

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SOUTH SUDAN: CAUSES AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS.

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Abstract: Violence is an attack on someone by another person else, often to get the person do something he does not want to do by making that particular person feel pain or fear. Violence can also mean anything from a group of people hitting another group to cause a fight between two or many communities or countries that likely may cause thousands of deaths. Violence against women in South Sudan has been the order of the day more especially in 2013 and 2016 when hostilities broke out between forces loyal to the President and those loyal to the Vice President. Women and girls including some men were terribly sexually abused by the security forces from both sides. This study undertakes to critically examine violence perpetuated against women in South Sudan, its causes and the health implications on victims. The study will equally proffer solutions and recommendation of how these atrocities could be minimized if not completely stopped. The study would be of great help to researchers, students, health workers, the South Sudan government, churches, teachers and the humanitarian organizations, both international and local.

Keywords: Violence South Sudan, Causes, health, implications

Introduction

The Background of the Study

South Sudan has never been part of the Sudan right from the time of the British rule in the Sudan, but it was treated as a separate administrative province of the condominium rule. The condominium was an agreement between Britain and Egypt to govern the Sudan jointly. According to Aruma (2013), this agreement was signed on January 19, 1899. However, Egypt became independent in 1922 and demanded that Britain should pull out from the Sudan. But before the final withdrawal of the British, there were preparations going on to prepare the North for independence. Arab administrators from the South were withdrawn and traders were banned from the South. Equally labor migrations from the South to the North were stopped. Aruma says that, Christian missionaries that have been banned in the North were now invited to set up schools, health facilities and churches in South Sudan. Islam was discouraged in the South by the British and Christian Missionaries permitted to work instead.

The policy on South Sudan initially was to prepare South Sudan become part of East Africa or a separate country, but the British did not live to implement this policy. In 1947, the South Sudanese authorities were informed at the Juba conference that they would in future be governed by a common administrative authority with the North. This agreement was not favoured by South Sudanese who were then anticipating to become an independent state. This caused a lot of agitations within South and before the set date of January 1, 1956 for the independence of Sudan, trouble had already started in August 1955, when the Sudan Defense Forces (SDF) mainly Southerners mutinied in Torit by killing all the northern officers. By this action the long civil war between north and south for self-determination had begun. The war continued until 1972 when peace agreement was signed in Addis-Ababa. The peace was short-lived when again in 1983 the second war led by Dr. John Garang De Mabior a Dinka from Jonglei state broke out. It was in 2005 when the war ceased. South Sudan gained its independence in July 2011 through a referendum.

What surprised the South Sudanese and the whole world is that, South Sudan having obtained independence in 2011, barely in two years it plunged into an ethnic war in 2013 and 2016. The pains and sufferings of this war is

visibly seen in the lives of South Sudanese people within the country and most especially on the internally displaced citizens and those in the refugee camps in neighboring countries. The purpose of this study therefore, is to critically investigate both causes of the war, sexual violence against women and health implications on victims and to proffer solutions. The methodology employed is library method where primary and secondary sources are extensively used. These include interviews of witnesses, books, journals, printed materials, magazines, news letters and diaries.

Definition of terms:

For the importance and comprehension of the study, keys words forming the topic of the study have to be defined. These words include: violence, causes, health and implications.

Violence: is a “behavior” involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill something/someone. It Can also be explaining that violence is “strength of emotion or of a destructive force.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as “The international use of physical force or power threaten or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

This definition distinguishes four models in which violence may be inflicted: physical, sexual, psychological and deprivation. It further divides the general definition of violence into three sub-categories to the victim-perpetrator relationship. These sub-categories include: self-directed violence, interpersonal conflict and collective violence.

- Self-directive violence refers to violence in which the perpetrator and the victim are the same individual and is sub-divided into self-abuse and suicide
- Interpersonal violence refers to violence between individuals, and is sub-divided into family intimate partner violence and community violence. The former includes child maltreatment; intimate partner violence; and elder abuse, while the latter is broken down into acquaintance and stranger violence and it includes youth violence; assaulted by stranger; violence related to property crimes; and violence in work places and other institutions.
- Collective violence refers to violence committed by larger groups of individuals and can be sub-divided into social, political and economic violence.

