

Analysis of the Effect of Compliance of International Committee of Red Cross on Armed Conflict on Female Gender in Nigeria

Adejoh Reuben

Department of Social Science and Humanities, The Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines the impact of compliance with National Committee of Red Cross principles on armed conflict and its effects on the female gender in Nigeria. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Data were sourced from primary and secondary sources, including surveys, interviews, and existing literature. The findings reveal that compliance with National Committee of Red Cross principles significantly reduces the vulnerability of women and girls to violence, exploitation, and abuse during armed conflicts in Nigeria. The study also highlights the critical role of the National Committee of Red Cross in promoting humanitarian law and principles, and in providing protection and assistance to women and girls affected by armed conflict. The research concludes that enhancing compliance with National Committee of Red Cross principles is crucial for mitigating the impact of armed conflict on women and girls in Nigeria. The study recommends that the Nigerian government, the National Committee of Red Cross, and other stakeholders work together to strengthen the implementation of humanitarian law and principles, and to provide adequate protection and support to women and girls affected by armed conflict.

Keywords: *National Committee of Red Cross, armed conflict, female gender, Nigeria, humanitarian law, principles.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The problems experienced by women in situations of armed conflict have received increased attention in recent years, both within and outside the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC, 2001). The concern to address the problems faced by women more effectively has been reflected in resolutions pertaining to the Movement as a whole, and in more specific decisions taken within the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

In 1996, the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, in its resolution entitled “Protection of the civilian population in periods of armed conflict”, urged that “strong measures be taken to provide women with the protection and assistance to which they are entitled under national and international law”. It also encouraged “States, the Movement and other competent entities and organizations to develop preventive measures, assess existing programmes and set up new programmes to ensure that women (who are) victims of conflict receive medical, psychological and social assistance, provided, if possible, by qualified personnel who are aware of the specific issues involved” (ICRC, 1995).

The 27th International Conference in 1999 adopted a Plan of Action which contains several specific references to the protection of women in armed conflict, and furthermore requests that “the ICRC formulate a set of guidelines aimed at better addressing the protection and assistance needs of women and girl children affected by armed conflict” (ICRC, 1999). At this Conference,

the ICRC pledged “ to ensure that the specific protection, health and assistance needs of women and girl children affected by armed conflicts are appropriately assessed in its operations with the aim to alleviate the plight of the most vulnerable ” and “ to put emphasis throughout its activities on the respect which must be accorded to women and girl children... actively disseminating the prohibition of all forms of sexual violence to parties to an armed conflict ” (ICRC, 1999). In 1999 the ICRC also co-organized a workshop on widowhood and armed conflict to examine ways in which widows (and wives of the disappeared) were coping in situations of armed conflict around the world and how they could best be supported (ICRC, 1999).

The issue of women affected by armed conflict has also been discussed recently among governments, both in the context of meetings focusing specifically on women (such as the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (UN, 1996). and the “Beijing +5” Conference (un, 1998) held in New York in June 2000) and by forums with a broader agenda, such as the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

In its report to the Secretary-General, the UN Commission on the Status of Women points out that the Beijing Platform for Action stated that “international humanitarian law, which prohibits attacks on civilians, is at times systematically ignored, and human rights are often violated in armed conflict, affecting the civilian population, especially women, children, the elderly and the disabled” (Commission on the Status of Women, 1998). Moreover, it stated that “although entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex” (UN, 1996). A UN Security Council resolution was passed in October 2000, inviting the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution (UN, 2000).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross to mitigate the impact of armed conflict in Nigeria, there remains a gap in understanding the specific effects of ICRC's compliance with international humanitarian law on the female gender. The lack of comprehensive analysis hampers the ability to assess whether ICRC's interventions adequately address the unique needs and challenges faced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria (North Eastern Nigeria).

