The Representation of the Vulnerable in the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis in the Print Media: The Dynamics and Impacts

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Abstract: Over the past 7 years, violent clashes in Cameroon between the military and armed separatists have driven thousands of Cameroonians to seek refuge in other parts of the country, and being known as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). All these displaced persons moved into other parts of Cameroon like Yaounde, Douala, Dschang and Baffousam, which are borders between Cameroon's Anglophone and Francophone regions. The displaced, most of whom are women and children, face grave humanitarian issues that forces them to migrate to these areas. The print media estimates that over 246000 people have been internally displaced. Internally displaced persons abandon their homes, seeking shelter in nearby bushes and safe regions as a result of their entire communities set ablaze. Some of these vulnerable persons migrate to the French speaking regions for safety, education, employment and health aids. According to the research findings, about 68 per cent of IDPs are known to be women and children, with the elderly and disabled inclusive. Majority of the women have been abandoned by their husbands and as such they live in vulnerable conditions. Also, it shows that there have been gross impacts of war on the vulnerable that forces them into displacement. These are; loss of lives and property, educational barriers, poor health conditions and inability to access health facilities, separation from loved ones, trauma, poverty etc. Some of these turns our children into child hawkers, child bombers, exposure of females to sexual assaults and increase in loss of lives, just to name a few. The impacts mentioned above demands that the vulnerable be paid more attention to by the media and other concerned stakeholders, in order to remedy their challenges.

Keywords: The Vulnerable, Representation, Anglophone Crisis, Print Press, Impacts.

1. Introduction

Cameroon, like numerous countries in Africa, undergoes complex migratory issues. First, the Far North Region continues to be impacted by the Boko Haram related armed conflict and this has displaced 490,000 persons in the Far North, with about 1million people in the region faced with serious protection risk. Life-saving assistance remains crucial to respond to the humanitarian needs of the displaced persons and the local communities whose pre-existing vulnerabilities have been further exacerbated by these movements along with the violence and the disruption to their livelihoods and basic social services.

Cameroon has been facing a series of socio-political crises in its Anglophone regions since October 2016. One of the first events of the crisis was a strike held by Lawyers from the two regions, which occurred from 10th to 21st October 2016. The Lawyers protested against the government's failure to come up with an English version of the OHADA Law and its interference to destroy the Common Law System inherited from the British (which was practiced

in the English-speaking Zones) (*New African Magazine*, 2018). These Lawyers subsequently sought support from traditional rulers, trade unions, and the entire population of both regions to abandon their duties and functions in the government of the Republic of Cameroon. They held meetings in Bamenda and Buea, which let to the following proposals: A call for the return of a two-states Federation that existed before 1972, and a call for the government to cease from sending Francophone Magistrates to Anglophone Courts. In November 2017, armed security forces pursued Common Law Lawyers who embarked on a peaceful protest in Bamenda and Buea: had them tortured, their gowns and wigs ceased, while some sustained injuries from rubber bullets (*The Scoop People Magazine,* 2018).

In November 2019, the crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon intensified. The socio-political crisis in the Northwest and the Southwest regions turned into a situation of violence with increasing reports of human rights violations and abuses, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, destruction of property, and rising humanitarian needs. Almost 680,000 Cameroonian are now internally displaced due to this crisis mainly in the Northwest and the Southwest regions. About 52,000 persons have sought refuge in neighbouring Nigeria. The displaced communities have acute need for protection, food, shelter, water and sanitation, as well as access to health and education (Kaze, 2021). Persons who could not flee from the violence, most notably older persons and persons with disabilities were at heightened risk of attacks and sexual violence. The Northwest and Southwest regions have been subjected to a resurgence of attacks against persons, their properties and public infrastructures (including health centres and schools): which all directly or indirectly has an impact on the vulnerable.

2. Literature Review

The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), (2018) says "the Crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon generated significant internal displacement in the west region of the country ". There has been a tremendous increase in the number of people internally displaced from towns to villages, from villages to bushes and forests, since November 2017. Recent findings revealed that over160.000 people were internally displaced in the two affected regions of Cameroon. The Southwest region has 90 percent of the over 160.000 people with 135.000 located in Meme Division, 15.000 in Manyu Division, and about 10.000 in the North West Region (*The Horizon Newspaper*,2018). A number of inhabitants of Meme Division abandon their homes and escaped into neighbouring communities due to the constant gun shots, burning, and looting of their localities. Also, some were internally displaced into different towns and villages, as well as moved into the forests for safety.