South Sudan: From the time of independence of Sudan in 1956, South Sudan has been part of Sudan. Historically Sudan refers to both the geographical region, stretching from Senegal on the Atlantic coast to Northern Africa and the modern Sudan. The name derives from the Arabic “Bilad as-Sudan” which means land of the Blacks.

The phrase “South Sudan” here dose not really give a definition of the word, but a description of where the country bearing the name is located. It is the newest country in Africa that has recently gained independence from the Sudan. It is bordered to the East by Ethiopia to the North by Sudan, to the west by Central Africa Republic, to the South-west by Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to the South by Uganda and to the South-east by Kenya.

Causes: This is defined as something that brings about an effect or a result to find the cause of the accident. It can also be defined as a person or thing that gives rise to an action phenomenon, or condition. It is also a principle, an aim or movement to which one is committed and which, one is prepared to defend or advocate.

Health: Health, according to World Health Organization (WHO) is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity. Huber et al (2011), introduced a new concept of health as: “The ability to adapt to self-image in the face of social, physical and emotional challenges.”

The phrase “**Health implications**” in the field of medical science cannot be defined without the use of other synonyms such as “health consequences”. The definition of implication is something inferred. Implication refers to a consequence that is likely to follow or happen, that is the end results. For example, smoking may cause health

risks of pneumonia, cancer of the lungs and other related implications. Sexual violence against women may cause early pregnancy in young girls, sexual transmitted diseases, death while trying to abort the child and many other implications.

Violence Against Women in South Sudan

Uzuegbunam in Clarke, (2009) says, violence connotes rough treatment of people, or use of bodily force on others especially unlawfully to cause hurt or harm. It is regarded as an act of human inflictions, deprivations and discrimination resulting or likely to result in unlawful physical and psychological harm; suffering or deprivation. Antonio (2019) the UN secretary, on his part says that; “violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today which remains largely unreported due to impunity, silence, stigma and shame surrounding it”.

The declaration on the elimination of violence against women issued by UN General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as; “Any act of gender-based violence that results in or likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private”. Violence occurrences within nations by indigenous people on indigenous people and otherwise are referred to as domestic while those between nations and among nations are referred to as international.

The issue of sexual violence against women is a sensitive one. Though there has been little reporting on the issue probably due to some factors associated with it, however, a recent study in Juba County in 2007 show that at a large number of women experienced sexual violence during the civil war of 1983-2005.

According to Guterres (2019), violence against women and girls continues to be an obstacle to achieving equality, development, peace as well as to the fulfillment of women and girls’ human rights. All in all, the promise of the sustainable development Goals (SDGS)-to leave no one behind cannot be fulfilled without putting an end to violence against women and girls. Efforts to prevent and end violence against women at global, regional and national levels show that there is widespread impunity on sexual violence and rape.

The Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework draws knowledge on exiting literature to advance theory. It traces the development of theory to expand or analyze the existing theories, pointing out flaws or demonstrating the advantage of one theory over another. The study therefore examines theories internal consistence and external validity, issues that point to violence against women/girls in South Sudan would be treated.

The study needs to emphasize that theories are important, not only because they offer different explanations for the phenomenon of domestic abuse, but because each approach has clear implications for responses and interventions by practitioners and policy-makers. If there is no common understanding of a problem, responses will not be consistent, and are likely to conflict. This can undermine quality of service provision, safety and initiatives for social change. Although it is important to recognize and challenge beliefs which are little more than myth or prejudice, we should acknowledge that several of the theoretical approaches are supported by some legitimate evidence.

Although our strategy is rooted in acceptance of the broad explanatory power of feminist theories, the trend in the literature is towards approaches which seek to integrate valid insights from various perspectives, recognizing the complexity and multidimensional nature of domestic abuse. Our challenge is to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and likely outcome of theories. The criteria for equality, empowerment, justice, dignity and wellbeing of all person regardless of gender, tribe, race and nationality.

Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts:

It is important to ask these questions to guide us as we intend to find out the causes of sexual violence in armed conflicts and the possible interventions to curb or minimize it. The questions are: what are the motivations for

sexual violence in war? Is there a common framework or distinct categories to define the various reasons why rape and other forms of sexual violence are carried out against civilians/women in conflict zones? Once reasons for rape and other forms of sexual violence are known will this assist in developing interventions that could be carried out to either prevent or mitigate these crimes?