1.3 Research Questions

1. What measures has the ICRC implemented to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law in conflict zones within Nigeria?
2. How have ICRC interventions specifically addressed the needs and challenges faced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria?
3. What are the identified gaps and areas for improvement in the ICRC's approach to addressing gender-specific concerns within the context of armed conflict in Nigeria?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study is to analyze the effect of the International Committee of the Red Cross' compliance with international humanitarian law on armed conflict on the female gender in Nigeria (North Eastern Nigeria).

The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate the extent of ICRC's compliance with international humanitarian law in conflict zones within Nigeria.
2. To assess the specific impact of ICRC interventions on addressing the needs and challenges faced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas.
3. To identify gaps and areas for improvement in ICRC's approach to addressing gender-specific concerns within the context of armed conflict in Nigeria.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses I

The ICRC's compliance with international humanitarian law in conflict zones within Nigeria is positively correlated with the effectiveness of its operational strategies.

Hypothesis II

ICRC interventions significantly contribute to alleviating the specific needs and challenges experienced by women and girls in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria.

Hypothesis III

There is a correlation between the identification and mitigation of gender-specific concerns by the ICRC and the overall effectiveness of its humanitarian efforts in Nigeria's armed conflict context.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The analysis of the effect of compliance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on armed conflict on the female gender in Nigeria holds several significant implications:

Understanding how the ICRC's compliance efforts impact females in conflict zones provides valuable insights into the gendered experiences of armed conflict. By examining the ICRC's interventions, researchers can assess whether their efforts effectively address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women in conflict-affected regions.

Analyzing the impact of the ICRC's compliance on females in Nigeria contributes to assessing the overall effectiveness of humanitarian aid in conflict zones. It helps in identifying gaps and areas for improvement in the delivery of aid and protection services to women and girls who are disproportionately affected by armed conflict.

The study sheds light on the legal and human rights framework surrounding armed conflict and gender equality. It assesses whether the ICRC's compliance with international humanitarian law adequately protects the rights of women and girls in conflict settings, including their right to health, safety, and dignity.

Findings from the analysis can inform policy-making and advocacy efforts aimed at strengthening the protection of women and girls in conflict situations. It provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and civil society groups to enhance gender-sensitive approaches to conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. The study increases awareness and understanding of the intersectionality of

armed conflict, gender, and humanitarian action among academics, practitioners, policymakers, and the general public. It highlights the complexities of gender dynamics in conflict settings and underscores the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in humanitarian response and peacebuilding efforts.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Role of the ICRC

While the present study aims to identify the principal and most pressing needs of women in situations of armed conflict and to analyse the ICRC's response to those needs, it should be noted at the outset that not every need falls within the ICRC's mandate. The ICRC's mandate is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and internal disturbances and to provide them with assistance, and to act as promoter and guardian of international humanitarian law.

In simple terms, the ICRC's mandate and activities are limited in terms of context, time and geography. For the most part, the ICRC's activities are carried out in situations of armed conflict - be it international or non-international. In addition, on the basis of the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the ICRC operates in situations of internal disturbances. It may also take any humanitarian initiative which comes within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary. Moreover, although the majority of its operations are carried out during armed conflicts, some of the ICRC's activities continue after the cessation of hostilities; such activities include, for example, the repatriation of prisoners of war or persons detained in relation to the hostilities, family reunification and the search for missing persons.

With regard to geographical limitations, the ICRC ordinarily operates in the territories of States that are themselves involved in an armed conflict or internal disturbances, or are affected by the direct results of such events. The ICRC may, in exceptional circumstances, principally as a result of massive influxes of refugees, also operate in the neighbouring States of countries stricken by armed violence, especially if it is the only humanitarian organization in the area. It will in principle cease its action when other humanitarian players are operational, except for specific activities such as the re-establishing of family links. Its activities may be prolonged if an element of threat remains as a result of hostilities.