In November 2019, the number of displaced people in the Southwest and Northwest regions had risen exponentially due to the recurrent violence. UNOCHA inter-agency assessment mission reported that the number of people internally displaced by the crisis had reached 40,000. By April 2018, the number of people had increased to around 160,000, of which 150,000 were in the Southwest and 10,000 in the Northwest Region. In August 2018,, OCHA estimated that the number of IDPs in the Southwest and Northwest Region reached 211,000 and as of 9 October 2018, the number of IDPs in the Southwest and Northwest Regions of Cameroon was estimated to be 437,000

UNHCR (2019) confirms that, wars and armed conflict in many regions of the world and especially Africa have an eloquent impact especially on women, children and the elderly. As of the present, the on-going crisis in the North and South west has left a significant impact on the family and individuals in the affected areas. Women and children have been victims of traumatic events of war and the most vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Atabong (2018) reports that, "women rallied in a stadium in the city of Bamenda in the Northwest region of Cameroon to protest multiple abuses against them, their husbands and their children". As they sad on the ground, these women advocate for peace through shedding tears, their shared testimonies and sang songs of lamentation, while others prayed to God for peace. The United Nations Officer for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs (OCHA) recorded that over 21000 people have fled from the Northwest and the majority being women and children. An estimate

was made by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicating that, over 246000 people have been internally displaced. As a result of some communities completely set ablaze, leaving locals desperate for shelter and safety: most internally displaced families have been forced to abandoned their homes, seeking shelter in nearby bushes and safe regions. According to Guardian Post (2019) women have been abandoned by their husbands and about 68 per cent of Cameroonian IDPs are said to be women and children.

Atabong (2018) postulated that, the crisis has compelled women in some local communities in the northwest regions to break their well respected and aged-old traditions. For example, in some cultures the digging of graves and some aspects of a burial process has always been known exclusive as a man's duty. But due to the fact that most men are either engaged in combat or in hiding for fear of reprisals, women are force to take up burial matters into their hands, which is a major taboo. In addition, evidence of abuses perpetrated by the government and the separatist forces have been documented by the Human Right Watch (2019); with arbitrary arrest, torture, rampant kidnapping, and the detention of pregnant women, have all become recurrent. The hope for peace lies with the country's women. She urges more women organizations to get together to hold regular strategy meetings, marches and protests to "restore peace to our land". She continuous: "This is what is being done by women of civil society organizations who have mobilised themselves to form the Southwest and Northwest women's Task Force. We are tired of losing our children and burying our husbands".

On his part, Onuoha Chima (2022), postulates that: displacement is arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge globally, as the number of IDPs continue to increase. He examines the challenges of internally displaced persons in Bakassi IDP camp in Cross River State Nigeria. He took into consideration the role of social workers, government and non-governmental organisations. After carrying out a survey by means of questionnaires, he found out that; IDPs face overwhelming challenges in Bakassi IDP camp. The respondents were positive on social workers and NGOs meaningful contribution to the IDPs, but on the negative, they emphasised the need for an improved intervention. His findings provided a better understanding of the challenges faced by IDPs and the roles of social workers and NGOs therein. Thus, suggesting the need for a collaborative effort in ameliorating their plight. This paper is related to the work of Onuoha Chima in that, they both deal with issues of displacement and what IDPs go through, but on the other side this paper looks critically into the case of vulnerable IDPs, now no longer those in Bakassi as seen above, but those found within the francophone regions of Cameroon, with a attention paid to print media reports about the vulnerable during displacement.

3. Theoretical Frame

This Paper is couched in the Conflict Theoretical frame.The conflict theory was first postulated by Karl Marx in the 19th century. The conflict theory states that "society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources". According to the Conflict theory social order is maintained by power domination (rather than consensus and conformity). Also, according to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to 'power', intentionally by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that, individuals and groups within a society work to maximise their own benefits.

Conflict theory therefore, focuses on the competition between groups within society over limited resources. Conflict theory sees economic and social institutions as tools of the struggle between groups or classes, use to maintain inequality and the dominance of the ruling class. The Marxist conflict theory talks of the society as one divided along lines of economic class between the proletarian working-class and the bourgeois ruling class. Recent versions of conflict theory reveals other dimensions of conflict among capitalist factions and other groups such as social and religious groups.