According to UN OCHA paper 1 (2008): Sexual violence in conflict takes rape, sexual abuse, gang rape, rape-shooting or rape stabbing combinations at times undertaken after family members have been tired up and forced to watch. Sterilization, sexual slavery and forced prostitution are also common forms of wartime sexual violence. Different motivations underlying the use of sexual violence in armed conflict abound. One key conclusion to this is that, considering sexual violence in conflict as either “opportunistic” or as “a method of warfare” is too simplistic. On the contrary, sexual violence in conflict areas is motivated by a complex mix of individual and collective, premeditated and circumstantial reasons. Indeed, a range of explanations have been advanced as accounting for the use of sexual violence against women in armed conflict.

Gottschall in Journal of Sex Research 41. No. 2 May 2004, with other scholars, proposed four main theories to explain this matter. These theories include:

- Gender inequality theory
- The psycho-social and economic background theory
- The strategic rape theory
- The Biosocial theory.

1. Gender inequality Theory:

This theory states that: “Unequal power relation, discrimination and misogyny in patriarchal societies are exacerbated by the promotion of aggression and violence during war”. According to Seifert (1992), sexual violence is not-sexually driven, but rather a sexual expression of aggression. Patricia Rozce, Groth and Bernabaum (1980), examining motivations for in peace time also propose explanatory models belonging in this category. Seifert proposes five theses to explain the cultural models which influence the behavior of individual perpetrations as follows:

- War is presented as ritualized finely regulated game. Violence against women in the conquered territory is conceded to the victor/winner in the immediate post-war period as one of the “rules” of this game.
- Abuse of women is perceived as an element of male communication. Seifert stated that: “Rape can be considered the final symbolic expression of the humiliation of the male opponent..., it communicates from man to men...that the men around the women in question are not able to protect “their women”.
- Rapes results from insecurity associated with armed forces which is exaggerated in times of conflict. Construction of masculinity in armies becomes equated with power, and within this culture, lead to an indication of rape.
- Rape aims at destroying the opponent’s culture. According to this theory, women assume especial significance in the existence of a community due to their central role in the main stay of the family, through which continuity in the culture and the society is ensured. By striking at the heart of the community, the attacking side destroys its opposition.
- Rape is culturally-rooted contempt of women that is acted out in times of crisis and thus rape results from pre-existing animosity, which can be acted upon with a high likelihood of impunity.

2. The Psycho-social and Economic Background Theory.

In this theory, a nations or armed group’s history and psycho-social dynamics is examined to find triggers for sexual violence against women. To cite an example, the study would like to look at the present day widespread perpetrators of sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by examining how the pre-European intra Africa slave trade, the European slave trade and colonial rule, along with post-colonial intra and inter-state wars have laid foundation for the present situation where DRC has become known for the epidemic-like proportion brutality of sexual violence against women, especially in the east of the country.

Jennifer Leaning in her work on DRC, looking at the historical and socio-economic patterns of DRC society, have found out the following characteristics and the degree they contribute to the epidemic-like proportions of sexual violence:

- ❖ Young men have through generations been prevented from accomplishing the traditional tasks of inheriting or acquiring land, thus creating wealth to afford a bride, thus being able to marry in the respectable and traditional way, and thus become an adult.
- ❖ The only available source of remuneration is the military or in the pay of some kind of rebel group and demobilization process of armed rebel groups has always been incompletely carried out, leaving men with guns and no jobs.
- ❖ Women have been acquiring skills and status while men have not been able to acquire women by respect and appropriate pathways because they are too poor, too unskilled, too jobless.
- ❖ Hence there has been a growing sense of futility among young men and a growing rage at women, who are unavailable through the normal means and who are humiliating the men by being more able survivors, in many cases even by selling sexual favors.
- ❖ Munoz-Rojas and Fresard (2005) of the International Crescent of the Red Cross (ICRC), on the other hand have identified three factors that may influence combatants to commit atrocious acts in conflict. These factors include:
 - ❖ **Group conformity:** Dilution of individual responsibility, prioritizing the esteem of comrades over the esteem of society, as well as dehumanization of “others” are all phenomena of group conformity that may lead combatants to commit acts they as individuals would perceive is immoral and wrong.
 - ❖ **Obedience to Authority:** Including the importance of examples set by leaders, and lack of orders to obey the law as much as explicit orders to break it. In the DRC for example, combatants may be given days off to rape and pillage.
 - ❖ **The spiral of violence:** Combatants who have taken part in hostilities are subject to trauma and humiliation and are prone to “lash out” and commit crimes against others. They may see themselves as victims of moral disengagement, i.e. the gradual breakdown of cultural values and by breaking taboos.

