EDU REKHA INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Journal Homepage: https://edurekhapublisher.com/erijalss/

Volume- 2 Issue – 6 (November-December) 2026

ISSN: 3107-5169 (Online)

Frequency: Bimonthly

PAGES: 25-32

ARTICLE TITLE:

Women, Peace and Security: Assessing Women's Contribution to Conflict Prevention and Community Resilience in Ehime-Mbano Local Government Area, Imo State, Nigeria



Nwokorie Amaka Ethel

Department of Religion and Peace Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Imo State University, Owerri

ARTICLE HISTORY

RECEIVED
24-10-2026

ACCEPTED
27-10-2026

PUBLISHED
15-11-2026

Corresponding author:

Nwokorie Amaka Ethel

Department of Religion and Peace Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Imo State University, Owerri

Abstract

Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has emerged as an important international framework for recognizing women's rights, strengthening their participation in peace processes, and addressing the gendered dimensions of conflict and insecurity. Although women are frequently portrayed as victims of violence, they also contribute to conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation, community mobilization, livelihood recovery, and the development of social networks that support resilience. This article examines women's contributions to conflict prevention and community resilience, focusing on the proposed research context of Ehime-Mbano Local Government Area in Imo State, Nigeria. It explores the historical development of the WPS agenda, its theoretical foundations, the roles women can perform in preventing conflict, and the relationship between women's participation and community resilience. The analysis draws on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, feminist peacebuilding scholarship, human security perspectives, and research on women's participation in peace processes. Particular attention is given to women's roles in family and community mediation, informal early-warning networks, economic cooperation, social support, peace education, and community leadership. The article also examines structural barriers, including gender inequality, limited access to decision-making, inadequate resources, insecurity, and the marginalization of grassroots women's knowledge. It argues that women's participation should extend beyond symbolic representation to meaningful influence over peacebuilding priorities, resources, and decisions. The article recommends locally grounded research, inclusive community peace committees, women's leadership development, gender-responsive early-warning systems, and stronger institutional support for grassroots peace initiatives. It concludes that women's contribution to sustainable peace is best understood as an exercise of agency, rights, leadership, and collective capacity rather than an extension of traditional expectations that women should bear responsibility for maintaining social harmony.

Keywords: Women, Peace and Security, conflict prevention, community resilience, women's participation, gender equality, peacebuilding, Ehime-Mbano, Imo State

Introduction

Conflict prevention and community resilience are central concerns in contemporary peace and security studies. Communities experience different forms of conflict, ranging from interpersonal disagreements and family disputes to communal tensions, political competition, resource-related disagreements, and wider episodes of violence. Although these conflicts differ in scale and intensity, their consequences may include damaged relationships, economic disruption, displacement, insecurity, and the weakening of community institutions. The prevention of conflict requires more than the intervention of security agencies after violence has occurred. It also involves identifying emerging tensions, addressing grievances, strengthening social relationships, improving communication, and creating institutions through which disputes can be managed peacefully. Community resilience is relevant to this process because it concerns the capacities of individuals, households, organizations, and communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity.

Women play important roles in many of the social and economic relationships through which communities function. Their activities may include household management, agricultural production, trading, caregiving, religious participation, community association membership, informal counselling, and collective support during periods of hardship. Depending on the context, these relationships can provide opportunities for detecting tensions, supporting affected families, facilitating communication, and mobilizing collective responses. However, women's contributions to peace and security have not always received recognition proportional to their importance. In many settings, women are discussed primarily as vulnerable populations requiring protection rather than as political actors and peacebuilders with knowledge, skills, and decision-making capacities.

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000 represented a major international policy milestone. The resolution recognized women's roles in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction. It also emphasized the importance of women's participation in decision-making and the protection of women's and girls' rights during and after armed conflict (United Nations Security Council, 2000). The Women, Peace and Security agenda subsequently developed into a broader framework addressing participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. These dimensions are interconnected. Women's participation in decision-making is difficult to sustain without adequate protection, while effective recovery requires attention to gender-specific experiences and the involvement of women in determining community priorities.