Horkeimer (1982) says "conflict theory has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence". It brings out most of the fundamental developments in human history. Some of which are;

democracy and civil rights, a capitalistic attempt to control the masses (as opposed to a desire for social order). The central tenets of conflict theory are the division of resources, the concepts of social inequality, and the conflicts that exist between different socio-economic classes. Many types of societal conflicts throughout history can be explained using the central tenets of conflict theory. Some theorists, including Marx, believes that societal conflict is the force that ultimately drives change and development in society. Marx's version of conflict theory focuses on the conflict between two primary classes. To him, each class consists of a group of people bound by mutual interests and a degree of property ownership. For example, his theory about the bourgeoisie, who represent a group of people in a society holding the majority of wealth and means. He also talks of the proletariat, which is another group that includes those considered working class or poor. With the rise of capitalism, Marx theorised that the bourgeoisie, a minority within the population, would use their influence to proletariat the majority class. Such a philosophy is tied to a common image associated with conflict theory-based models of society; adherents to this philosophy tend to believe in a pyramid arrangement in terms of how goods and services are distributed in society; at the top of the pyramid is a small group of elites that dictate the terms and conditions to the larger portion of society because they have out sized amount of control over resources and power. Ideological coercion let to the predicted uneven distribution within society, as seen through; the bourgeoisie with force acceptance of the current conditions by the proletariat. Further more, the Conflict theory assumes that, while preventing others from joining their ranks, the elites will set up systems of flaws, traditions, and other societal structures in order to further support their own dominance. Marx theorised that as a result, the working class and poor were subjected to worsening conditions, and that collective consciousness would raise more awareness about inequality, which would potentially result in revolt. If conditions were therefore adjusted to favour the concerns of the proletariat after the revolt, the conflict circle would eventually repeat, in the opposite direction. The aggressors and revolters would then become the bourgeoisie, grasping for the return of the structures that formerly maintained their dominance.

This theory is a reflection of this work in that, following the historical development of the crisis, we realise that it has all been political, birth by the decisions of the higher class over the low class, or the majority over the minority. Power has been in the hands of the political leaders to put an end to the crisis which has been affecting the poor vulnerable population than the latter. The vulnerable pay the price for the decisions taken above: they are exploited, marginalised, and neglected by those who are focused on fighting for their selfish interest rather than turning to the call for peace-building as cried out-loud by these vulnerable suffering ones.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The impacts and the challenges of the Anglophone conflict on the vulnerable in Cameroon constitute this section of the Paper.

The impacts of conflict on the vulnerable

Conflict can have significant and lasting impacts on vulnerable populations, especially women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. These impacts can be physical, emotional, and social, it can affect individuals, families, and communities. Some impacts of conflict on the vulnerable include: Displacement: Conflict can force vulnerable populations to flee their homes, leaving them without shelter, food, or basic necessities. Displacement can also disrupt access to healthcare, education, and other essential services. Violence and abuse: Vulnerable populations may be at increased risk of violence and abuse during conflict, including; sexual violence, forced labour, and other forms of exploitation. Health: Conflict can disrupt access to healthcare services, leaving vulnerable populations at risk of disease, malnutrition, and other health problems. Education: Conflict can disrupt access to education, leaving vulnerable populations without access to learning opportunities and hindering their future prospects. Psychological trauma: The experience of conflict can cause psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can have long-lasting impacts on mental health and well-being. The media and other social actors have regularly complained that

this social group suffers most from gender-based violence, in particular rape, kidnappings and forced marriage (Friedrich Stiftung,2020)

Challenges faced by IDP Children

Children are said to be the most affected during conflict. They are the most vulnerable to social circumstances such as; fear, insecurity, separation from family, exposure to sexual and physical violence, disease and malnutrition, poverty, abuse, exploitation and psychological distress.