3. The strategy Rape Theory:

According to Jonathan (2004), this theory is considered by some scholars or researchers as the influential of the four, claiming that sexual violence is used to achieve strategic aims. Robert Last, Pratt and Werchick, Thomas and Regan, Leaning and Gingerich belong to this category. Jennifer Leaning and Tara Gingerich examine the strategic use of rape in war, and list the following resources for why it may be seen as an effective tool to achieve military objectives:

- ❖ It creates a sense of fear in the civilian population and restricts freedom of movement and economic activity.
- ❖ It can instill flight which facilitates the capture of land and killing male civilians who are left more vulnerable to attack when fleeing.
- ❖ It demoralizes the population and reduces their will to resist and prolongs their forced exit from the land.
- ❖ It tears the communities apart by breaking family and community bonds, and by “pollution” of the blood line.
- ❖ It is a strategy to encourage aggression; commanders can utilize tolerance of rape to “accelerate brutality in attacks of their troops against the enemy”.
- ❖ In addition to the above, the authors also refer to other explanation for the use of rape in conflict:
 - Rape as a reward or spoil of war
 - Rape as a boost to morale: provides troops with access to sexual relations in order to improve troop morale.
 - Rape as punishment or an outlet for rage. Isolated instances of atrocities committed against civilians, involving civilian massacres or rapes or both, have been reported throughout the history of war.

Explanations vary with circumstances but key themes appear to be underlying brutality of the battle, chronic dehumanization of the enemy, and failures of command to contain feelings of acute rage hatred.

Leaning and Gingerich as well as Wood, also suggest circumstances where an armed group will find it in its strategic interest to prohibit sexual violence towards civilians, especially if the armed group depends on civilians for information, food and protection, aims to govern that group of civilians when the conflict ends.

4. The Biosocial Theory:

This theory states that sexual desire is the main motivation for rape, but is regulated by socio-cultural factors. Jonathan Gottschall cites Thorahill and Palmer as the main theorists representing his school of thought. They hold that given the cross-cultural and cross-historical prevalence of sexual violence against women in war, and given that the primary victims of wartime (and peacetime) rape are women of “peak physical attractiveness”, they conclude that a prominent motive for wartime rape is the sexual desire of individual fighters.

Gottschall argues however, that:

The variability of wartime rape across conflicts and the fact that many soldiers with the option to rape apparently choose not to, decisively rules out the view of wartime rape as a blind genetic drive that is, and ever will be, expressed when men meet to fight and kill. This variation is best explained as a result of socio-cultural influences.

He concludes that genetic and socio-cultural explanation cannot be seen as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Sexual Violence Against Women in South Sudan:

South Sudan has a history of gender-based violence as a result of long period of conflict and instability.

According to Beijing Declaration (1995):

Gender-based violence is any act of violence against women that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in private or public life.

The civil wars in Sudan, the first of which started in 1955 and ended in 1972 when peace agreement was signed in Addis-Ababa between the North and South. Virtually ten years of peace, the second civil war broke out in 1983, equally between South and North. This war was ended in 2005 by signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nairobi, Kenya- (The Naivasha Accord). During this time many women were sexually abused. Rape, forced marriages and abductions remain prevalent in South Sudan. Women and girls are raped and women of foreign origin particularly became vulnerable. With insecurity increasing in many parts, gender-based violence became more frequent, and women are now specifically targeted during violent inter-ethnic conflict between Dinka and Nuer and other rebel groups.

The issue of sexual violence against women in South Sudan is a sensitive one, though there has been little reporting on the issue due to some factors associated with it. However, a recent study carried out in Juba by Isis-WICCE in 2007 shows that a large number of women experienced sexual violence during the war. According to the study conducted, of the 267, women interviewed few admitted to have been raped, 36.7 percent knew of others that have been gang-raped, 31.1 percent of the women knew others had been forced into marriage against their will and 28.5 percent of the women knew of others that had been abducted and subjected to sexual abuse or slavery.

