

ISSUES AND TRENDS IN AFRICAN CONFLICTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS IN RWANDAN AND SIERRA LEONEAN CRISES

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Summary

Background *There have been scholarly responses to and peace-agents' interventions to the reality of diseases spread in African conflict situations. The problem however, is a lack of adequate response to HIV/AIDS victims in the post-conflict era. This paper looks at the employment of HIV/AIDS transmission as a 'New Instrument of Warfare' (NIW) in Rwandan and Sierra Leonean conflicts and the challenges of the victims in the post-war period.*

Methods *We conducted historical survey of African conflicts with special interest in Rwanda and Sierra Leone through a combination of content analysis, descriptive and comparative approaches. A review of extant literature revealed certain contradictions in conflict responses by African states and international organisations during and after conflicts in Africa.*

Findings *In the emergence of HIV/AIDS transmission as a NIW in Africa especially as a form of ethnic cleansing strategy, the study finds speedy persistence of spread of HIV/AIDS and the unfortunate neglect of the vulnerable victims mostly women and children in the aftermath of war.*

Interpretation *There is evidence of reoccurrence on the use of sexual violence and rape as weapon of warfare in Africa and the consequence in the spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic. The study observed that this act was deliberate meant purposely for ethnic cleansing. The study shows that women and under aged children who are infected with HIV/AIDS also suffer infirmities such as VVF and other STIs. Curtailing the growing number of such cases will require designing of post-conflict collaborative response by peace agents to reduce the suffering of victims, provide access to Medicare, empowerment and education as disease control strategies.*



Keywords: *Conflict Zone, HIV/AIDS, Vulnerable, Eradication, Persistence, Rebels, weapon of war*

Introduction

Conflicts, from the period of pre-colonial conquest to wars of independences of states, supremacy, nationalism and subjugations had been an issues-based thoughts and adventure. However, in the period of cold war, where regimes change: alliances, suspicions, arms trafficking and leadership struggles among others were based on superiority – dominance; down to the end of cold war, the strategy of wars also changed. To which today, the events had turned into interplay of mix-feelings and absurdity. The tones and directions of armed conflicts are now tailored into extreme annihilations and or perpetual destruction. This adventure meant to render the human race incapacitated and invalid becomes a theatre of warfare. Thus, adopting the view of Machiavelli (1640), that end justifies the means, to apply in most conflicts and crisis in the world.

The language of war and chants of vengeance, carnage and destruction with hypocrisy and blackmail occasioned by hysteria propaganda cause or escalate many conflicts. With this global trends of conflicts wearing a new look at the end of the 20th century into the new millennium, the protagonists derive joy in taking the extreme contest to exacerbate battlefield casualties rate, especially where wars could not be won out-rightly, an indelible scares, marks and or pains are pictured on the forehead

of the vanquished so that they would forever remember that they were once defeated, humiliated and or dehumanized.^{1,2} And since starvation was no longer one of the major weapons of war as seen in the Biafra-Nigeria civil war of 1967 to 1970, recent warfare had shown that such has been exchanged with rape, sexual assault and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like: Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes (AIDs) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) among others, the battle is as good as having been won because the victims have been successfully dehumanized.³⁻⁷ With great disparities, the Iraq wars, Sri Lanka war, the war that dismembered the former Yugoslavia, Afghan war and Syrian war among others all differ from the many wars and conflicts in Africa. These kinds of wars/conflicts being a reoccurring decimal in the human indecision to despise fellow human, repeatedly occurred in several African conflict zone in the 1990s and 2000s, due to the character of warfare that has also changed² admitted. Thus, this dread in itself, was over escalated to affecting almost the people of the continent owing to easy and free migrations within.