Nigeria provides an important context for examining the implementation of this agenda. The country has adopted national policy measures intended to advance the objectives of Resolution 1325. Nevertheless, research has raised questions about whether national commitments adequately reflect the experiences and priorities of women in rural communities (Durueke, 2025). This concern is significant because the social realities of women vary according to location, livelihood, age, disability, socioeconomic position, and exposure to insecurity. Ehime-Mbano Local Government Area in Imo State offers a relevant setting for investigating how women contribute to conflict prevention and community resilience at the grassroots level. However, an accurate assessment requires attention to the specific experiences of women in the area rather than assuming that patterns observed in other Nigerian regions apply equally to Ehime-Mbano. The central argument of this article is that women should be recognized as active participants in peace and security processes whose contributions extend beyond traditional caregiving responsibilities. Their knowledge, organizational capacity, economic activities, community relationships, and leadership can support conflict prevention and resilience when they are accompanied by access to resources, institutional recognition, and meaningful decision-making authority. The article therefore examines the conceptual and theoretical foundations of Women, Peace and Security, the mechanisms through which women can contribute to conflict prevention, the relationship between women's participation and community resilience, and the institutional conditions that may strengthen or constrain their contributions in Ehime-Mbano.

Understanding of Women, Peace and Security

Women, Peace and Security is an international policy and research framework concerned with the relationship between gender, conflict, security, peacebuilding, and recovery. It recognizes that armed conflict and insecurity affect women and men in different ways and that women's equal participation is essential to developing more inclusive approaches to peace and security. The framework challenges the assumption that security should be understood exclusively in military or state-centred terms. It broadens attention to include the safety, rights, participation, and well-being of people whose experiences may be overlooked by conventional security approaches. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for increased representation of women at decision-making levels in institutions responsible for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. It also emphasizes the need to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and to consider their particular needs during conflict and post-conflict recovery (United Nations Security Council, 2000). The WPS agenda is commonly organized around four interconnected pillars: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. Participation concerns women's meaningful involvement in decision-making and peace processes. Prevention focuses on addressing the causes of conflict and preventing violence. Protection concerns the rights and safety of women and girls. Relief and recovery address their needs and participation during humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. These pillars provide a useful framework for examining women's contributions to community peacebuilding. They also demonstrate that women's participation cannot be separated from their rights and security.

The WPS agenda should not be understood as suggesting that women are naturally more peaceful than men. Women have diverse political, social, economic, and ideological interests, and their responses to conflict vary. The importance of women's participation lies in equal rights, the inclusion of different experiences and perspectives, and the recognition that peace processes are incomplete when significant sections of society are excluded. Similarly, women should not be expected to assume responsibility for preventing violence simply because of their gender. Governments, security institutions, community leaders, and other stakeholders retain responsibilities for preventing conflict and protecting civilians. Women's participation should strengthen their agency and influence rather than transfer additional unpaid responsibilities to them.

The Development of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

The WPS agenda emerged from decades of advocacy by women's organizations, peace activists, human rights groups, and civil society movements that challenged the exclusion of women from formal peace and security institutions. For much of modern history, formal negotiations concerning war, peace agreements, and security policy

have frequently been dominated by men. Women's experiences and priorities were often treated as secondary to military and political concerns. Feminist peace scholarship questioned this exclusion and argued that conflict and security must be understood through the social relationships, inequalities, and power structures that shape people's experiences. The adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000 marked a major step towards institutional recognition of women's rights and participation in peace and security. The resolution called for greater representation of women in decision-making, attention to gender perspectives in peace agreements, protection from gender-based violence, and support for women's peace initiatives (United Nations Security Council, 2000). Subsequent Security Council resolutions expanded aspects of the agenda, including conflict-related sexual violence, accountability, women's participation, and gender-responsive recovery. Together, these instruments established an international policy framework for integrating gender considerations into peace and security activities.

