SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF ARMED CONFLICT ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN BAWKU MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract

Conflict is inevitable and has the ability to cause social and economic implications in society.Throughout Africa violent conflicts profoundly affected the individuals, families, communities, organisations, and states leading to increased household burdens of women. Violent conflict not only obliterates the present society, but it also mutilates the future. This situation increases and widens gender disparity and poverty gap making women and children more vulnerable. This paper examined the socio-economic effects of conflict on women and children in Bawku Municipality. It is a descriptive study. The qualitative research method and the case study approach were employed for the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 respondents. The main sources of data were primary and secondary. In-depth interview guides and focus group discussions were used to collect primary data from respondents. Related literature and other documents were reviewed for secondary data. The study revealed that, the effects of conflict on women and children included poverty, divorce, internal displacement, denial of sources of livelihood, under-nourishment and malnutrition, school dropout, psychological trauma, insecurity, physical injuries, work overload on women, and child abuse. It is recommended that the government and other stakeholders should give scholarship to children to retain them in school, increase small-scale credit facilities for women, resettlement packages, life enhancing opportunities, counseling services to conflict victims, transform the conflict, and improve upon the lives of the women and children in the Municipality.

Keywords: Bawku Municipality, Children, Conflict, Socio-economic, Women.

Introduction

Conflict refers to a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Such conflicts may take place between individuals, collectivities, or between individuals and collectivities" (Coser, 1956; 10). Nnoli (1998) postulates that armed conflict is inevitable and manifests in many societies. Conflict may be on a small scale and localized or on a large scale. The former refers to the type of conflict which is fought in a relative short period of time with the use of small arms and light weapons such as machine guns, self-loading pistols, rifles, bowls and arrows, knives and cutlasses (United Nations, 1997). On the other hand, a large scale conflict may

be fought at national, regional and international level. For instance large scale conflicts manifested itself in Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia (Nnoli 1998). This study deals with socio-economic effects of small scale armed conflict on women and children in the Bawku Municipality involving Kusasis and Mamprusis ethnic groups. According to Kendie, Osei-Kufour and Boakye, (2014), factors that account for the outbreak of conflict in Bawku relate to chieftaincy problem, increasing demand for land for agricultural purposes given the high population density in the area and political interference since colonial and post-independence eras. The conflicts decimate the local economy substantially as trade has reduced and several business minded persons have migrated to other urban peaceful towns to ply their trade (Kendie, Osei-Kufour & Boakye, 2014). According to Yahaya (2007), in the event of armed conflict, the whole society is negatively affected because war is indiscriminate in its ability to inflict havoc to lives, properties and sources of livelihood. Loss of family members and social networks inflict suffering on women and men alike, but women are affected in many particular ways from men because of socio-cultural roles assigned to women by society. Women may lose husbands and sons on the battlefield and they may also lose their girls and young children as civilian casualties, or witness their suffering as victims of assault. As the primary caregivers to children in among most ethnic groups in Ghana, women arguably suffer the loss of their children in gender-specific ways. Although the relationship of motherhood to women's stance toward war is debated, women in many different historical and cultural contexts have argued that a mother's suffering is unique (Lorentzen & Turpin, 1998; Rhene & Sirleaf, 2002).

The rational for this study is to unveil experiences of armed conflict by the vulnerable from the point of view of women and children rather than depending on the electronic and print media which focuses their reportage on other segment of the society such as destruction of physical environment and destruction of property because of its cost to the state at the expense of the women and children (Yahaya, 2007). With this study, the voices of the vulnerable will be heard to compensate the shortfall of the media.

Statement of the Problem

The effects of conflicts world over have been documented in scholarly literature. These include death, displacement, health, and education (Justino, 2007). In the view of Yahaya (2011) conflict disrupts markets, banking, and credit systems. In the absence of all these facilities life becomes unbearable for the society at large but women and children face the consequences more than men because of cultural roles assign to them. Nevertheless, even when exposure to actual armed violence is limited, the effects in terms of loss of security, income and service access, displacement, and other such phenomena are considerable. The discriminatory employment practices, limited access to schools and other facilities may have an immense impact on children and result in a wide range of human rights violations. Notwithstanding this, little attention have been given to the socio-economic effects of armed conflict on women in Ghana especially, Bawku Municipal. It is in line with this that this paper sought to examine the socio-economic effects of armed conflict on women and children in the Bawku Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