Although, old had not totally gone contrary to the views above, nor that of,⁸ but as a reflection of many African categorical problems,⁹ was quick to remind us that Africa have had its own

shares of problems, with the issues of rebellion, political instability, religious fanaticism, economic recession, mass poverty and civil wars that were predominant. To which, according to,¹⁰ as at 1996, an estimated 19 major internal conflicts were fought worldwide. Added to these are further 42 lower intensity wars, of which a close review of the period shows that Africa, with 13 conflicts at home, was ranked amongst the highest in number of distributions of the world's conflicts and crises with extreme form being displayed. Rwanda and Sierra Leone, specifically, being on the index of extreme conflict zones were classified so because sex, rape, sexual assaults and sexually transmitted HIV/AIDS were used as weapons of war.

Thus,¹¹ argued that mass sexual violence did not only serve as a weapon of genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group, but it was a strategic bait of external extermination of whatever that might remain of the Tutsi people. In the same vein, the level of sexual assault in Sierra Leone towns of Port Loko, Cambia, Rogbere and Mashaka among others demystified a nation without conscience, especially in the hand of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). It further stated that there were act of sexual violence with severe medical and psycho-social pains visited on the women by the RUF rebels. Violence against women, especially rape, has added its own brand of shame to recent wars with systematic rape often used as a weapon of war in 'ethnic cleansing',

just as occurred both in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, where women and girls contacted HIV/AIDS; faced with unwanted pregnancies and health complications resulting from botched abortion; suffer sexual mutilations and other injuries.

Most often, opposition armed groups are fragmented with no unified command structure and always driven by particularistic/parochial interests rather than national goals and civilians, especially the vulnerable categories – the aged, women and children are victims of such armed conflicts. Dirty wars seek victory through horror rather than through battlefield strategies. Furthermore, civilian populations are the main targets of these conflicts, while fear, brutality and murder are the basis on which control is constructed. Thus, the actions of the RUF rebels, IntraHamwe rebels, Rwandan Armed Forces (RAF) and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) among others in the African conflicts zone were centered on horror. The perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide viewed sexual violence against the Tutsi women as an effective method to shame, humiliate and conquer the Tutsi populations.⁷

Premised on these reasons, this study, particularly interested on the facts that victims of such atrocities in African conflict theatres as seen in Rwanda, Sudan – Darfur, Sierra Leone and Cote D'voire are either abandoned, neglected and or left to suffer their wounds to death become a source of worry to this study



as the survivors also waste no time to spreading the pandemic due to lack of check and control.⁶ An act that had combined both trend and bait to inflict pains and suffering on the vulnerable and innocent Africans in the conflict zone. This study, mindful of these lapses inherent in several conflict zones in Africa, considered Rwanda and Sierra Leone conflicts important in its investigation in the contemporary period. Toward this end, African conflicts and the catalysis of war; the negative trends in African conflicts; HIV/AIDS as weapons of war of exterminations of the victims; the problems and effects in Rwanda and Sierra Leone; the scourge of the spread in Africa conflicts and the new idea (rape as a weapon) of war and the general implications among others were examined.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The study adopts Frustration – Aggression theory and Top-Down Violence Model of the Political Conflict Theory to examine how long-time deprivation, suppression, oppression and leadership struggle occasioned by greed and dictatorship led to conflict/war of annihilation by any means (rape, sexual violence and STDs infection as weapon of war), especially against women and girls.

(a). **FRUSTRATION – AGGRESSION THEORY:** The scholars who employed the frustration-aggression model in their studies to explaining situation^{12-18,10}

among others, believes that the greater the frustration, the greater the quantity of aggression against the source of frustration.

The intensity of frustration in the society can motivate men to either intense, short-term attack or to more prolonged, less severe attacks on the initiators of the thwarts.¹⁹ This implies that the severity of deprivation affects both intensity of violence, and the extent of human and physical damages. Mild deprivation motivates little violence, moderate deprivation push more across the threshold and very intense deprivation encourages large segments of political community actions.¹⁴ This is because, according to,^{15,18} destructive behavior, which is a fundamental property of the human organization of men and exposed to noxious stimuli that cannot be avoided or overcome, hence, having the innate disposition, to strike out at their sources.