However, international commitments do not automatically produce changes in local practice. Their effectiveness depends on implementation, institutional resources, political commitment, monitoring, and the extent to which policies reflect local realities. Hudson (2017) examines the language of national action plans from several African countries, including Nigeria, and highlights tensions in how women are represented within WPS policy. Such analysis raises an important concern: policies may recognize women's importance while continuing to portray them primarily as vulnerable dependants or assigning them responsibility for preventing violence without providing adequate authority and resources. This concern is especially relevant to grassroots peacebuilding. Local women may possess detailed knowledge of community relationships and emerging tensions, yet their experiences may not influence formal security planning. Effective implementation therefore requires mechanisms through which women's local knowledge can shape decisions and receive institutional support. For research in Ehime-Mbano, the international WPS framework provides a starting point, but it must be interpreted in relation to the local social, economic, and institutional environment. The experiences of women in the area should be investigated directly rather than inferred from national policies or research conducted in regions facing different forms of conflict.

Feminist Peace and Security Perspective

Feminist peace and security scholarship examines how gender relations influence conflict, security institutions, political participation, and peacebuilding. It challenges approaches that treat conflict as a gender-neutral process or assume that security priorities are experienced equally by all members of society. This perspective emphasizes that social expectations can shape who participates in decision-making, whose experiences are recognized, and whose security concerns receive attention. Women may be excluded from formal negotiations even when conflict has significantly affected their livelihoods, families, and community relationships. A feminist perspective also recognizes differences among women. Gender intersects with age, disability, class, education, livelihood, religion, and other social factors. Women do not share identical experiences or interests, and peacebuilding processes should avoid treating them as a homogeneous group. Applied to Ehime-Mbano, the feminist perspective directs attention to the ways women participate in community decision-making, the barriers they encounter, and the forms of knowledge they contribute to conflict prevention. It also encourages researchers to examine whether women's participation produces meaningful influence or merely satisfies formal expectations. Representation is important, but the ability to shape priorities, access resources, and influence outcomes is equally significant.

Human Security Perspective

The human security perspective broadens the understanding of security beyond the protection of state territory and institutions. It emphasizes the safety and well-being of individuals and communities, including their economic, social, and personal security. This approach is relevant to women's peacebuilding because insecurity can affect livelihoods, household stability, mobility, access to services, and social relationships. Conflict prevention must therefore consider both immediate threats of violence and the conditions that make individuals and communities vulnerable. Women's contributions to human security may include supporting household livelihoods, maintaining social networks, identifying emerging disputes, providing assistance to affected families, and mobilizing collective responses to adversity. Nevertheless, these activities should not be romanticized. Women may themselves experience economic insecurity, exclusion, violence, and limited access to decision-making. Their capacity to support community resilience depends partly on whether they have access to resources and institutional protection. The human security perspective therefore connects women's participation with the broader social and economic conditions necessary for sustainable peace.

Community Resilience Theory

Community resilience concerns the capacity of communities to withstand adversity, adapt to changing conditions, mobilize resources, and recover from disruptions. It involves social relationships, institutions, local knowledge, economic resources, collective organization, and opportunities for participation. Norris et al. (2008) conceptualize community resilience as a set of networked adaptive capacities that support effective responses to disasters and other disruptive events. Their framework emphasizes the importance of economic resources, information and communication, social capital, and community competence. Although their work focuses on disaster resilience, the framework can also inform analysis of community responses to conflict. Communities require reliable communication, trusted relationships, collective problem-solving, and access to resources when responding to insecurity.

Women's networks may contribute to these capacities through community associations, cooperative activities, religious groups, family relationships, and informal support systems. Such networks can help circulate information, mobilize assistance, and maintain social connections during periods of uncertainty. However, the existence of a network does not automatically demonstrate resilience. Researchers must examine whether networks are inclusive, whether they have access to resources, and whether they can influence decisions. The combined application of feminist peace and security scholarship, human security, and community resilience provides a framework for examining women's agency, the conditions under which their contributions occur, and their potential significance for conflict prevention in Ehime-Mbano.