Sexual Violence as War Tactic in South Sudan:

South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. Hopes in the country were high for a peaceful future and development. But all of a sudden, these hopes were thwarted when an ethnic violence/fighting broke out in

2013 and 2016, South against South. The conflict spread across the Country with many rebels factions with different motives and ideologies. The conflict has led to immense loss of human life and property, dislocation and displacements of people and land occupation. Both the warring sides committed atrocities of different kinds used against people, more especially women as war tactics.

This study has extensively discussed many theories and has found out that rape in war zones is used as a tactic to achieve military successes and gains. The four theories were used/ proposed to explain this more especially the “Strategic Rape Theory” that examines the use of rape in a war situation as an effective tool to achieve military objectives. The theory puts forward eight strong reasons why rape has to be applied as a military tactic:

- i. It creates a sense of fear in the civilian population and restricts freedom of movement and economic activity.
- ii. It can instill flight which facilitates the capture of land and killing male civilians who are left more vulnerable to attack when fleeing.
- iii. It demoralizes the population and reduces their will to resist and prolongs their forced exit from the land;
- iv. It tears the communities apart by breaking family and community bonds, thus diminishing the reproductive capacity of the community; and by “pollution” of the blood line.
- v. It is a strategy to encourage aggression; commanders can utilize tolerance on rape to “accelerate brutality in attacks of their troops against the enemy”.
- vi. It is used as a reward or spoil of war;
- vii. It is used as a boost to morale; it provides troops with access to sexual relations in order to improve troop morale, and
- viii. It is used as punishment or as an outlet for rage.

Sexual violence against women by definition is an approach to having sex without due consent from the person. Wikipedia (2017), defines rape as:

A type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse...carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority, or against a person who is incapable of giving consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, has an intellectual disability or is below the age of giving consent.

Rape, according to Petra, Jenny, Hedge and Baraba (2003) “is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “sexual assault”. Rape is not about sex-it is an act of use of power by the rapist, and it is always strong and a crime.

Sexual violence in conflict zones is committed by soldiers, other combatants or civilians during armed conflict or military occupation. It also covers the situation where both women and girls are forced into prostitution or sexual slavery by an occupying army.

In South Sudan sexual violence against women is used as a means of psychological warfare in order to humiliate the opponent enemy and to undermine their morale. It is often systematic and thorough, and military leaders may actually encourage their soldiers to sexually assault civilians. Likewise, systematic rapes are often employed as a means of ethnic cleansing. The current situation South Sudan is being fought against ethnic lines and the examples are clear, between the Nuer and Dinka ethnic groups, though now some groups have joined in, who even are not part of the peace agreement of 2018. Part of the cause of this fight is domination of power and of the political system and nothing else.

In the course of this fight, many people were driven away from their land. Usually the captured areas, whether by the government troops or by the rebels, women and girls always fall victims of sexual assault. Land and property occupied and confiscated. These atrocities committed by the two sides constitute a war crime against humanity. According to article 27 of the fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits wartime rape and enforced prostitution. These prohibitions according to Askin (1997) were reinforced by the 1977 additional protocol which came into force by 1978.

The international Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, according Askin (1997), made a landmark decision that rape is a crime or genocide under international law. In one judgement, Navanethern says that:” From time immemorial, rape has been regarded as spoils of war. Now it will be considered a war crime. We want to send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of wars.

Nelen et al (2020) in international Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health reports that men, women and children are subjected to sexual violence, which according to the report, was used as a weapon of conflict and torture in South Sudan. The report mentions that both government forces as well as rebels were involved in this acts, for example, people were being burnt on the faces and head with a red hat knife or mental instrument. According to this report, seventy-five percent pf the men interviewed, reported that they were beaten and/or tortured, with twenty-five percent claiming that they had been shot at by rebels or had been sexually assaulted/raped.