Striking out may or may not reduce the frustration, but it seems to be an inherently satisfying response to the tension built up through frustration for years.¹² Arguing along the same line,¹⁸ posited that the depraved may go all out to show how odious they are to the frustrations and their generations if not checkmated. As such action may be a mark of revenge or otherwise for the ultimate drive of all actions. The desire to release tension is not the only source of aggression, however, response to tension may themselves include the resort to violence.²⁰ These actions are

seen in those who rebels against their political community. Thus, implying that frustration–aggression relationship provides the dynamics for the relationship between intensity of deprivation and the potential for collective violence as witnessed in the Rwanda’s war in (1959-1994) and Sierra Leone’s armed conflict (1992-1998).

As a sequel to these contentions, the following questions demand answer, viz, Could the rebelling against the Tutsi leadership as occurred in Rwanda 1959, against the Hutu leadership in 1988, 1990 and 1994 among others, be due to the level of frustration suffered by both the Hutus from 1849 to 1959, and then the Tutsis from 1962 – 1994? Should we agree that it was due to the long denial and suppression that had availed the RUF to toe the line of action that they deemed possible in the period of civil war? Can the view of,¹⁸ above, be linked to the act of infecting the women and girls in Rwanda and Sierra Leone with HIV/AIDS as a way of shaming the respective governments and people⁷? Why do the rebels/warlords choose to humiliate the people with the kind of atrocities visited on the society? How has these long years of deprivation and frustration propelled the magnitude of aggression and destruction seen in these societies? Why should HIV/AIDS be seen as the most appropriate weapons of war to be used by the planners of the genocide in Rwanda and the warlords of Sierra Leone civil war? Does the Hutus, in recounting their pains, frustration and dehumanization in the hand of the Tutsi

oligarchy, despite their large population of about 84% afford them the opportunity to adopt and perpetuate the kind of leadership style they initiated? Does the imposition of forced labour and untold hardship and grievous exploitation of the people by the Tutsi oligarchy inform the Hutus to detest the Tutsis? During the period of the Tutsi oligarchy rule, the intrigues of cheat, hate, greed and forceful deprivation of their land, cattle, sheep, wives and daughters amongst others to the detriment of the deprived people was extolled.

The Temines ethnic group of Sierra Leone, on the other hand, being the largest in population, the owners of the land where all the mineral resources like gold, diamond and cobalt among others are being mined are never allowed to rule the land since independence in 1962. The minority Limbas, Krios and Fulas had ruled with treacherous dislocation of the Temine land. They are otherwise seen and treated as second class citizens upon their wealth. Their sons are not allowed to be promoted in the military, civil service and even political offices. All these deprivations and ill treatments informed the kind of aggression and wanton destructions with infesting of the victims with HIV/AIDS as a way of revenge by the Temine owned RUF.

(b). **TOP-DOWN VIOLENCE MODEL:** Such scholars as,^{13,21-23} sees the model as an instrument of the ruling class against their opposing subjects.



This occurs in the forms of instilling fear, intimidation, checkmating of opposition using hysteria propaganda, repression and suppression of the hated enemies and so on. According to,²² top-down violence model is when the act of violence or destruction are planned and mobilized from the top to the lower echelons of the society by political actors or leaders. It is usually funded by the political leaders and or entrepreneurs. This kind of action is always targeted against oppositions, threatening group and or at a particular ethnic, sect or religious groups. This consist of a powerful group who help to mobilizing violence from the top by creating large number of followers (recruits), who in turn helps to executing, re-recruiting and or using major coercion to actualizing the goal of the leaders.

Top-down violence model, which is the same as disorderliness in conflict are manipulative scheme of wicked repression, used by seat-tight leaders to perpetually retain power by all means.¹³ This, mostly seen among African leaders in the contemporary period is despicable. Agreeing to the above assertions,²¹ reiterated that it is mindless, mad and senseless act. Combined with hysteria propaganda, it tends to brainwash and even risk to death many in the name of protecting the nation state. It projects ethnic hatred, mindless violence and chaos by instilling fears on the mass-public while perpetrating evil-annihilation. This act helps largely to abuse the civilian population, even when

such is termed as being an unfortunate deviation from the laws of war or as a means to a military/rebel ends.²⁴ In the case of Rwanda and Sierra Leone above, this study identified war and abuses like rape, sexual assault, sexual dehumanization and sexually transmitted diseases on the vulnerable by the perpetrators as a means of achieving their ends.