Women's Contribution to Conflict Prevention

Early Warning and Community Information Networks

Conflict prevention depends partly on the timely identification of emerging tensions. Information about disputes may circulate through families, neighbourhoods, markets, religious groups, community associations, and other social networks. Women who participate in these networks may become aware of developing disagreements, changes in relationships, or threats to community

cooperation. Depending on the circumstances, they may communicate concerns to community leaders, encourage dialogue, or support efforts to prevent escalation. The value of local information depends on how it is collected and used. Early-warning systems should distinguish credible threats from rumours and should protect individuals who report concerns. Information must be handled responsibly to avoid stigmatizing people or intensifying existing divisions. Women should also have access to formal channels through which their observations can influence community decisions. If information provided by women is routinely dismissed, early-warning systems may fail to benefit from important local knowledge.

In Ehime-Mbano, empirical research could investigate whether women's associations, religious groups, market networks, or community organizations participate in identifying and communicating emerging disputes. It could also examine whether such information is taken seriously by traditional authorities and relevant public institutions. The objective should be to understand actual practices rather than presume that women already operate formal early-warning systems in the area.

Informal Mediation and Negotiation

Women may contribute to conflict prevention by facilitating communication among relatives, neighbours, traders, association members, and other parties experiencing disagreements. Their involvement may draw on personal relationships, community standing, practical knowledge, and experience in managing social interactions. Informal mediation can provide opportunities to address disagreements before they become more destructive. A trusted intermediary may help parties clarify their concerns, correct misunderstandings, and identify acceptable solutions.

However, mediation is not appropriate in every situation. Serious violence, intimidation, coercion, and substantial power imbalances may make informal settlement unsafe or unfair. Women who mediate disputes may also face pressure, social criticism, or personal risk. Effective mediation requires training, impartiality, confidentiality, and clear referral arrangements. Women should not be expected to resolve disputes simply because they are considered responsible for maintaining family or community harmony. A study in Ehime-Mbano could explore the forms of mediation women undertake, the disputes in which they participate, the support available to them, and the extent to which their interventions influence outcomes.

Family and Neighbourhood Peacebuilding

Families and neighbourhoods are important settings for the development and maintenance of social relationships. Disagreements within these settings can affect wider community cooperation, especially when disputes involve extended families, shared resources, or longstanding relationships. Women may contribute to peaceful relationships through communication, counselling, practical support, and the management of shared responsibilities. Their involvement may help parties understand competing expectations and identify ways of reducing tension. Nevertheless, family peace should not be confused with the absence of complaints. Where domestic violence, coercive control, or abuse occurs, pressuring a victim to preserve family unity may increase harm. Peacebuilding must recognize the rights and safety of affected persons. Women's participation in family peacebuilding should therefore be understood as a potential contribution rather than a compulsory gender role. Men, community leaders, institutions, and other family members also have responsibilities for preventing violence and promoting respectful relationships. For Ehime-Mbano, research could examine how women understand and practise family-level conflict prevention, what support they receive, and how local institutions respond to disputes that affect family and community relationships.

Peace Education and Community Dialogue

Peace education develops knowledge and skills that enable individuals to manage disagreement constructively. It can include communication, negotiation, respect for differences, nonviolent responses, responsible leadership, and awareness of rights. Women may contribute to peace education through community associations, religious organizations, educational activities, cooperative groups, and informal mentoring. Their involvement can create opportunities for discussing local concerns and promoting peaceful responses. Community dialogue can also help address misinformation and mistrust. Where people have limited opportunities to communicate across social boundaries, assumptions about the intentions of others may become entrenched. Dialogue provides a setting for clarifying concerns and identifying shared interests. However, successful dialogue requires more than bringing people together. Participants must be able to speak without intimidation, and facilitators must ensure that powerful individuals do not dominate the discussion. Women's organizations should therefore receive support to organize dialogue and peace education activities, while also being included in wider community decision-making structures. Research in Ehime-Mbano could examine whether women participate in such activities, which institutions support them, and whether community members perceive these initiatives as useful.