The reports cite one local government official’s testimony, thus:

The fighting in South Sudan is very complex. Sexual harassment and sexual gender-based violence is ripe in South Sudan; sexual gender-based violence is used as a weapon of war, even small girls are gang raped and as a result are crying with no one to help. Children, women and men are raped. It causes lots of emotional distress and the whole family is affected. Survivors are often raped in front of family members. To those forced to witness it, is psychological torture.

Human right abuses have been on the rise including torture and other forms of abuses. A male refugee in Adjumani describes the situation in South Sudan in these words when interviewed by service provides:

Many people have been captured and tortured in South Sudan and held in military barracks (or detention locations). There was extensive torturing, robbing and anyone could be implicated and accused of being a rebel...people experienced atrocities, for instance, removing off of our finger nails, tying our penises, and being short: even girls were tortured, raped and short.

Again, a woman was interviewed in Adjumani refugee camp by the service providers and she has this to say:

I was selling beer in Juba...the attackers came and wanted to kill me so that they could take away my children. They tied my legs up head down and beat me in between my legs, the head and left me unconscious, thinking I was dead. I was left there until the next morning. My husband then had managed to escape with our children. It was the neighbor that came, helped me down, gave me water and took me to the health center in Juba.

Sexual Exploitation and Violence

The accounts of sexual violence in South Sudan according to World Vision Report 2020 are so brutal and difficult to hear. According to humanitarian agencies, there were 2,300 cases of rape targeting women and girls 2018. Of these cases:

- ❖ More than 20 percent were children
- ❖ 125 women and girls were raped as they walked to emergence food distribution centers set up by International Aid Agencies, and
- ❖ At least 134 women and girls were raped some as young as eight. Almost 90 percent of them were gang raped.

The testimonies above describe the situation in South Sudan both 2013, 2016 and onward. The question people ask include the following: who is actually behind this senseless war?

What could have been the causes that have triggered the conflict?

Was this war genuine or was it to oppress and dominate over other people? Answering these questions lead us to discuss the possible causes of war.

The cause of 2013 and 2016 war in South Sudan:

Ethnic Conflict according to Reuter (2023), is a form of conflict in which the objectives of at least one party are defined in ethnic terms, and the conflict, its antecedents, and possible solutions are perceived along ethnic lines. The conflict is usually not about ethnic differences themselves but over political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial matters.

Ethnic conflict is one of the major threats to international peace and security. Such conflicts were witnessed in the Balkans, Rwanda, Chechnya, Iraq, India, Darfur and South Sudan to mention, but a few. They are among the best-known and deadliest examples of our time. The destabilization of provinces, states, and in some cases, even the whole region is a common consequence of ethnic violence. Ethnic conflicts are often accompanied by gross human rights violations, such as sexual violence against women, genocide and crimes against humanity, economic decline, state failure, environmental problems, and refugee flows. Violent ethnic conflicts lead to tremendous human suffering.

Ethnic conflict arises when ethnic groups compete for the same goal-notably power, access to resources, or territory. The interests of a society's elite class play an important role in mobilizing ethnic groups to engage in ethnic conflicts. Ethnic conflict is thus similar to other political interest conflicts. South Sudan in 2013 and 2016 witnessed such conflicts of which this study tries to establish the root causes. The following are the possible causes that fuel the conflict:

1. Competition over grazing land and water.

The Dinka and Nuer, two rival pastoralists groups, have competed over grazing land and water for their cattle in the past. These clashes have usually taken place in a local context without causing massive number of casualties. However, in 2013, according to Howden the dismissal of the former Vice President Riak Machar, a Nuer, by the South Sudanese President, Salva Kiir, a Dinka, functioned as a catalyst for mass violence, claiming thousands of victims.

2. Riak Machar support for Sudanese war in the past made him to be seen as not supportive enough of the South Sudanese government. At one time. Riak defected from the SPLAM and joined the government of Khartoum who supplied him with large quantity of weapons which were used to fight the SPLA/M and also used in the traditional conflicts of cattle raiding that became more lethal.