➢ **Psychological Suffering**

Children are exposed to situations of terror and horror during war. Experiences that may leave enduring impacts in post-traumatic stress disorder. Severe losses and disruptions in their lives lead to a high rate of depression and anxiety in conflict-affected children. Also, this impacts could be prolonged by exposure to further privations and violence in refugee situations or a IDPs

➢ **Loss of Right to Education**

So many children loss the opportunity to be schooled due to terror and threats of being taken hostage and maimed. During conflict a majority move to displaced person camps, where they wait for years in miserable circumstances for normal life to resume, if it ever does. Imagine a child disabled during conflict and losses a limb sight or cognitive capacity; automatically he/she loses the opportunity of schooling and of social life. Girls who are raped and end up being pregnant turn to stay back and watch over their babies (educational limitation)**.** The C.T reports that;

> More disturbing even is the fact that the two hitherto education powerhouses are today shadows of themselves. Children have been taken hostage and their God-given and human-enhanced rights to education sharply violated… They no longer go to school at will. Fear of the unknown is dictating the pace of life in the North West and South West Regions…

> They have moved from intimidating those who attempt to go to school to killings and kidnappings…

Kidnapping some children and teachers going to school and outrightly killing others, as is the case now, sends many wondering where people have taken their consciences to. Children are not responsible for whatever happened in the past. … On February 25, 2019, secessionist insurgents set fire to Espoir College and APAWYS Secondary School. - the following day, February 26, 2019, other armed gangs forced their way into Government High School Santa premises, causing havoc and despair, and taking away many of the students' belongings, including school bags, books and other school materials…Incursions into schools in Mbouh village in Bangem in Kupe-Muanenguba; the burning of classrooms at the Batoke High School in Kumba; shooting at students of the University of Buea; fire at Presbyterian High School; rape of two students returning from Mundemba after the First School Leaving Certificate examinations; the burning of the Marem Islamic Primary School…'(C.T, Tuesday, August 27th, 2019, Pg7)

Beyond the fact that education is one of the fundamental rights of a child that should not, whatsoever, be violated, it goes without saying that failing to educate a child is synonymous to preparing him for doom. An educated child, it must be said, is an asset and the reverse can be chaotic. To say the least, this is avoidable in the restive regions. The earlier the better! Inasmuch as aggrieved people have the right to complain, theirs is also the responsibility to uphold the rights of others. Children have an absolute right to education. Tampering with it, as is the case at the moment, is jeopardising their tomorrow. Education is indispensable for responsible livelihood. Cameroonian children and particularly those in the Northwest and Southwest Regions should not be denied this privilege. Human beings today need to have a set of skills to survive in a competitive world. These skills can be packaged into education. Without necessarily going to school to have a public service job, education builds the capacities of a human being and ignites creativity in his field of giftedness. Why then deprive our children of this golden opportunity to

get empowered for responsible living? The schools are there, the teachers are willing and the children ambitious to gain knowledge. Terrorising them sometimes to the point of death is going against humanity. This is unacceptable! The crisis has been detrimental to many a child in the past two academic years that it has raged on. Some have been derailed, no doubt, but they can be brought back to the right ways. It is imperative to salvage what is left and give tomorrow's leaders the brains to face the future rather than arms that at best destroy and kill. It is thus pathetic to watch children deprived of their educational rights.

➢ **Loss of right to family and shelter**

As a result of the conflict, children who have been victims turned to be abandoned. That is, the lack of shelter and parenting which gives a child warmth and space for attentive interactions. They therefore leave in chronic stress and fear. Others find themselves in the homes of strangers or relatives who most at times takes advantage of them. Unfortunately, some end up on the streets where they struggle for survival. There are cases of mothers who have ran away living their children behind and vice versa.

"One lady who pleaded not to be named said she went to a village in Konye Subdivision to buy snails when chaos started there. They all ran to the bush. She went the same direction with two sons (least than 10 years) of her snails seller while the woman with other family members went another way. After spending some weeks in the forest, she succeeded to return to Buea with the children and they are still under her care. "I do not know any relatives to these children," she said while in tears" (C.T Lundi 12, November 2018, pg 4)

The above extract tells of how due to conflict, children were being detached from their parents and home/village, only to fine themselves in the bush and later in a different town and region. They are said to have been a unable to trace or hear from their parents. This detachment from family can be psychologically overbearing for most children. Today we see a family tight up in one room in their numbers as a result of escape and survival. In Cameroon these people have been commonly termed internally displaced persons (IDPs); those who have escaped to other peaceful regions within Cameroon.