The arising questions to this effect could be why should government plan the annihilation of its own citizen? What benefit do the government tend to gain by destroying the same people it wishes to govern? Why should hysteria propaganda and ethnic chant be used to destroy the society? Why should the victims be neglected after haven suffered sexual assaults and rape? Was the sexual transmission of infectious diseases meant to reduce the population of the hated or otherwise?

However, the two theories above have a great linkage with the study as it separately and expressly show that what informed the action of the RUF rebels, Interahamwe rebels, RPF rebels and the RAF was due to long years of suffering, frustration, deprivation an social neglect by government after government while the Top – Down violence approach of the Hutu Government officials after a concise plan and brainwashing was meant for the genocidires to expedite action using ethnic cleansing as instrument of hate to do away with the remains of the common enemies – the Tutsis.

On the other hand, against the reasons that there had been many persistent neglects of victims of conflict years after the war has ended might also have indicated the degree of pains and challenges of the neglected people of Rwanda and Sierra Leone. This sorrow, bad and painful situations could be examined in two broad perspectives: the first is that of those victims who were already HIV/AIDS and other STDs carriers, which freely mix with the returnees from refugee camps and possibly spread the endemic diseases. Then, second are those who are aware of their status but out of the euphoria and or in the seek for greener pasture travels freely to other neighbouring countries, especially states' in conflict to spreading the pandemic in the name of ad hoc workers, mercenaries, sex workers and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) among others, thereby acting as both a baits and possibly peace agents or peacekeeping soldiers among others.

AFRICAN CONFLICTS AND THE NEW IDEAS OF WAR

Conflict is not new in Africa and it is inevitable.^{12,16,9} However, what becomes the necessary evil in such crises is not only the processes but the various trends and dimensions that accompanied its executions. This probably might have been followed by negative attitudes and wastages, especially as seen in the recent times, where wars are prosecuted against the victims and the vanquished.

Perhaps also, truce on the catalysis or accompanying factors in most of the recent African conflicts are narrowed down into two spheres that might had made it a juicy venture or otherwise includes, one, total war of leadership struggle and the subsequent power sharing measures are at times assumed and adopted. Two, win or lose the war for an enthroned ethnicization against victims. These kinds, having been seen in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and possibly the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur (in Sudan) among others tends to suggest that weapons, arms, armoured tanks, missiles and bombs are gradually been abandoned to a new phase of warfare. Where men trade infections like goods in order to exterminate or annihilate the unwanted races and people. An instance from Congo DR,²⁵ revealed that the Congolese women in the 1997 war noted that the most insane fantasies have found their expression. When seven soldiers rape a women or little girl, and thrust a knife or fire shots into her vagina, for them the woman is no longer a human being, she is an object. And since there are no longer any laws or rules, combatants pour out their anger and their madness on to women and little girls.

According to the²⁶, members of the Hutu Militias (interahamwe) and the National Army of Rwanda were noted to have targeted women and girls in the genocidal campaign of mass sexual violence. Similarly,⁷ reiterated that the perpetrators, the extremists themselves



viewed sexual violence against the Tutsi women as an effective method of shame and to conquer the Tutsi population, the moderate Hutu women supporters, mostly those who held opposing political views. In another instance,¹¹ argued that mass sexual violence did not only serve as weapon of war against the Tutsi ethnic group, but it was a strategic bait of external destruction of whatever that might remain of the Tutsi people.