The general objective of the paper is to examine the socio-economic effects of armed conflict on women and children in the Bawku Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Specifically, the paper sought to give a brief historical background of the conflict; examine violence against women and children during the conflict; assess the survival strategies of women and children during conflict; and make recommendations for policy implementation. Most communities in conflict zones are profoundly affected by armed conflict and forced migration, with grave implications for the

survival, development and well-being of women and children. Consequently, little is known about how women and children in conflict affected communities experience the effects of armed conflict, or what legal and practical means exist to aid and support them. This proposed case study is an attempt in this direction to fill the information gaps. This has serious ramifications for policy and programmatic interventions, since effective measures require a full understanding of both the overall situation with respect to armed conflict, political struggles and the specific circumstances of women and children lives. This will help raise awareness of the true extent and effects of social and economic implications of armed conflict on women and children. It is also an attempt in building capacity in child-focused participatory research in conflict affected communities in Ghana.

Theoretical Issues

Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) and Yahaya (2007), made the following propositions highlighting gender perspective on experiences of violence by women and children during armed conflicts:

- "The magnitude of violence suffered by women before and after conflict is overwhelming" (Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002:6).
- "The extreme violence that women suffer during conflict does not arise solely out of the conditions of war; it is directly related to the violence that exists in women's lives during peace time" (Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002: 15).
- Women suffer in war today not because of an absence of law, because of the lack of implementation of, and or respect for existing laws.
- "Men who have witnessed and perpetrated violence during war seem to continually act violently to their families" (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002:16).
- Women use many different coping mechanisms which enable them to survive in times of crisis (Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002 and Yahaya, 2011).

Violence against women refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private (Cusack, 1999:31). According to Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) violence against women is a universal phenomenon. Sarah (1998) points out that because excessive forms of violence against women go largely unpunished, violence against women turns to be an acceptable norm, and it aggravates during armed conflict as violence in general escalates. Machel (2001) expresses the view that no woman is exempt from violence and exploitation. During conflict women and girls are assaulted if combatants realized that they are associates of their opponent groups or are present at home when the combatants make incursion in the abode of their adversaries.

Rehn and Sirleaf (2002:16) put forward that men who have witnessed and perpetrated violence during war seem to continually act violently to their families. The violence male family members endured or meted out to their adversaries and their encounter with lack of jobs, shelter and services during conflict times traumatizes them in the aftermath of conflict. In addition, several studies of the psychological state of conflict-affected populations and ex-combatants demonstrate that the occurrence of violence makes a deep scar on the human psyche. Rehn and Sirleaf (2000:37) express the view that "war-affected populations suffer traumatic stress disorders". These states of affairs according to them are responsible for perpetuating violence against women by men domestically in the aftermath of conflict. According to Lindsey (2003:8), women are likely to be more vulnerable in all conflict times if they are perceived as symbolic bearers or custodians of culture and ethnic identity as well as the producers of the future generations (children) of their communities. In such situations

women may be vulnerable to attacks or threats from their own community members for not being able to conform to these roles as a result of conflict. Conversely, enemy combatants may target and assault women in an attempt to subvert or destroy their traditional function of performing these aforementioned roles. Victimized women in conflict are in most cases reticent, they do not speak about sexual violence or report incidents of sexual abuse if they happened to be victims. This may be so because, many times, when such a crime becomes known, women can be ostracized from their community or treated with contempt.

Literature Review

Armed conflict shatters the lives of the current generation, and the dreams of the future generation. According to Dercon (2004), most individuals and households in developing countries, especially in Africa, face severe socio-economic risks even in the absence of armed conflict. These insecure socio-economic environments force vulnerable people, women and children into deprivation and distress situations in the communities. The incidence of violent armed conflicts is likely to increase fear, insecurity, and suspicion further in already unsecured environments. These are typically associated with the destruction of essential infrastructure and social amenities and services in the affected communities, the breakdown of the rule of law, and reductions in economic activities, private and public investment. Most armed conflicts lead to killing and displacing of populations, often limiting the access of households to employment and earnings and increasing levels of instability and loss of trust (Fearon & Laitin, 2003).