➢ **Exposure to arms (militarization)**

In a quest to get back at the enemy or those who caused you pain, most vulnerable young persons have been caught up holding arms as minors. This is the case reported in some parts of the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Some of these children are said to have strayed into bushes for safety and some being caught and trained by the ''boyses n the bushes'' to hold arms or accomplish secrete assignments. Having arms in the hands of minors is a terrible bridge to the law. This also cause many to die untimely. Some grow to love it and totally turn away from their families. There have been cases where after escape and separation from loved ones due to war, the only place where these children find refuge or make sense of life is in the world of other gangsters. This automatically places them in an atmosphere of criminality and holding of arms for survival. "In April, Boko Haram fighters stormed Amchidé, Far North region. **Two teenage suicide bombers detonated their explosives in the center of the town, killing nine men and injuring 10 others**. Another man was shot in a confrontation between Boko Haram fighters and the military. **An attack by apparent child suicide bombers,** carried out overnight between August 1 and 2, in a displacement camp in the town of Nguetechewe, killed at least 17 civilians, including 5 children and 6 women, and wounded at least 16."(EDEN 1194 Monday 25 January 2021, Pg.9). The above extract gives us a clear example on the impact of conflict on children, who in their vulnerable state seek for survival.

➢ **Cultural Alienation and Social losses**

Displaced children turn to loss their culture as they try to assimilate the culture of the new community they find themselves. In these new communities reinstituting their own culture becomes challenging. They are therefore sometimes forced to abandon their culture and adopt the culture of others (where they find refuge). This is cultural alienation which is detrimental,

knowing how valuable culture is to a society. Socio-culturally, children who have been brought up with good morals sometimes find themselves in indifferent surroundings and loss meaning in their construction of themselves. They therefor, may have to change their moral structure and lie, steal and sell sex to survive or train to kill as part of a military force. A majority of these IDPs find it difficult living in other French speaking regions of Cameroon as they are faced with language barriers. Self-expression and getting into the job market becomes challenging. Gradually they learn or adopt the French culture and language. This causes a drop in the inherent English culture in them. The Eden newspaper throws light on this

> Amba madness orchestrated massive expulsion and forceful migration of whole families to francophone regions where the kids of the 'Anglofools' now suffer constant verbal bashing from their francophone school mates and who are forced to learn and speak french not just as a survival strategy, but as also to he considered an assimilee and so benefit from certain fallouts… Our lovely kids who grew up in standard homes now mix with rustics who organize sex parties and drug consumption competition.''.(Eden, Tuesday 18ᵗʰ January 2022, Pg 9).

This is a totally cut off from morality and cultural values. Change in language and attitude just to survive. We see the reporter uses the word 'Anglofools' which is adjective describing the Anglophone separatist fighters and their foolishness at addressing their problem, and indirectly killing those who hold the future.

➢ **Exposure to Illnesses**

Conditions for maintenance of child health deteriorates in during conflict. Access to health services becomes challenging, nutritional problems, water safety issues, sanitation, housing. With population movement and influx in single rooms, there might be loss of immunity to disease vectors. IDP children are particularly vulnerable to deadly combination of malnutrition and infectious illnesses. This also increases child mortality.

In a nutshell Children are among the most vulnerable and affected groups in conflicts. They are often the victims of violence, displacement, and other forms of harm that can have long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological impacts. Children may be targeted directly in conflicts, such as through the recruitment of child soldiers, sexual violence, and other forms of abuse. They may also be affected indirectly, such as through the loss of family members, displacement from their homes, or exposure to violence and trauma. Conflict can disrupt children's education, health, and social development, with many forced to leave school or suffer from malnutrition, disease, and other health problems. The psychological impact of conflict can also be significant, with many children experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. International humanitarian law recognizes the particular vulnerability of children in conflicts, and provides protections for them. These include provisions against the recruitment of child soldiers, protections against sexual violence and other forms of abuse, and the provision of humanitarian aid and support for children affected by conflict. Efforts to address the impact of conflict on children include the provision of psychosocial support, education, and healthcare services, as well as initiatives to prevent and respond to violence and abuse. It is essential that the voices and needs of children are heard and prioritized in conflict resolution and peace building efforts, to ensure that they are not left behind and can rebuild their lives in safety and security.