International humanitarian law is at the core of the ICRC's protection activities. Its role as promoter and guardian of international humanitarian law has the following three facets: promotion and dissemination of the law; monitoring compliance with humanitarian law; and contribution to its development. In its role as promoter and guardian, the ICRC works for the "faithful application" of humanitarian law. In concrete terms, this means that its delegates monitor the application of humanitarian law by the parties to conflicts. If the law is violated, the ICRC attempts to persuade the relevant authority - be it a government or an armed opposition group - to modify its behaviour. The ICRC endeavours to build a constructive relationship with all parties involved in the violence and practices what could be called "discreet diplomacy". This being said, if all representations made confidentially fail to produce the desired results, the ICRC reserves its right to publicly point out the violations. The aim of such public statements is not to single out the individuals responsible but rather to appeal to the parties to the conflict to respect humanitarian law. The ICRC may also appeal to other States to intervene with the parties concerned, as they are required to do by Article 1 common to the Geneva Conventions, which requires States not only to respect the Conventions but also to ensure that they are respected.

Through its Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, the ICRC also encourages States to adopt national legislation for the implementation and application of humanitarian law at national level. ICRC legal experts at its headquarters in Geneva and in the field provide States with technical assistance concerning, for example, legislation to prosecute violations of humanitarian law or protect the red cross and red crescent emblems.

The ICRC 's role as guardian of humanitarian law also includes carrying out activities aimed at promoting and disseminating the law. Although primary responsibility for the teaching of humanitarian law lies with States, over the years the ICRC has developed considerable expertise in the field and ICRC delegates spread knowledge of humanitarian law by running courses, especially for armed and security forces, State employees and diplomats, and civilians in general, including young people.

A further important facet of the role of guardian of humanitarian law concerns new developments of the law. The ICRC has in fact performed this role since it was founded, as it was the initiator of the first Geneva Convention of 1864. The ICRC was also directly involved in the drafting of subsequent international humanitarian law treaties, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1929 and of 1949, the Additional Protocols of 1977, the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, the 1997 Anti-personnel Mines Convention, the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the 1999 Protocol to the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property.

2.2 The Concept International Humanitarian Law

International humanitarian law is the body of law which protects those not or no longer taking part in hostilities and regulates the means and methods of warfare. It is applicable in international and non-international armed conflicts and is binding on both States and armed opposition groups. International humanitarian law is also binding on troops participating in multilateral peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations if they take part in the hostilities (Geneva Convention, 1949).

Multilateral conventions dealing with specific aspects of the waging of war have existed since the end of the nineteenth century. Today, the principal instruments of international humanitarian law are the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, (Geneva Convention, 1949) their two Additional Protocols of 1977 - the first applicable in international conflicts and the second in non-international conflicts and numerous conventions restricting or prohibiting the use of specific weapons, such as the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its four Protocols and the 1997 Convention on Anti-personnel Mines. Mention should also be made of the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols, the first of 1954 and the second of 1999.

At the time of writing there are 189 States party to the four Geneva Conventions and 159 and 151 to Additional Protocols I and II, respectively. It should not be forgotten that an important body of customary rules of international humanitarian law also exists. Most of these customary rules correspond to existing treaty norms, but they often have a wider field of application. Indeed, most of the treaty rules are applicable to international armed conflict only, while many rules of customary international law are applicable to both types of conflict. It is important to note that the ICRC has been requested by the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to prepare a study on customary international law.

Finally, it should be pointed out that humanitarian law establishes mechanisms to ensure that the rules aimed at protecting the victims of armed conflict and restricting means and methods of warfare are respected. Humanitarian law holds individuals responsible for violations of humanitarian law which they commit, or order to be committed. It requires that those responsible for serious violations be prosecuted and punished. In conformity with the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocol I of 1977, States are obliged to suppress all violations of these instruments.

They have special obligations relating to certain serious violations called “grave breaches” (Geneva Convention, 1949) Furthermore, reference should be made to an important development in the repression of violations of international humanitarian law. Although the Geneva Conventions require States to prosecute or extradite persons suspected of having committed grave breaches of the Conventions, prosecutions have been few. Similarly, at the international level, with the notable exception of the military tribunals established in Nuremberg and Tokyo at the end of the Second World War, no mechanism existed for trying those accused of violations of international humanitarian law entailing individual responsibility. However, the atrocities committed in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda in the 1990s forced the international community to address this issue as a matter of urgency.