Different from the above observation,²⁷ it is noted that violence against women in Sierra Leone is a co-factor of HIV/AIDS infections and population reduction among the opposition to Temine ascendancy. However, both Rwanda and Sierra Leone illustrate how war affects men and women differently. What form the catalysis (m) of war is that if gun cannot defeat the enemy, HIV/AIDS infections are used as a weapon of war by other means. There are links between conflict and the spread of HIV/AIDS in African armed conflicts. Although, quantifying that links is difficult, because reliable statistical data are not readily available, but evidence of the outcome of the pogrom has affirmed that most of the examined cases are tented towards that assumption.²⁸

It is evident that what constitute major issues in the Sierra Leonean and Rwandan armed conflicts/wars, apart from leadership struggle was hate and the ploy to do away with the arch-enemies by any means, thereby requiring the adoption of the most

inhuman tactic of infecting the victims with HIV/AIDS. This argument,²⁹ noted that in the 1990s there was more focus on war-time sexual violence than ever before in the anal of African conflicts, to which it was affirmed that there were strong but complex relationship between sexual violence and war mostly targeted against the gender.

Although, rape cases in war zone is not new as observed by³⁰, because systematic and organized rape was a tactic of war. Agreeing to this notion,³¹ reiterated that sexual violence is a common part of military conquest. In contemporary time men had treated women as spoils of war from the first expansionist societies. But the idea and outright usage of HIV/AIDS/STDs as a measure to cow the enemies or extinct them is new and very destructive. This also bring to fore the incessant and deplorable manner by which victims of war are abandoned, neglected or treated with disdain.

In this paper, evidence from the literature review so far indicate that the events in Sierra Leonean town of (Magburunka), where Aminata Koroma and Khadijah Morgau, two teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 16 years, who were infected with STDs, boils, swollen legs and black spots all over their bodies, beard their minds on the degrees of traumatization they went through since their predicaments. This ranging from abandonments to outright neglects by friends and immediate families, not to talk of the humanitarian

groups who care less about them and failed to help. To these according to a field based research conducted by³², Sandra Koulabaye at Braihmon – County, recounted:

It seems the war was still on and everyone is still hiding. I suffered from VVF from the age 12 years owing to rape resulted pregnancy that kept me invalid for life due to poor handling and early neglect by all around me. At 22 years old, with HIV/AIDS positive, I still wet clothes and napkins at every 20 minutes due to the infirmity. For Khadisah Bah and Rukiya Aluhassan at Masebi and Matutuka respectively... since we were taken into sex slavery by the RUF at the age 14 and 16 years, we had wished we never existed, because the men who infected them with HIV/AIDS/STDs and TB are no more and, here we are suffering the pains. Without ARV, which we cannot even afford today, it would have been over long ago.

The questions that are pertinent here are: What happens to the voiceless in conflict zone? Why is it that only the known records, relatives, prominent persons and possibly those at refugee camps that are officially recognized as displaced or victims or conflicts, whereas their many suffering, passing through pains and trauma that are not heard of or care for? The answers may be unknown or simply put, African conflicts are always complex and the accompanying trends forms the complexity and catalysis of

the war that goes along to affecting everything.

HIV/AIDS AND CONFLICT FANNED MEDIUMS IN AFRICA

Ideally, it is nullity to compare two different and major conflicts as having semblance, but one pertinent occurrence in most recent African conflicts has been the will of the indecent group to emulating the evil that their kind or party displayed while humiliating a perceived enemies or people. The Rwandan war/genocide and the Sierra Leonean war were both rooted in ethnicity and its manipulation by warlords for parochial gain.^{33,34} The functional mechanism of attaining this quest as nursed and desire were also centered on ethnicization³⁵, which informed the actors to see rape, sexual violence and the act of infecting the victims with STDs, HIV/AIDS and TB among others as a bait to exercising their dominance over the lesser groups or enemies. This negative trend, which has become part of African states army/rebel warfare strategy portends a great danger as other upcoming crises like the Boko Haram insurgence in Nigeria, Tuareg rebels in Mali, the Central African rebel groups have adopted such heinous method of warfare to decimate the helpless civilian population, especially the vulnerable categories (women and girls). The Rwandan and Sierra Leonean wars are among the best classical cases of how the wars have resulted in the spread (both during and after the war) of HIV/AIDS.