Effects of Conflict on Women

Women are often disproportionately affected by conflict, as they may be at increased risk of sexual violence, separation from their partners or loved ones, rendered motherless and early widows, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse. Conflict can also disrupt access to healthcare services, including maternal health services, leaving women at risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Research also demonstrates that gender relations are often impacted and may be reconfigured by war/displacement, injury, incapacitation and death of young men and husbands in conflict, which shifts the burden of providing for the household's food, care of

children and their education to a much greater extend, and sometimes exclusively onto women (Shackel & Fiske, 2017). Some of the impacts of conflict on women as reported in the print media are;

➢ **Separation from Loved ones**

One impact of conflict in the life of women is, it separates them from their loved ones; that is, their children, husbands and others. In times of chaos run for safety, which causes them to be separated from their loved ones. Women are separated from their husbands and children which leaves them psychologically traumatised, for example; She went the same direction with two sons (least than 10 years) of her snails seller while the woman with other family members went another way**.**

> After spending some weeks in the forest, she succeeded to return to Buea with the children and they are still under her care. "I do not know any relatives to these children," she said while in tears. Another woman who came from Manyu Division talked of her husband whereabouts still unknown after he had fled to the forest a year ago. "His number is not going to hrough and I fear for the unthinkable," she said and burst into tears. Ekema Patrick Esunge, Mayor of Buea Council, in a consolation message told them to be strong. (C.T Lundi 12, November 2018, pg.4)

Some women have been separated from their children as a result of the fear of terror and violence. The above talks of a woman who run away separate direction from her children. It is always a reflect action that leaves the victims thinking of what they have done, only after they must have reacted. We have others who have left their babies because they couldn't carry everyone as they escape. In this chaotic escape woman can't lay track on their children and husbands. This causes great pain and distress in the hearts of these vulnerable persons, the verbal and intransitive phrase 'she said and burst into tears'*;* is an expression of pain when separated from your loved ones. Thus, separation is a negative impact of conflict on the vulnerable.

➢ **Renders them Motherless and Widowed**

During conflict women loss their children and husbands, leaving them as motherless and as widows. This can be seen the examples below;

> It is on record that men count the highest casualties in the ongoing crisis living behind children and wives… They said women are the hardest hit as more of them are becoming **windows** and motherless on a daily basis… The Coordinator of SNWOT Bamenda branch Adah Mbah said it was high time women raise their voices so that the authorities concerned will know their pain (reported speech). She said it is a sad situation that has rendered so many people homeless. "Our husbands and children are killed every day which makes us more vulnerable. We are tired!" (C.T, Monday, September 10th 2018, Pg.3).

The example above brings o us an impact of conflict on women. It renders them motherless. Woman loss their children both born and unborn. They are either killed or kidnaped or separated from them during escape.

Apart from their children taken away from them, women become young windows during conflict. Those who fight and are killed at the battle field leave their wives as widows. Men are intentionally attacked and murdered, leaving their wives behind. We have above that men count the highest casualties in the ongoing conflict, leaving behind children and wives. The C.T reports that; *"*Under the umbrella of the South West-North West Woman Task Force (SNWOT), the women called on the powers that be to give peace a chance. They said women are the 'hardest hit' (use of metaphor) as more of them are becoming windows and motherless on a daily basis". The present continuous tense 'becoming' shows the continuous effect of conflict on changing woman into the adjectival expressions 'window and motherless'. Meaning they are deprived of their mother rights.

We also have the case of a nursing Mbororo woman who in the heart of the muslim fasting, her baby strapped to her back is seized and her tummy torn open. (Eden, 18th May 2020, pg10). We therefore see the negative impact of conflict on women irrespective of your culture, religion or environment. The muslim woman's baby is killed in the heart of a muslim fasting, showing the extent to which conflict hunts and inflict pain on the vulnerable.

➢ **Vulnerable to Sexual assaults**

During conflict, a great percentage of women are raped at random. It is a common evil acted upon them. Sexual assault is not only an assault against a woman's physical and psychological well-being, but it often precipitates a catastrophic loss of social status and expulsion from social networks (Fiske and Shackel 2015). As vulnerable persons to sexual assault, some become sex tools in the hands of both the secessionist fighters and the military. For example, we have a woman report;

"We are living like animals in the bushes. Rape is a constant thing there. My last child is the result of rape'' (Eden Monday, 27 April 2020, Pg.4)

Rape is evidently a negative impact of conflict on women and young girls as it leaves some with early and unexpected pregnancies as seen in the case of the speaker above. These IDP women are metaphorically compared to animals, meaning they are being abused and used up by their masters/exploiters as they please, like animals with no rights to themselves. The verb 'living' shows that 'rape' is a habitual action carried out on them in the bushes, which is so pathetic.