3. Ethno-political wrangling and competition for power among the elite of South Sudan. The recent violence in Upper Nile state and parts of Jonglei against civilians was triggered by the breakdown of SPLA-IO breakaway faction caused by disagreement between two generals over integrating their forces with the army under chapter two of the peace deal. This disagreement between the two generals caused much loss of civilian lives from both sides of the ethnic groups - Dinka and Nuer. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2013, no one has ever been held to account for the crimes committed under international law. While it is easy to see the political rivalry between Kiir and Machar as the catalyst for South Sudan crises, there are other factors that continue to drive and compound the war according to World Vision, (2020). These includes:

a. A devastated Economy:

The destruction of oil fields processing plants during the South Sudan war has impacted the country's ability to keep its economy afloat. Matters were made worse when the government shut down national oil-production – the source of 98% of their income. This affected the Country very badly and is unable to recover until today.

b. Lack of Unity within the army:

Rather than a single organized unit loyal to the government, the South Sudanese army is organized into ethnic-based militia. Naturally, when the fighting turned all-out war, soldiers and civilians alike looked to their ethnic groups for protection.

c. Creation of new States.

In January 2017, South Sudan went from twenty-eight (28) states to thirty-two (32) following a decree from President Kiir. Opposition groups criticized the move as a way for the Dinka to usurp control of fertile lands that did not belong to them and called it a violation of this transitional constitution.

Health Implications /Consequences as a Result of the Conflict:

According to USAID on global health report, the vast majority of South Sudan's lack access to essential health services, of clean water and sanitation. The maternal mortality ratio, estimated by the World Health Organization to be between 789 and 1,150 per 100,000 live births is among the highest in the world. Children under the age of five years fall victims. Malaria and other infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Polio, Covid 19, Ebola are the cause of many deaths in children and pregnant women.

The Centre for Preventive Action (2023) reports that, "more than 7.7 million people or two-thirds of the population, face severe food insecurity – the worst ever faced."

The UNIMISS report (2023) identifies three major challenges as follows:

- (a) **Limitation to health care facilities.** Access to health care facilities is extremely limited. The World Health Organization standard is two facilities per 100,000 people while in South Sudan the average number is one. With 72 percent of the population living more than five kilometers away from the closest facility, sexual violence survivors are forced to travel long distances through insecure areas to seek treatment, while others in such a situation prefer to remain silent.
- (b) **Limited medical personnel.** No enough skilled doctors, nurses, and midwives. This combines with lack of facilities, means survivors often seek treatment only after having developed a very serious complications like sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, and complications of unsafe abortion.
- (c) **Social barriers.** These have a significant impact by forcing many survivors to suffer in silence. According to this report, "Most of the survivors are developing stigma... They don't want anybody to know what has happened," as one of them said. These cases are often not easy to deal with.

Remedies or Solutions to Sexual Violence Against Women:

The issue of sexual violence against women is a global one and the way how to prevent it differ from situation to situation and from domestic to war violence. To talk about prevention is to say changing the attitudes, gender roles, and stereotypes that make violence against women acceptable, and raising awareness of different types of violence. Preventive actions should be taken within the education system, among professionals working with victims and in cooperation with NGOs, the media and the private sector in order to reach out to the public. The preventive measures that should be taken include:

- ❖ Training programmes for professionals
- ❖ Rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators
- ❖ Campaigns to raise awareness
- ❖ Promote women's empowerment initiatives
- ❖ Education in non-violence and equality between women and men
- ❖ Challenge gender stereotypes
- ❖ Disarmament of all militants or militias involved in the conflict not to pose any threat on civilians again.

In South Sudan, the UNFPA is doing its best in fostering transformative and reaching out to victims. They give much support and attention to support programmes to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including training of social workers and health staff to sensitively and professionally meet the needs of violence survivors. The one-stop centre model, with integrated medical, psychosocial, legal and support services for survivors, has

proved successful at reaching those in need. UNFPA is now working hard to create three more additional one-stop centres in Rumbek, Malualkon and Wau.

Conclusion:

The 2013 and 2016 conflict in South Sudan brought a lot of suffering in many ways of which sexual violence against women and girls has a devastating traumatic effect and pain on individuals and families affected both physically and psychologically. The testimonies of many eyewitnesses captured in this study indicate the level and the degree of seriousness of this epidemic called “sexual violence” against women and girls in South Sudan. Survivors of this disease still suffer from stigma, psychological, mental, and physical pains which of course take time to heal. At least some humanitarian organizations are in to provide clinical treatment and psychotherapy to individuals and communities most affected by the conflict. It is anticipated that the healing process though takes longer time, would eventually yield successful results.

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