THE RWANDAN EXPERIENCE

With the end of the war/genocide, to which the combination of both theories above had a link not only to the events unfolding then in Rwanda but as clearly shown that the stage and reactions of the people portrayed as such, thereby leading to the kind of violence visited on the vulnerable and victims. The other also explains the action of the RPF rebels and the role of the seating Hutus' government with the revisiting of the past treatment of the Hutus by the former Tutsi regime, resulting to war. The baseline survey of³² noted that an average Rwandan women and girls, on both side of the conflicts were beaten, raped, and tortured. The violence did not end either when the women arrived at the refugee camps, as rapes occurred frequently in and around the camp.³⁵ As a result, a number of women became pregnant.³³ The degree of sexual abuse resulting into easier HIV/AIDS transmission becomes more prevalent.

According to³⁶, citing the statement of Francisca,

“the Rwandan Hutu militia at the barrier said they could protect me, but instead, they kept me and raped me in their homes. It was a case of one militia member who keep me for two or three days. And then another would choose me thereafter. If killers group approaches, they would say that I am their sister. I had to stay with these men because I would have been killed otherwise. A condition was very favourable for HIV transmission. After the attack by the

rebels, I cried out and they stabbed me, carried me to forest where I meet other women and girls. A few years later, an RPF soldier came to my house and wanted to have sex with me. I tried to convince him that I was HIV positive and couldn't have sex. It was like a rape because he was a soldier. I felt I could shout. He wanted to marry me and since he was a soldier, I felt I had no choice. I only made him have a test and he was already HIV positive.

The Rwandan population, generally devastated by the genocide now have a 25% population infected by HIV/AIDS virus with a steady daily increase of the infirmities on the people. The resultant effect of (HIV/AIDS endemic) on the people according to⁷, shows a dwindling life expectancy of 34 years amongst the women, while the average infant mortality rate has increased from 53% to 81% death per every 1,000 live birth in the country. Over 10 million children between the age of 16 and 21 have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS.³⁷ Similarly,³⁸ opined that the genocidaires had two weapons, guns and machetes to infect victims with HIV/AIDS. Reacting to this situation,³⁹ opined that the Hutu extremist also accused the Tutsi women of being too proud and that the only way out is to use HIV/AIDS as part of their arsenal, raping them to infect them. Hence, the organizers orchestrated rape to humble the Tutsi. By and large, rape and HIV/AIDS infestation was alarming in the Rwandan conflict. It was a place where tears dried up, where the above

mentioned percentage of the women are HIV/AIDS carriers, with many emotionally traumatized.

SIERRA LEONE SITUATION

According to⁴⁰, the Sierra Leone war, which initially was armed conflicts among men owing to leadership problems arising from long years of denial, suffering, frustration, deprivation and social neglect that later degenerated into violence against women and girls, as they were subjected into brutal forms of sexual violence, including sexual mutilation and killings. The Foday Sankoh led RUF and the Hunter Militias turned most women into sex slaves, where rape, sexual mutilation and dehumanization were in the extreme. The war which dragged from 1992 to 2002 witnessed the worst atrocities against women and girls. Recounting the incidence in Port Loko, Matukuka, Mashebi and Cambia, the⁴¹ noted that in Sierra Leone alone, in the period of the conflict about 58% of the urban women and another 80% of the rural women and girls were infected with HIV/AIDS. Out of which about 33% of the girls suffered V.V.F with HIV/AIDS combined owing to rape and rupture of uterus.

According to⁴² many of the young women who survived the civil war in Sierra Leone suffered sexual abuse of rape, sexual assault, forced pregnancy and some were kept as bush wives and dragged across the war front; and that many women suffered low-self-esteem, depression and infection among others, which are common outcome of

HIV/AIDS. This mass rape and forced impregnation adopted as weapon of war saw non-Timene ethnic women, especially the Limbas suffer a great deal in the hand of their captors, the RUF rebels.³² A pathetic case is that of Aminata, an eleven-year-old Limba girl, which³⁹ revealed that after the killing of her parents by the RUF at Gbologhun in Cambia district, she was raped consistently until Economic Community of West African State (ECOMOG) came to her rescue. Then, at eleven years, she was pregnant and abandoned. At the time of birth, she was told that the wall between her vagina and bladder may be affected, she suffered fistula, a broken and ruptured uterus, leading to uncontrolled bladder as urine run uncontrolled and the odd of soaking of clothes or pads became incessant. The above cases show the dehumanizing impacts of African conflicts on citizenry as the bad memories of what women and girls experiences in conflict zone is not only disturbing but lingers on for years.