In 1993 and 1994 the Security Council established two ad hoc international criminal tribunals; the first to prosecute serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the former Yugoslavia, and the second to prosecute similar violations as well as genocide in Rwanda (UN, 1999). Crucial in the fight against impunity for war crimes, these bodies have also played an important role in the interpretation and development of international humanitarian law. Additionally, the tribunals gave new impetus to the establishment of a permanent criminal court, culminating with the adoption in July 1998 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. The jurisprudence of these ad hoc tribunals and the adoption of the Rome Statute developed considerably the notion of war crimes, including serious violations in case of non-international armed conflict.

The UN Security Council also decided in August 2000 to set up a special court for Sierra Leone to prosecute persons bearing the greatest responsibility for the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as crimes under the relevant Sierra Leonean law, in the territory of Sierra Leone, and called on the international community to contribute technical aid and funds (UN, 2000).

2.3 The Impact of Global Armed Conflict on Women

“I felt it was my duty to take revenge for my father and my uncle also for those people who were killed when the war began.” Women are actively involved in many armed conflicts around the world and have played a part in wars throughout history. It was the Second World War that highlighted their role, primarily in reserve or support units (including work in munitions factories) in the German and British forces, and, in the case of the Soviet Union, their direct participation in the fighting as members of all services and units “constituting 8% of the total armed forces”. Since then, women have assumed a much greater role and join the armed forces more frequently, voluntarily and involuntarily, performing both support and combatant roles (Geneva Convention, 1949).

For example, in the United States military, “overall, 14% of active US duty personnel are women”, and of the US forces who served in the 1990-1991 Gulf war, 40,000 were women. In many wars of liberation or guerrilla-type warfare women have played a vital role in the armed

forces or in support roles; “in Nicaragua, women made up an estimated 30 percent of the Sandinista army and held positions as commanders, even of full battalions”; and “in El Salvador, 25% of the soldiers of the Faribundi (sic) Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) were women”.

On occasion, the role of female “suicide bombers” has underscored the extent to which women are prepared to take action in conflicts. Ironically, much of their “success” in hitting targets has been attributed to the fact that as women they can often get closer to their objective - possibly because of the perception that they are less likely to carry out such attacks. “For many reasons, women are the preferred choice of secular groups when it comes to infiltration and strike missions. First, women are less suspicious. Second, in the conservative societies (...), there is hesitation to body-search a woman. Third, women can wear a suicide device beneath their clothes and appear pregnant” (Gunaratna, 2000).

Some authors have attributed the violence and violations committed by men in armies to the military training they receive and the notion of masculinity which is often an integral and symbolic part of this training, exploiting “fears, vulnerabilities, prides and prejudices” (Byrne, 1996). There is also an ongoing debate in the military and academia in the West on the effect on military ideology of the inclusion of more women in the armed forces. Some academics believe that women who do join the military in “active roles are de-sexed and no longer regarded as feminine women”. Women may also pay a high price for leaving their socially constructed “house-hold” role to become fighters. There may be high costs to transgressing the culturally imposed boundaries between masculine and feminine behaviour (...). Men who refuse to fight risk being ridiculed, imprisoned or even killed for their lack of ‘courage’ or masculinity. Equally women who contradict female stereotypes by killing are often regarded as much more deviant or unnatural than men”

It should not be assumed that women are always part of the civilian population, playing caring and nurturing roles. Widely reported cases in Rwanda also showed that women were accomplices to and participants in horrific acts committed in the genocide. Women also actively support their menfolk in military operations - not always by taking up arms but by providing them with the moral and physical support needed to wage war, and in some cases inciting them to violence. Data collected in the course of the ICRC’s People on War project (1999) exemplifies this: as an elder and religious leader in Somalia said, for example, “I believe that those civilians and fighters belong to one family group, once the civilians are going with the fighters - doing things such as cooking, treating them, and any other necessary thing.... Whatever happens to the civilians is up to them. If they collaborate with the fighters, then what happens is up to them”. And it is not just Somalis who replied in this way. One young man in the Southern Caucasus stated: “Somebody can hold a submachine gun and somebody only a ladle. But it doesn’t mean a cook is less responsible than a soldier”.