Economic Cooperation and Conflict Prevention

Economic insecurity can intensify certain disputes, particularly where households face competition over limited resources or lack opportunities to recover from financial shocks. The relationship between poverty and conflict is complex, however, and economic hardship does not automatically produce violence. Women's economic activities may contribute to community stability by supporting household livelihoods, creating cooperative relationships, and strengthening networks through which assistance and information can be exchanged. Savings groups, cooperative associations, trading networks, and livelihood initiatives can provide opportunities for collective problem-solving. They may also strengthen women's ability to participate in community decisions when they improve access to resources and collective organization.

Nevertheless, economic cooperation should not be presented as a substitute for addressing injustice or institutional failures. Livelihood programmes may support resilience, but they cannot independently resolve every source of conflict. For Ehime-Mbano, empirical research could investigate the relationship between women's economic associations and community peacebuilding. Relevant questions include whether these groups provide mutual support during disputes, whether they facilitate cooperation across social divisions, and whether members have opportunities to influence wider community decisions.

Women's Participation in Traditional and Community Institutions

Community institutions influence how disputes are recognized, discussed, and resolved. Where women are excluded from these institutions, their experiences and perspectives may not be represented in decisions affecting their security and livelihoods. Women's participation in community associations, local development initiatives, mediation structures, and other decision-making bodies can broaden the information available to decision-makers. It can also improve the legitimacy of peacebuilding

processes when participation is meaningful and inclusive. However, formal representation does not guarantee influence. Women may be present at meetings without having the opportunity to shape agendas or decisions. Effective participation requires access to information, opportunities to speak, respect for contributions, and the ability to influence outcomes. A study of Ehime-Mbano should therefore examine not only whether women hold positions in community institutions but also what authority those positions provide and how women's contributions affect decisions. Such research could help identify institutional changes needed to strengthen women's participation in local conflict prevention.

Women and Community Resilience

Social Networks and Collective Support

Social networks can provide important resources during periods of adversity. Relationships among families, neighbours, associations, religious groups, and community organizations may facilitate the exchange of information, practical assistance, and emotional support. Norris et al. (2008) identify social capital, information and communication, economic resources, and community competence as interconnected capacities relevant to resilience. These concepts help explain why community relationships can be important when people face disruption. Women's networks may contribute to resilience by coordinating assistance, supporting vulnerable households, maintaining communication, and mobilizing collective responses to local problems. The strength of these networks depends on trust, accessibility, inclusion, and the resources available to participants. However, networks can also reproduce exclusion. If membership is restricted or assistance is distributed according to personal loyalties, some community members may be left without support. Resilience initiatives should therefore consider who participates, whose needs are recognized, and whether resources are distributed fairly. In Ehime-Mbano, research could examine the role of women's associations and informal support networks in responding to community adversity and maintaining social cooperation.

Livelihood Resilience and Household Recovery

Livelihood resilience refers to the capacity of individuals and households to maintain or restore their means of living when confronted with disruption. It may involve savings, access to productive resources, diversified income, social assistance, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Women contribute to household livelihoods through different forms of economic activity, depending on their circumstances and opportunities. Their ability to maintain income and access resources may affect household stability and the capacity to recover from adversity. Collective economic activities can also strengthen social relationships by creating shared goals and opportunities for cooperation. However, women's economic contributions should not be taken for granted or used to justify unequal burdens. Peacebuilding policies should recognize women's work and address barriers to their participation, including limited access to finance, productive resources, training, and decision-making. Research in Ehime-Mbano could investigate the extent to which women's economic activities support recovery from local disruptions and whether cooperative structures provide practical assistance during difficult periods.