ISSUES IN AFRICAN CONFLICTS

According to⁴³, most African conflicts, either before or after independence, had not been on national issues as seen in them when agitating or struggling for freedom to attain independence. But like an act repeating itself, immediately after independence, they soon forget the pains of the trenches, the mould and early morning dews that they bath with. Struggle for power now take the center stage. Patriotism is thrown away. What each want to gain now become the bone of contest. Then conflict ensues. Of



interest, devious war strategies and tactics employed to dissipate the society. Some sees ethnic chanting and chauvinism as the best product to market, while some see ethnic humiliation, cleansing and ethnicization as the best tool to despise the enemies by employing the act of infecting captors with HIV/AIDs and STDs to show odiousness. The conflict in turn impede on human lives, the vision to protect the weak, the helpless and the vulnerable. Women and girls quickly become the victims of expected protectors as rape, sexual assault, abuse, mutilation, HIV/AIDs, fistula and unending traumatization become their nightmares.

Thus,²⁶ argued that there was an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 rape cases committed in Rwanda during the genocide, while women and girls in Sierra Leone were not different. They were systematically subjected to rape, gang rape, infected or otherwise killed or injured by having arrows, spears or other objects pushed into their vagina or being shut in the genitals.⁴⁴ This kind of war strategies that has proved uncontrollable, but adopted as a new system of warfare are today seen in conflicts in the DRC, Darfur (Sudan), Tuareg rebel uprising in Mali's North, Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria , Central African Republic crisis and even other pockets of wars and protracted armed conflicts in Africa. Wars are no longer the act of testing the might of men but a desire to capture women and girls for sex slavery with the intent of infecting them with HIV/AIDs and other

STDs viruses.³ Thus, agreeing with the research findings of,⁴⁵ that the increase in African states conflicts that was initially high has though reduced drastically, but has not shown any change in the growth of HIV/AIDs scourge in Africa as it is still near 82% from the 1994 (45%) after the Rwanda and Somali crisis combined. For instance, a disclosure from an alleged escapee among the over two hundred Chibok school girls that was abducted by the Boko Haram armed group in the North-East Nigeria informed that “one of the girl was being raped 15 times by 15 men every day ... the girl is now traumatized and confused”.⁴⁶ This new method of out-rightly using sex and infestation of HIV/AIDs transmission as a weapon of war had portrayed African in a bad light thereby projecting that the epidemics of AIDs virus and its casualty ratio in ten years' time might place African as a risk zone; this time, not on poverty but on the dread of HIV/AIDs pandemonium as risk in African societies.

TRENDS AND SPREAD

Premised on this new dimension of war in Africa, targeted at mostly women and girls, it is evident that the following are noticeable in the processes:

- i. The scourge of HIV/AIDs might be by direct unprotected sex through rape, which is the highly adopted method;
- ii. Most victims were placed in a situation where they were forced to exchange sex for survival;

- iii. Absence of food, shelter and security often encourage such act;
- iv. The act of intimidating partner by way of violence, thereby making it difficult to negotiate safe sex in relationship can lead to infesting of the victims easily with the dread disease.

Hence, sexual violence, a widespread act, mostly in conflict zone as noted in Rwanda and Sierra Leone are problematic to the African people. It is apparent that economic disruption, war or conflict also exacerbates gender based violence in number of ways, but the recent occurrence in many of the African conflict zones, especially as examined in Rwanda and Sierra Leone left such to be desired. That is why, the true understanding of the extent of violence against women and girls at the hand of warlords/rebels in the name of war or conflicts are worrisome to all.