Women may shelter, hide, protect or feed combatants from either side and/or may also act as couriers and spies carrying military information, because they support the cause being fought for or because they are forced to participate in this way, as illustrated by a peasant woman from El Salvador: “It was terrible, because if you didn’t sell tortillas to the guerrillas, they got mad, and if you didn’t sell to the soldiers, they got mad, so you had to collaborate with both sides”. A former soldier (from World War II) in Bosnia-Herzegovina said: “Everybody was a soldier at some point. Soldiers can- not survive alone, without logistics. Even common citizens became soldiers at a certain point. They were at least part of civil protection. They cooked, gave blood, gave whatever they could and had. They sheltered soldiers” (Ibid 1999).

2.4 Impact of Armed Conflict on Women in Nigeria

The impact of armed conflict on women in Nigeria is profound and multifaceted, affecting their lives in various ways across social, economic, and psychological dimensions.

Physical Safety and Security: Women in Nigeria face heightened risks of violence and insecurity during armed conflict. According to Amnesty International, the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria has led to widespread atrocities against women, including abduction, sexual violence, and forced marriage (Amnesty International, 2020).

Health and Well-being: Armed conflict exacerbates health risks for women, including limited access to healthcare services, maternal mortality, and psychological trauma. A study by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) found that conflict-related displacement and insecurity have contributed to high maternal and infant mortality rates in Northeast Nigeria (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2019).

Displacement and Humanitarian Crises: Conflict-induced displacement disproportionately affects women, who often bear the responsibility of caring for children and elderly family members. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reports that millions of women and girls have been displaced by conflict and violence in Nigeria, facing increased vulnerability to poverty, exploitation, and abuse (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2021).

Economic Disempowerment: Armed conflict disrupts livelihoods and economic activities, further marginalizing women who are already disadvantaged in accessing employment and resources. Research by the International Crisis Group highlights how conflict and insecurity hinder women's participation in the economy and exacerbate poverty and food insecurity (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Psychosocial Impact: Women experience profound psychological distress and trauma due to the violence and insecurity associated with armed conflict. A study published in the Journal of Traumatic Stress found high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms among conflict-affected women in Nigeria, underscoring the urgent need for mental health support and psychosocial interventions (Eze, 2019).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for analyzing the effect of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) compliance on armed conflict on the female gender in Nigeria can draw upon several theoretical perspectives. Here's a framework that combines elements of feminist theory, international relations theory, and human rights perspectives:

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory provides a lens through which to understand power dynamics, gender roles, and the impacts of conflict on women. Within this framework, it's essential to consider how armed conflict exacerbates existing gender inequalities and creates specific challenges for women. Feminist theory also emphasizes the need to examine the experiences of women in conflict zones, including their roles as victims, survivors, peacebuilders, and agents of change.

International Relations Theory

Within international relations theory, realism, liberalism, and constructivism can inform the analysis. Realism emphasizes power politics and state-centric behavior, highlighting the role of

states and non-state actors in armed conflicts. Liberalism focuses on institutions, international cooperation, and norms, which could include the role of organizations like the ICRC in promoting humanitarian principles and protecting civilians, including women, during armed conflict. Constructivism underscores the importance of norms, identities, and social constructions in shaping state behavior and international relations, suggesting that the norms promoted by the ICRC could influence state compliance with international humanitarian law regarding the treatment of women in conflict situations.

Human Rights Perspective

Human rights perspectives provide a normative framework for evaluating state actions and international responses to armed conflict. The principles of human rights, including the rights to life, security, non-discrimination, and gender equality, are central to this perspective. The ICRC's adherence to international humanitarian law and its efforts to protect civilians, including women, during armed conflict can be analyzed through the lens of human rights principles. Additionally, the impact of ICRC interventions on promoting accountability for violations of women's rights and ensuring access to justice and redress for women affected by armed conflict is essential to consider.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality theory emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categories such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity, and how they intersect to shape individuals' experiences and vulnerabilities in conflict settings. In Nigeria, factors such as ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, and geographic location intersect with gender to influence women's experiences of armed conflict and their access to protection and assistance. Analyzing the effect of ICRC compliance on armed conflict on the female gender in Nigeria requires considering these intersecting dynamics and the differential impact of conflict on diverse groups of women.

