the family since the struggle to control the market involves contacts and influence. As such, economic activities in Dagbon were no longer viable as before the conflict in the face of insufficient supplies and low sales hence the change in economic behaviour (Andani, 2015). The study reveal middlemen as well as some women hoarding goods, boycotting their business partners which cause strained relationship thus, resulting in discriminatory trade, suspicion and economic isolation (Andani, 2015). The barriers to women's economic advancement as indicated in Martha Walls (2000) revealed widespread direct and indirect discrimination thus gender discrimination in which female headed households have lower economic advancement. However, the economic discrimination witness in Dagbon after the conflict is among same gender thus discrimination among women in business which affects all irrespective of one's status whether single parent, divorce or married (Andani, 2015).

The women in Ghana play different roles within particular systems and occupy different socioeconomic positions as a result of these different roles. Women experience different vulnerabilities to such things as climate change and shifts in global markets for the crops under production, conflict and other social units to impact the long-term well-being of affected communities and individuals. The women undertake activities, efforts and interventions which are directed at alleviating their sufferings due to breakdown of social structure as a result of conflict. This is aimed at engaging many alternatives to solve socioeconomic challenges in order to have enabling environment for sustainable development. Studies show that violent conflict is an act against an individual or group, with the intent to cause injury or death which affect women's participation in activities in the community (Thomas & Eric, 2006; Grace, & Danfulani, 2015; Ghobarah et al., 2003). The informal sector is often seen as precarious, unregulated and lacking income security. This study found that it offers employment opportunities for women after conflict. The women were typically engaged in various forms of small businesses including food vending, street hawking, head porters *kayayei*, petty trading and hairdressing (Kwankye, et al., 2007; Center for Migration Strategy, (nd)). Asset accumulation is not only a means of survival but also enhances women's social status as well as improving the economic wellbeing. Women have particular interest in acquiring cooking utensils and clothes after devastating destruction of property after conflict. For young women, acquisition of these assets is the first step towards marriage and older women also acquire them to contribute to their daughters' preparation for marriage (Kwankye et al., 2007).

9. CONCLUSION

The chieftaincy institution plays a crucial role in the development of the country. Chiefs still remain a focal point of the cultural identity of the people. In most parts of the country the institution is considered male dominated and is described as a source of continues marginalization, oppression and discrimination. It provides leadership and serves as the embodiment of culture, traditions and customs as well as a channel to foster unity and development. Chieftaincy which revolves around ethnicity and clan is at the same time considered as the major source of conflict in Ghana. Such conflicts changed the meaning attached to the crucial role of the chieftaincy institution as well as the family, marriage ties and parenthood. The analysis has shown that the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict has strained relationships which lead to breakdown of families, friendship as well as marriage ties. The economic activities which are mostly agricultural based as well as petty trading were adversely affected. Apart from shortage of supplies and low sales, other impacts like reduction in businesses and other economic activities affects the income generation efforts of women to face their new responsibilities as breadwinners after the conflict. They have been able to come up with social and economic initiatives to mitigate the effect of the conflict and also serve as a spring board for their economic empowerment. The coping strategies those women in the conflict area highlights the role of sociocultural practices and access to resources, assets and the overall organization of their livelihood activities. The majority of displaced women has access to few resources and sometimes relied on their labour power as their most important livelihood asset and spends their minimal income on basic necessities of life just to supplement the family budget. These women are not only vulnerable economically, but also they keep the house under difficult conditions. Based on this, the United Nations (UN) Resolutions 1325 recognizes the impact of conflict on women and calls for their participation in conflict resolution processes just to cater for their needs and aspirations.

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