Conflict, and subsequent times of insecurity and fear, may impact on the ability of individuals and households to fall back on known scarce survival strategies. In vulnerable areas, or amongst the poorest, the negative consequences of armed conflict will add to the already existed difficult circumstances. Sometimes those that were not poor

may become so due to prevailing conditions such as reductions in food security, market disruption, increased difficulties in getting to markets to sell and buy goods, and the loss of earnings capacity, savings and formal and informal risk-sharing networks. During armed conflicts, households are left without breadwinners; the livelihoods of individuals are threatened. The safety of communities and the human rights of individuals are not also preserved. Aside the physical and emotional trauma, such deliberate actions, and events have long lasting effects upon the ability of communities affected by the conflict to recover (UNHCR, 1997).

In addition, armed conflict strongly affects the living conditions of households at the time of the conflict and for many years thereafter. Armed conflicts and violent insurrections kill, destroy, and injure millions of people whenever they occur. They destroy infrastructure, services, assets and livelihoods, displace populations, break social cohesion, institutions and norms and create fear and distrust. Fearon and Laitin (2003) concluded that armed conflicts resulted in three times as many deaths as inter-state wars between states since World War II. Armed conflicts are likely to add new forms of vulnerability and exclusion, which in turn may feed into future outbreaks of violence even after the initial conflict has subsided. The destruction of assets by armed conflict, in addition to unstable economic, social and political environments, will impact significantly on the ability of affected households to recover their economic and social position in post-conflict settings. On the other hand, armed conflicts take place because there is something worth fighting for, implying that some groups and individuals will benefit from violence through looting, redistribution of assets during conflict. There is ample evidence and literature that suggest that armed conflict can have strong negative impacts on human capital and socio-economic development of any nation. In relation to health, studies showed that armed

conflict do have greater effect on health of women and children (Alderman et al., 2006; Alderman, Hoddinot & Kinsey, 2009; Bundervoet, Verwimp, & Akresh, 2009; Arcand & Wouabe, 2009; Baird et al., 2011; Akresh et al., 2011, 2012) all these authors concluded that armed conflict intensity worsened child health during and after the conflict. Furthermore, studies have established a robust negative association between armed conflict and child health (Bundervoet et al., 2009; Akresh et al. 2011; Baez, 2011; Akresh et al., 2012; Mansour & Rees, 2012). A growing body of such research on the micro-level consequences of conflict finds that children and young adults are particularly vulnerable to negative shocks during armed conflicts (Swee, 2013).

Similarly, there is also some evidence of effects of conflict on education. De Walque (2004) discusses how civil conflict in Cambodia had a lasting impact on educational attainment and concluded that mostly it leads to the collapse of the education system. Akresh and de Walque (2008) in their study show that the armed conflict in Rwanda had a negative effect on schooling outcomes, with exposed children completing half a year less. In the same vein, Shemyanika (2011) presents evidence of the negative impact of armed conflict on schooling in the case of Tajikistan. Chamarbagwala and Morán (2011) on their part find a strong negative effect of the civil war in Guatemala on the education of Mayan men and women in rural areas, the most disadvantaged groups. Education services were also disrupted in conflict areas, where half of school-age children were deprived of education (Sany, 2010). It is estimated that 70 percent of professional health workers and 80 percent of government-paid teachers abandoned their posts in the northern and western parts of the country (Sany, 2010).

Severe injuries, spread of infectious disease, and increases in permanent physical disabilities are mostly caused by violence conflict (Justino & Verwimp, 2006; Brück & Binzel, 2006). This may also result in large decreases in household welfare. Households may have to draw on existing savings to pay for medical bills, which will pose severe financial burden on already vulnerable households. The consequences of this in terms of household labour decisions can also be dramatic and long-lived. In many circumstances, the household may choose to replace dead or injured males with children. Children are then removed from school, which may in turn deplete the household of their stock of human capital for future generations (Ghobarah, Huth & Russett, 2003; Alderman et al., 2004; de Walque, 2006). This is made worse when the health status of children is badly affected by the conflict. These effects may result in forms of poverty trap and contribute towards the reinforcement of structural, persistent forms of poverty. These negative health and education shocks during childhood have significant negative impacts on the long-term performance of individuals (Miguel & Kremer, 2004; Bleakley, 2007). These can also be aggravated by the severe mental health and the psychosocial consequences of disasters and conflicts amongst adult and children.