Impact of Conflict on the Elderly

Older people may be at increased risk of physical harm, losing their lives and in ability to be displaced during conflict, as well as social isolation and neglect. Conflict can also disrupt access to healthcare services, leaving older people at risk of disease and other health problems.

➢ **Victims of Maiming and Loss of Lives**

During conflict the elderly easily die due to their inability to escape, some due to shock at the sudden death of their love ones or at the sound of guns and blades. Others, as a result of abandonment and the inability to meet up health demands etc. this can be exemplified below;

'There is the reported death of **86years old** Frida Ndumu. Her house was reported said ablaze in the wake of the general commotion' (The Post, Monday, February 26th, 2018, pg.5)

"Reports from Wum state that a total of seven persons died in two days with some 13 houses set on fire killing an 80years old man by name John Mvo with his body incinerated in his own house" (Eden, Tuesday 26th October 2921, pg.10)

"Father killed for having an Amba son, one Mallam Baba Musa age about 65years….resident Tatum was reported shot dead on the night of May 11th 2020". (Eden, Monday 18th, May 2020, pg.10)

"How can soldiers arrest an old man, Bobe Many Sahnjong and burn down his house at Ntufe in Belo Subdivision for the simple reason that they could not lay hands on his son who is a suspect?" (The Post. Monday, February 26th, 2018, Pg.4)

Extract one is an example of elderly people who die as a result of mass destruction and violent commotion. That is the looting and burning of properties. It is said that 86yrs old woman dies as a result of her house said ablaze. Evidentially, the figure '*86*', means that this was an elderly lady and at that age obviously tired, helpless/vulnerable to any circumstance. We have the adjectival qualifier 'ablaze' which describes the state of the house containing the deceased and talks of totally destruction. The use of the abstract noun 'dead' signifies the end effect of violence on this vulnerable woman's existence. The verb 'commotion' gives more inside to the kind of atmosphere this vulnerable group find themselves. In the midst of violent commotion, young persons are the ones said to possess the ability to run, while the elderly ought to be assisted. When this doesn't happen, they are left behind, thus, become victims of dead. In this case the old

woman most have found it difficult to escape, and so was burnt alongside her house. Thus, death is a negative impact of conflict.

The second example brings to us the group of elderly persons who die as a result of blame and revenge. It is reported that Mallam Baba 65yrs old was killed for having an 'Amba' son. This is injustice and man inhumanity to man. The example signifies that, the elderly are used as a ransom, a peace offering for the unjust (the Amba son). The elderly therefore pay for their children's crimes by being assassinated or taken into captivity for monetary reasons. The transitive verb phrase 'father killed for having an Amba son' tells the cause and effect of the victim's dead; which is a negative judgment categorizing the reason for such an evil action executed upon vulnerable.

The last example is introduced to us by use of rhetorical question. This question is to trigger the minds of the readers to ponder and judge for themselves if this is sensible act or not. The discourse of blamed is employed here, whereby soldiers are said to be the actors, the doers of such a hilarious act. The employment of a rhetorical question is as a result of the fact that, soldiers ought to act as defenders and protectors of the vulnerable, yet they are accused of perpetrating such actions. Just as stated above the elderly are taken into hostage (soldiers arrest an old man) and most killed in the place of their children (for the simple reason that they could not lay hands on his son who is a suspect?). Dead therefore is a negative impact on the vulnerable during conflict.

> **Increase in health challenges and inability to access health services**

Accessing health services during conflict is challenging. This is as a result of destruction of hospitals in some of our local communities, the blockage of roads, declaration of ghost towns, poverty and lack of physical support. Some of these elderly persons are deprived of their children, and are therefore allowed to battle with life. Due to the burning down of hospitals as reported in the papers, "He added that the village's Integrated Health Centre had been burnt down." (EDEN Monday 11 July 2022, Pg 11)**,** most of these elderly ones turn to be deprived of health services. Poverty too causes increase in health challenges: lack of medication, feeding, lack of social amenities to live healthy etc. . Displaced communities face difficulties accessing basic services, including healthcare. The crisis has severely affected the public health system. Many health centres have closed or are non-functional, medical workers and facilities are being directly targeted by violence, and insecurity is hindering the supply of drugs and medical equipment. (EDEN 1196 Monday 08 February 2021)