IMPLICATIONS ON AFRICAN SOCIETY

According to^{47,1} the systematic raping of women and girls in several of the African conflicts as a method of warfare is a gross human violation, portraying the actors of the wars as senseless fighters without any purpose other than looking for cheap manner of settling sexual urges. An intention that might have informed the assertion about the Hutu rebels, according to⁴⁸, that their leaders asked them (troops) to rape the Tutsi women as part of their genocidal campaign, in order to quicken the

transmission of HIV/AIDS, which is the fastest way of wiping out the Tutsi race from the face of the earth.

Going by the various contentions above, it is evident that armed conflicts exacerbated the spread of HIV/AIDS in many ways. This is because it disintegrates countries, with negative consequences of societal dislocations and collapse of state institutions and social services among others. Specifically, the conflict in Rwanda and Sierra Leone contributed greatly to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Noted to have aided this spread easily was the high incidence of refugees overflow and migration within that period. In Sierra Leone, for instance, over 62% of rural health units were non-functional in the immediate aftermath of war in most of the above mentioned provinces.

For Rwanda, especially schools, apart from classes being disrupted, children or pupils caught in the cross fire becomes immediate victims or booties of war, even when they are not taught the life skills that will protect them from HIV/AIDS, hence, they are consumed by the heat of war predators and agents of infections, the rebels.⁴

Beside the complex nature of the Rwanda and Sierra Leone conflicts the war complicated the efforts at determining the accurate rate of HIV/AIDS victims, thereby making it easy for the fleeing refugees to spread the pandemic in their place of host so



easily. This also, to some extent, provided excuse for inaction and lack of political will to check or tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS as some receiving countries see their involvement as mere helping people in distress.

Finally, the overwhelming implication of the widespread of HIV/AIDS in African conflicts uncontrolled indicates that rape, unprotected sex, sexual assault and forced pregnancy amongst others have been adopted as a way of life, thereby portend danger and great risk to the continent. This is because it does not only undermine the progress of stopping HIV/AIDS transmission but it also put the lives of the entire continent in serious danger. This negative act also directly affects women across the services, including methods of protecting self. The fallout also poses serious challenges to sexual negotiation like the use of condom, the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS and creates serious burden to healthcare system as it may impede on survival chances of carriers and new victims with low immune system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Going by the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325⁴⁹ and 1308⁵⁰ under and respectively, which argued that women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable to HIV infection during conflict and post-conflict periods. That is, they may be by fleeing home, loss of family members, loss of means of livelihood and may have little or no access to healthcare among others. It is

to be argued that sex and HIV/AIDS transmission is a weapon of war in the modern African warfare. The study finds that the speedy persistence of the spread of the scourge in conflict zone had for long been neglected. The study revealed that in worst cases, under aged children who are infected with HIV/AIDS also suffers other infirmities like virginal vascular fistula (VVF). The study observed that the existed evidence of the menace exposed the growing number of carriers that are mostly women and children in African conflict zones and, are yet neglected and abandoned. A disheartening scenario that has clearly informed the crude state of African level of awareness compared to the western world where modern warfare is centered on technological know-how and not on consistent rape and virus transmission as a way of dissipating and dehumanizing the enemies. It is also obsolete in modern time to agree with³¹ that sexual violence is a common part of military conquest documented from earliest historical records to contemporary conflict. This study, would rather see the argument of,³⁷ that sexual violence targeted against women and girls in the name of mass violence is brutal and invisible form of a systematic use of rape to serve a political ends as objective contention. That is why, this study would probably suggest the use of peacekeepers and other peace agents in tracking down the distributors of this pandemic. At the same time the exposure of the sufferers for treatment and curtailment is very necessary.

The contention and usage of the two theories above showed that the populist were manipulated due to the evidence of deprivations, frustration, denial and social neglect, to which they were easily brainwashed by the government agents cum rebel leaders who used them to their own end in destroying the general society of Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

Meanwhile, the actions of the perpetuators should not in any way, be accepted in scoring cheap political points either in the battlefield or peace time. Just as the mass rape organize as part of systematic violence campaign with physical and psychological torture on Rwandans by the Hutu IntraHamwe rebels were quickly dismantled by the opponents.

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