Methodology

Study Area

Bawku East (Bawku Municipal) has Bawku town as its District Head quarters. It is one of the nine districts and municipalities in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It shares border with Burkina Faso and the Republic of Togo, Bawku West District and Garu-Tempane District to the north, east, west and south respectively. It is located between latitude 11º 111 and 100401 North and longitude 0º 181W and 0º 61E in the north-eastern corner of the region. It is the fastest growing town in the region and ethnically mixed (bawkumunicipal.ghanadistricts.gov.gh). It is a home for Kusasi who constitute majority, and other

ethnic groups domiciling the area include Mamprusi, Bisa, Moshi and Hausa. The pre-colonial trade route from Ouagadougou and the Sahel passed through Bawku to Gambaga and onwards to Salaga and beyond (Awedoba, 2011). Agriculture is the mainstay of the local economy with tomatoes, soya beans and onions being among the principal crops. The Bawku Municipal has a total population of 217, 791 with 104 males and 113,409 females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

The nature of this study necessitated the use of the qualitative approach. Qualitative research methodology seeks to answer questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Silverman (2006) views qualitative research design to include analysis of words and images rather than numbers, observation rather than experiment, meaning, behaviour and hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis testing. The case study approach is employed for this paper. A case study according to Yin (2003) is empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in a natural setting when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not easily understood. The single case research methodology is the basis of making this assessment. The choice of using single case to investigate the phenomenon is by virtue of its ability to enable the researcher get closer, have an in-depth insight and a better exposure to its deep structure and enabling a right description. Case studies allow variation and individual differences to be fully recognised and characterised. Regardless of how the analysis is done, the method helped to describe the results in detail, and holistically without ambiguity (Tinab, 2014).

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 respondents. The rationale for the choice of the sample technique was to select respondents who are abreast with relevant information and knowledge with regard to the study. The sampling was done based on certain strategies. These were theory-based and critical case sampling techniques. The theory-based was used to select respondents on the basis of their manifestation in armed conflict in the study area. Critical case sampling was used to select most important sites and localities that could yield information which would have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge (Patton, 1990). This method permits logical generalisation and maximum application of information. The main sources of data were primary and secondary. In-depth interview guides were used to obtain primary data. Personal in-depth interview guide with opened-ended research questions were used. The personal interview was found to be appropriate as the women were illiterate or semi-literate and needed interpretation and clarification of the questions and also helps the researcher to probe responses. The personal interview also helped the researcher to use and evaluate the respondent's non-verbal behaviour and habits. A high level of co-operation and response rate were obtained since the majority of the respondents did not reject the request to be interviewed. Related literature and other documents were reviewed. The data gathered were analysed using the contents, case and inductive approach.

Results and Discussions

There are several effects of armed conflict on household globally. The most visible and direct impact of armed civil conflict on household welfare is the destruction of human lives these are often young men in prime working age. The death of household members in working age means that the household will be left with severely depleted earning capacity. This is often enough to push previously vulnerable households into extreme forms of poverty particularly amongst household with widows, orphans and disabled individuals, which may well become persistent if the household is unable to replace labour. The researchers were interested in finding out the socio-economic effects of the conflict on women and children in the Bawku municipality. Respondents were interviewed

concerning this. One of the women, a house wife and a farmer respondents narrated that:

> *During conflict I took care of the house and protect my children and our property at home. I cook food for the men at the battle ground and provided them with vital information concerning the other party. I sometimes provide moral support to the men at battle field in the form of singing praise songs. All these put too much pressure on me as I get over tired.*

Another house wife respondent said that:

> *We find hiding places to protect our lives, take care of our little property and children. We defend our area from our opponents. Sometimes we are used as spies on our opponents. Hmm! It is not easy but that is what we have come to meet. We and our children have to run into the bush to find places to hide. We lived in the bush with reptiles and other animals which is harmful to our lives. In addition to this hard way of living we have to search for food for the family.*

In order to know from the women and children the violence meted against them during the conflict, respondents were asked to give their views about violence against them. One respondent gave the following:

> *Some of my children got injured and others have to stop schooling for the fear of been killed and some got frightened and fell sick. Hmm! Sometimes women and children are killed like animals. One of my children was killed. I cannot forget about it. I tried several times but the pain keeps on coming. My first time of seeing such a heartless thing was when eight women and three children were slaughtered during the conflict and people were happy. Even a pregnant woman was also killed for fear of carrying a male baby who will retaliate the killing of his kinsmen in future.*

To consolidate this response, another famer respondent lamented and gave the following narratives:

> *My brother, we suffered from severe injuries, and spread of infectious diseases as the result of this conflict. Look at this boy; he had this amputated leg not because of accident, but as a result of gunshot from unknown source. This has made him to become permanently physically disabled person. You see there is a big hospital in this town, but sometimes we are afraid to go for treatment because of the people working there. Sometimes when you attend the hospital the people who are there when they get to know the side you belong to in the community they will treat you as such. I remember the last time I went there with my child for treatment, the man who treated my child and I told me that I am lucky one of the staff is not there he would not had allow him to attend to me and my child. So he advised me that next time I should visit a different health facility and do not come there again. We rely on friends and relatives who are staying in the other villages and nearby markets for food stuffs. We depend on food stuffs stored from previous years' harvest and reliance on Pusiga, Garu and Kulungu market. The major effect of the conflict in this our community has been poverty, hatred, loss of lives and property. When the conflict occurs it leads to starvation. People find it difficult to go to farm. And when it happens that way we have to rely on only the previous harvest which sometimes is not always sufficient.*

In a related narration, one of the respondents said:

> *Hmm! We need not to be talking about this issue like that, but to tell you the truth we have been suffering from so many things. It is just that people do not want to accept the truth. Look sometimes we have to move to*

nearby villages with children where we know there is no conflict. The men are left in the community alone. When things are getting better then we come back. It is not always comfortable my brother. We are suffering. Look you will be there all of a sudden you will hear gunshots and you cannot tell who is shooting and for what. Because of this, we are always living in perpetual fear and psychological trauma.

A business woman lamented that her business collapsed because of the conflict. She noted that:

Businesses become standstill. We cannot go to market to sell and buy things. Businesses come to halt during the conflict because of insecurity people are afraid to go out to sell. Bawku is a big commercial town where people from Burkina Faso and Togo come to sell and buy goods. But whenever the conflict starts these people are afraid to come to market. This affects our businesses.

A widow (farmer) and a single parent noted that:

My husband and my first son died through the conflict. They were the bread winner of the house. They work to support me in the up keep of the house. Now that my husband and my son are dead all the burden of the house is on me. The death of my husband and my son left me with severely depleted earning capacity to cater for myself and the children. This has brought severe extreme forms of poverty on me.

Another widow gave the following:

I am a widow and as you can see me sitting I am a disabled individual due to the injure I had during the conflict when my child went out and never came and I went out to search for him and sustained this injury from a gunshot. My husband is dead as a result of the conflict, but I have no means of surviving than to depend on benevolent people and philanthropist in the community to survive. The burden on me is too high. I have to pay for my children medical bills, school fees, and feed them alone because of the death of my husband through the conflict. This has posed severe financial burden on me. In order to get support I have to sometimes engage these two little children in selling onion in the nearby villages during the village market days. The little income they bring is used as supplement to my own. To be frank with you sometimes I have to stop the children from going to school to help me on my small farm. This is where we get the foodstuffs which we sell part to get their school fees for them and use the rest for the upkeep of the house.

The narratives above are in line with the findings of Justino and Verwimp (2006) and Brück and Binzel (2006) in their studies when they concluded that armed violence conflict leads to severe injuries, spread of infectious disease, and increases in permanent physical disabilities mostly among women and children. This according to them may also result in large decreases in household welfare leading to poverty. Households may also have to draw on existing savings to pay for medical bills, which will pose severe financial burden on already vulnerable households. It is clear from this finding and the literature review that women and children in Bawku municipality are exposed to so many dangers as a result of the armed conflict in the municipality.

One of the respondents gave similar responses when she noted that:

Most of my children have moved to big towns like Tamale, Kumasi and Accra. There, they make a good living and sometimes send down money for me to cater for the young ones. Though, I also moved to Bolgatanga for some time, but I decided to come back after all there is nothing I can do to stop this people from fighting. I only need to be careful so that I do not involve myself in the case. I miss my children who left this

town because of the conflict. So some time when I think of them I become worry. They are afraid to come home very frequent.

The findings of Fearon and Laitin (2003) confirms this result when they noted that most armed conflicts lead to killing and displacing of populations, often limiting the access of households to employment and earnings and increasing levels of instability and loss of trust. In this case the women and children are disadvantage because of the conflict since they have to move from their place of abode to a new place in search security and jobs to earn a decent living.