> **Loneliness**

One pathetic impact of Conflict is that it takes away and deprives one from what they possess. Loneliness has been one of the major aspects which characterizes the life of the elderly. This is because their young men and women displace themselves for various purposes; some go to the battle field, some migrate for academic purposes, greener pastures, and sadly some are murdered. The elderly are force to stay back in the bushes all alone; "She is hoping the crisis can come to end soon for her children to reunite with their grandparents who are in the bush for more than two years and counting" (Eden Monday, 27 April 2020, Pg.4)

Impact of Conflict on the Disable

People with disability are recognised as among the most marginalized and at-risk population in any crisis-affected community. People with disabilities may be at increased risk of harm during conflict, as they may face barriers to accessing care and support services. Conflict can also disrupt access to assistive devices and other accommodations, leaving people with disabilities at a disadvantage. A majority of persons with disabilities are forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and persecution and are victims of human rights violations and conflict-related violence. They become victims of high death rate, stigmatization, mental health challenges among others.

> **High Death Rate and Risk during Fighting**

Conflict often forces people to flee areas when violence erupts. Persons with disabilities can be at risk of harm during fighting. The disable face a lot of difficulties fleeing armed attacks on their communities. Persons with disabilities may struggle to flee and seek shelter without assistance and access to assistive devices. People who are blind and have to flee may require support from others. Those with hearing, intellectual or developmental disabilities often cannot hear and understand what occurs during an attack. In some cases some stay back and become burden to their family who try to escape. All these makes it easy for them to be victims of death, kidnap and molestation.

> **Abuse and Stigmatisation**

Conflict exacerbate stigma, resulting in extreme practices including treats, shackling and physical and verbal abuse in the community (including hurtful and offensive comments). There are cases where relatives physically abuse people with disabilities, beating them, chaining them up (especially when faced with the challenge to access mental health and psychosocial support) not be destructive, isolated from others and sometimes forcibly taking their food or other possessions from them.

Academically they are also stigmatized as exemplified;

> Besides promoting inclusive education in the regular schools, the campaign is to raise awareness on the right to education for children with disabilities who are not able or not allowed to go to school, many of whom are hidden in homes for fear of discrimination and stigmatisation from the public" (The Post, Monday March 26th, 2018, pg.10)

The modal verbal expression 'not able to', and the prepositional phrase 'hidden in homes', shows the inability and how limited these groups are to possessing and acting upon their rights. Conflict comes into play here in that some have been disabled as a result of bullets, blades and victim of fire burns and other consequences of violence, which leaves them maimed and vulnerable.

> **Physical disabilities**

The war causes physical injuries, such as amputations, burns, and spinal cord injuries, which can result in permanent disabilities. People with physical disabilities may face challenges accessing medical care, rehabilitation services, and assistive devices such as wheelchairs or prostheses.

> **Mental health disabilities**

The conflict also causes or exacerbates mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. People with mental health disabilities experience difficulties accessing appropriate treatment and support services, and face stigma and discrimination.

> **Access barriers**

We equally realise that activities of the war result in the destruction of infrastructure such as buildings, roads, and bridges, which can create access barriers for people with disabilities. For example, rubble or debris may make it difficult for people who use wheelchairs to move around, or for people with visual impairments to navigate safely.

> **Displacement and migration:**

War causes people to flee their homes and become refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). People with disabilities who are displaced face additional challenges accessing adequate healthcare, food, water, and shelter, and may be at increased risk of exploitation, abuse, or neglect.

➢ **Social exclusion**

People with disabilities face social exclusion and discrimination during times of war. For example, they are seen as a burden on their families or communities, or may be perceived as less able to contribute to the war effort.

  ➢ **Trauma**

The war causes lasting trauma for people with disabilities. They experience fear, anxiety, and uncertainty about their future, and may struggle to cope with the loss of loved ones, the destruction of their homes and communities, and the disruption of their daily routines.

Overall, the war is having profound and long-lasting impacts on people with disabilities, and it is important for policymakers and aid organizations to take their needs into account in humanitarian responses.The above impact of conflict experienced by the vulnerable has been negatively impacting psychologically, physically and emotionally, as revealed by the print media. Coping in other parts of the country as a means of survival has not been an easy one, even though the government has so far been putting in much to see that some of their needs are being met and their burdens made lighter. There is need for continuous counsel and help to be accorded to these ones.

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