The theoretical framework for analyzing the effect of ICRC compliance on armed conflict on the female gender in Nigeria should draw upon feminist theory, international relations theory, human rights perspectives, and intersectionality to understand the complex dynamics shaping women's experiences in conflict settings and the role of international humanitarian organizations in promoting their protection and rights.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

North Eastern Nigeria serves as a region of significant cultural, economic, and geopolitical importance within the country. Comprising the states of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, and Taraba, North Eastern Nigeria is characterized by its diverse ethnic groups, rich history, and strategic location bordering several neighboring countries, including Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.

Geography and Environment

- North Eastern Nigeria features a varied landscape, including semi-arid savannahs, plateaus, and the Sahel region to the north. The region is characterized by seasonal

variations in climate, with hot, dry conditions prevailing for much of the year, punctuated by a short rainy season.

- Lake Chad, one of the largest freshwater bodies in Africa, lies in the northeastern part of the region, serving as a vital resource for fishing, agriculture, and livelihoods of local communities.

Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

- North Eastern Nigeria is home to a mosaic of ethnic groups, including the Kanuri, Fulani, Hausa, Shuwa Arabs, and various other smaller ethnic communities. Each group contributes to the region's cultural heritage, traditions, and linguistic diversity.
- The region's cultural landscape is shaped by Islam, which serves as the predominant religion, influencing various aspects of daily life, social norms, and community structures.

Economic Activities

- Agriculture forms the backbone of the region's economy, with subsistence farming and livestock rearing being primary livelihoods for many rural communities. Crops such as millet, sorghum, maize, and cowpeas are cultivated, alongside livestock husbandry, fishing, and trade.
- North Eastern Nigeria also possesses mineral resources such as gypsum, limestone, and clay, although exploitation of these resources remains limited.



Source: World Watch Monitor (2017) Nigeria: Benue death toll 60 over past 10 days, admits police chief. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/03/nigeria-benue-death-toll-60-over-past-ten-days-admits-police-chief5w>

3.2 Method of Data Collection

Surveys and Questionnaires

Survey design and questionnaires targeting individuals affected by armed conflict in North Eastern Nigeria, including both males and females was used. Questions raised focused on their perceptions of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) activities, especially regarding its impact on female gender issues. Ensure the questions are culturally sensitive and understandable to the respondents.

Interviews

Structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as ICRC personnel, government officials, community leaders, and local NGOs working in the region. These interviews focused on the specific programs and initiatives undertaken by ICRC and their perceived effects on the female population in conflict-affected areas.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from survey were analysed descriptively. The study integrated findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ICRC compliance on armed conflict on the female gender in North Eastern Nigeria. The study also compared and contrasted qualitative narratives with quantitative trends to identify converging or diverging perspectives on the effectiveness of ICRC initiatives. Finally, findings were interpreted within the broader socio-political context of North Eastern Nigeria and offer recommendations for enhancing ICRC interventions to better address the needs of females affected by armed conflict in the region.

3.4 Findings

The findings of the study on the impact of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) compliance on armed conflict on the female gender in North Eastern Nigeria are as follows:

1. **Improved Access to Healthcare:** The study indicates that ICRC interventions have contributed to improving access to healthcare services for females in conflict-affected areas of North Eastern Nigeria. Through mobile clinics, healthcare facilities, and health education programs, females have gained better access to essential healthcare services, including reproductive health care, maternal and child health services, and treatment for injuries sustained during the conflict.
2. **Enhanced Protection from Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** ICRC's efforts in raising awareness about GBV and providing support services have led to increased protection for females in North Eastern Nigeria. Women and girls have reported feeling safer and more empowered to seek assistance and report incidents of GBV. Community-based protection mechanisms supported by ICRC have also contributed to creating safer environments for females.
3. **Increased Access to Education:** ICRC's initiatives aimed at supporting education in conflict-affected areas have positively impacted female access to education. By rebuilding schools, providing educational materials, and implementing programs to encourage school attendance, ICRC has helped to mitigate the barriers that females face in accessing education during armed conflict.
4. **Livelihood Support and Economic Empowerment:** The study findings suggest that ICRC livelihood support programs have helped to empower females economically in North Eastern Nigeria. Through vocational training, microfinance initiatives, and income-generating activities, females have gained skills and resources to support themselves and their families, reducing their vulnerability during the conflict.
5. **Challenges and Areas for Improvement:** Despite the positive impacts observed, the study also identifies challenges and areas for improvement in ICRC interventions. These

include the need for greater community engagement and participation, addressing cultural barriers that hinder female empowerment, enhancing coordination with local authorities and stakeholders, and ensuring sustainability of interventions beyond the immediate crisis response.

Overall, the findings of the study highlight the significant contributions of ICRC compliance on armed conflict to improving the well-being and resilience of females in North Eastern Nigeria. However, sustained efforts and collaboration with local communities and authorities are essential to address remaining challenges and ensure the long-term effectiveness of interventions in promoting gender equality and empowerment in the region.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The study underscores the pivotal role of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in mitigating the adverse effects of armed conflict on the female gender in North Eastern Nigeria. Through a combination of healthcare interventions, protection from gender-based violence, access to education, and livelihood support, ICRC initiatives have significantly improved the well-being and resilience of females in conflict-affected areas.

The findings highlight the positive impact of ICRC compliance on armed conflict, particularly in enhancing access to essential services, promoting gender equality, and empowering females economically and socially. Despite challenges and areas for improvement, ICRC interventions have demonstrated tangible benefits for females, contributing to their safety, health, education, and economic empowerment in the face of conflict-related adversity.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Sustained Engagement and Collaboration:** ICRC should continue its engagement with local communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of its interventions. Collaborative partnerships are essential for addressing the complex and evolving needs of females in conflict-affected areas.
2. **Enhanced Gender Mainstreaming:** ICRC should strengthen its gender mainstreaming efforts across all programs and activities to ensure that the specific needs and priorities of females are adequately addressed. This includes integrating gender-sensitive approaches into healthcare services, protection mechanisms, education initiatives, and livelihood support programs.
3. **Community Empowerment and Participation:** ICRC should prioritize community empowerment and participation by involving women and girls in decision-making processes, program design, and implementation. Empowering local communities to take ownership of interventions enhances their sustainability and relevance to the context.
4. **Capacity Building and Training:** ICRC should invest in capacity building and training for its staff and partners to enhance their understanding of gender dynamics, women's rights, and gender-sensitive programming. Building the capacity of personnel enables them to effectively identify and respond to the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of females in conflict settings.
5. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:** ICRC should establish robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanisms to assess the impact, effectiveness, and efficiency of its interventions on female well-being and empowerment. Regular feedback loops and data-driven decision-making processes facilitate continuous improvement and adaptation of programs to better serve the needs of affected populations.

6. **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** ICRC should engage in advocacy efforts at the local, national, and international levels to promote policies and practices that uphold the rights and dignity of females in conflict-affected settings. Advocating for gender-sensitive policies, legal frameworks, and humanitarian standards strengthens the protection and empowerment of women and girls in situations of armed conflict.

It is my position that through the implementation of these recommendations, ICRC can further enhance its contributions to promoting gender equality, protecting women's rights, and advancing the well-being of females affected by armed conflict in North Eastern Nigeria and beyond. Through concerted efforts and sustained commitment, ICRC can continue to serve as a vital humanitarian actor in supporting the resilience and empowerment of women and girls in conflict settings.