Most of my children education is disrupted because of displacement as a result of this conflict I have to change school for my children because the community where their school is located is seen to be in a community for battle ground where most of the shooting incidence always occur. Because of fear of them becoming victim to the situation I have to relocate them in a different community in order to get an alternative school for them save their live.

You see there is the problem of disruption and loss of access to schools. However, this is not the only problem due to bureaucratic procedures; some of the children are denied access to educational facilities by the leaders in the school based on their ethnic background. I took my child to a public school just in the next community from here, to my surprise the child was denied of admission because of lack of a birth certificate. I lost the child birth certificate when I was moving from here to Kumasi because of the conflict. The head teacher used this as an excuse to deny my child entry to the school.
Because of the conflict situation in this town most often than not, the government imposes a state of emergency in the whole of Bawku

municipality for some number of months. When this happens we are not free to move at all times. This affects our movement to markets, farms and even sometimes the children have to be late to school. In the long run their performance in school is affected. The imposition of security checks, patrols, curfews, and restrictions to some facilities during the conflict is a great source of worry.

The result of this study is consistent with that of Akresh and de Walque (2008) in their study which shows that the armed conflict had a negative effect on schooling outcomes of children, with exposed children completing half a year less the normal in their education. In the same vein, Shemyanika (2011) study supported the findings when it was noted that armed conflict has negative effects on children education and presents evidence of the negative impact of armed conflict on schooling in the case of Tajikistan. Sany (2010) findings also revealed that education services were also disrupted in conflict areas, where half of school-age children were deprived of education. A house wife respondent lamented:

This is an issue sometimes we cannot understand, already we have a problem of inter-marriages but this conflict has come to worsen the existed status quo in the community. My daughter had a suitor from the other ethnic group, but because of the current misunderstanding my husband and his elders refused to accept the man. Meanwhile they have children and the husband took the children away from us and denied their mother from getting access to them only God knows what is happening to them. Thing of this nature has gone against our human rights, but we have to managed with it. Women as you know we like attending social functions such as wedding, naming ceremonies, and funerals, but my brother to be honest with you, I have

personally received beating from my husband for disobeying his rules and attended a wedding ceremony.

As I am speaking with you we find it difficult attending the funeral of each other, marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies, just because of this issue even it difficult to establish courtship because of mistrust. Before the conflict we were befriending each other and could eat together from the same bowl and we could also drink together, but as I speak to you now we suspect each other a lot because of that we stop all those things I belief that this is not too good for us.

Relating the findings from the narratives to the literature, it is realized that the literature supports the findings. For example, In relation to health, studies in the literature showed that violence armed conflict do have greater effect on health of women and children in so many ways (Alderman et al., 2006; Alderman, Hoddinot & Kinsey, 2009; Bundervoet, Verwimp, & Akresh, 2009; Arcand & Wouabe, 2009; Baird et al., 2011; Akresh et al., 2011, 2012) all these authors agreed and concluded that violence armed conflict intensity worsened children and women health during and after the conflict. Furthermore, the studies have established a robust negative association between armed conflict and child health (Bundervoet et al., 2009; Akresh et al. 2011; Baez, 2011; Akresh et al., 2012; Mansour & Rees, 2012). More so, a growing body of such research on the micro-level consequences of armed conflict finds that children and young adults are particularly vulnerable to negative shocks during armed conflicts (Swee, 2013). Looking at the current issue in Bawku municipality, it can be realized that women and children are the greatest victims of the conflict.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that, the effects of conflict on women and children included poverty, divorce, internal displacement, denial of sources of livelihood, under-nourishment and malnutrition, school dropout, psychological trauma, insecurity, physical injuries, work overload on women, and child abuse. It is recommended that the government and other stakeholders should try to maintain the current fragile peace the people in the municipality are enjoying and building confidence and trust among the feuding groups to avoid the future occurrence of the conflict. This can be done through reconciliation among the conflict parties. More so, creating of job opportunities for people and assisting others to overcome the suffering they went through during the conflict. The security should seize the weapons the people used to fight. The government and NGOs should give financial support and resettlement packages to victims of the conflict in the municipality. The governments and other stakeholders should give scholarship to children to retain them in school, increase small-scale credit facilities for women, life enhancing opportunities, counseling services to conflict victims to improve lives of the women and children in the Municipality. Further research should be carried out on the effects of conflict on the Bawku municipality.

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