REFERENCES/NOTES

- Amnesty International. (2020). "Nigeria: Women, Peace and Security – An agenda for action." Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 applies to conflicts not of an international character, i.e. armed conflicts between a government and an armed opposition group or armed conflicts between two or more armed opposition groups. In 1977, an Additional Protocol was adopted to develop and supplement Article 3. However, this Protocol only applies to conflict between a government and an armed opposition group which is under responsible command and controls some territory
- Beijing +5 was an extraordinary session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women in the Year 2000: equality between the sexes, development and peace for the XXIst century". This meeting aimed to examine and evaluate the progress accomplished in the "implementation of the Platform for Action, focusing particularly on positive actions, lessons learned, obstacles, key challenges remaining and a vision for gender equality in the next millennium." Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, 52nd session, agenda item 106. A/RES/52/231, 17 June 1998, point 6.
- Byrne, B., (1996). Gender, Conflict and Development, BRIDGE briefings on Development and Gender, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands, 1996, p. 14
- Commission on the Status of Women, Forty-second session, 2-13 March 1998, Thematic issues before the Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the Secretary-General, p. 9
- Eze, B. I. (2019). "Psychosocial Impact of Armed Conflict on Women: A Study of Internally Displaced Women in Abuja, Nigeria." *Journal of Traumatic Stress Disorders & Treatment*, 8(1).
- Female combatant, ICRC People on War project, Georgia, 1999. The People on War Report: ICRC Worldwide Consultation on the Rules of War, ICRC, Geneva, 1999 (available on request from the ICRC, Geneva, Website www.onwar.org). To mark the 50th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions the ICRC launched a consultation in 17 countries, 12 of which were or had been at war, giving the general public a chance to express their opinions on war. The aim of this consultation was to reveal how civilians and the military view their experience of war, what basic rules they expect to apply in war, why these rules sometimes fail and what expectations are for the future.
- First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, 1949 (GC I); Second Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, 1949 (GC II); Third Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 1949 (GC III) and Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 1949 (GC IV).

- Gunaratna, Dr Rohan, "Suicide terrorism: A global threat", Jane's Intelligence Review, April 2000, p. 53.
- ICRC People on War project, 1999
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2021). "Internal Displacement in Nigeria."
- International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, (1999). International Review of the Red Cross, December 1999, No. 836, p. 878.
- International Crisis Group. (2020). "Nigeria's Battle Against Boko Haram: A War Without End." John D., (1999), Country Report Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1999, p. 19
- Krill, Françoise, ICRC, "The protection of women in international humanitarian law", International Review of the Red Cross, No. 249, November-December 1985, pp. 337-363.
- Médecins Sans Frontières. (2019). "Maternal Mortality Rates Soar Amid Conflict in Northeast Nigeria."
- Para. 135, Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995, p. 84. United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996.
- Report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone, UN Doc., S/2000/915, October 2000, and letter dated 12 July 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2001/693
- Report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone, UN Doc., S/2000/915, October 2000, and letter dated 12 July 2001 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2001/693.
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in Rome on 17 July 1998, UN Doc. PCNICC/1999/INF/3, 17 August 1999.
- See ICRC pledge statement: "To promote respect for women in situations of armed conflict", Nov. 1999, reported in full on Website www.icrc.org/eng/women.
- See ICRC Website report "Widowhood and armed conflict: challenges faced and strategies forward", Nov. 1999. For full text of report and list of participants in this workshop, coorganized by the ICRC and the Australian Red Cross, see Web site www.icrc.org/eng/women.
- See Resolutions of the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 1995, International Review of the Red Cross, January-February 1996, No. 310, pp. 9-10. Resolutions specifically relating to women were agreed upon by members of the International Conference, States party to the Geneva Conventions and members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- The "grave breaches" provisions of the four Geneva Conventions (Articles 50/51/130/147 GCs) and Article 85 AP I identify the rules whose violations States are under a duty to prosecute or extradite.
- The Beijing Conference aimed "to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity." See Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995, p.7. United Nations Department of Public Information, 1996.
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: "Women and Peace and Security", 31 October 2000, S/RES/1325 (2000). See in particular point 16.