Psychosocial Support and Community Recovery

Conflict and insecurity can affect emotional well-being, family relationships, and people's sense of safety. Community recovery may therefore require social support as well as economic assistance. Women may contribute to psychosocial support through caregiving, peer relationships, religious networks, community associations, and informal counselling. Such support can help people maintain social connections and identify sources of assistance. However, informal support should not replace professional services where these are needed. People experiencing severe distress, trauma, or abuse may require qualified assistance and appropriate protection. Women providing support may themselves experience stress or insecurity. Programmes that depend heavily on unpaid care work risk placing additional burdens on those already managing significant responsibilities. Community resilience initiatives should therefore recognize both the value and the limits of informal support. They should provide resources, training, and referral options for those assisting affected individuals and households.

Community Trust and Social Cohesion

Social cohesion concerns the quality of relationships among members of a community and the extent to which people can cooperate despite differences. Trust can make it easier for individuals to share information, participate in collective activities, and seek peaceful solutions to disagreements. Conversely, persistent mistrust may make communities more vulnerable to rumours, polarization, and retaliation. Women can contribute to social cohesion through community service, dialogue, collective economic activity, and participation in local institutions. These activities may create opportunities for interaction across families, generations, and social groups. Nevertheless, social cohesion should not require silence about injustice. A community may appear united while some members experience exclusion or fear. Sustainable cohesion depends on fair participation and the ability to address grievances openly. Research in Ehime-Mbano could examine whether women's initiatives contribute to trust, cooperation, and inclusive decision-making. Such assessment would require evidence from women themselves and from other community stakeholders.

Environmental and Resource-Related Resilience

Communities may experience disputes connected to land use, environmental changes, access to productive resources, or competing livelihood needs. The relevance and intensity of these issues vary by location and must be established through local research. Women whose livelihoods depend on agriculture, trading, household resources, or other local economic activities may possess practical knowledge about changes affecting community well-being. Their participation can broaden discussions about resource management and identify concerns that might otherwise be overlooked. Women may also contribute to community dialogue about the fair use of shared resources and the management of disagreements. However, their involvement should be supported by access to information and decision-making authority rather than treated as an informal responsibility. For Ehime-Mbano, research could identify whether environmental or resource-related disagreements are significant concerns and examine how women participate in their prevention and management.

The Nigerian Context of Women, Peace and Security

Nigeria's implementation of the WPS agenda reflects the challenge of translating international commitments into institutional and community-level practice. The country has developed National Action Plans intended to advance the objectives of Resolution 1325. These policy instruments provide a framework for improving women's participation, strengthening protection, and integrating gender considerations into peace and security initiatives. However, the existence of a policy does not guarantee effective implementation. Outcomes depend on funding, coordination, accountability, local awareness, and the willingness of institutions to share decision-making authority. Durueke (2025) examines Nigeria's National Action Plans in relation to the lived realities of

rural women. The study questions whether national frameworks adequately capture the diverse experiences of women in rural settings and emphasizes the importance of context-sensitive implementation. This concern has implications for research in Ehime-Mbano. Policies developed at national or state levels may not adequately reflect the priorities of women in individual communities unless local perspectives are incorporated into planning and evaluation.

Hudson (2017) also identifies tensions in the language used in African WPS action plans, including the tendency to frame women primarily through vulnerability or assign them responsibility for preventing violence. Such framing can limit recognition of women as autonomous political actors. A more inclusive approach would recognize women's leadership, knowledge, and rights while ensuring that responsibility for peace and security remains shared among government institutions, community leaders, civil society organizations, and the wider population. The Nigerian context therefore demonstrates the need to connect formal policy commitments with locally grounded participation. Research should examine not only the existence of programmes but also whether women know about them, can access them, influence their design, and experience tangible benefits.

The Relevance of Women, Peace and Security to Ehime-Mbano

The WPS framework provides a useful basis for investigating women's contributions to conflict prevention and community resilience in Ehime-Mbano Local Government Area. The local relevance of the framework should be established through an examination of the area's social relationships, economic activities, community institutions, and experiences of conflict. It would be inappropriate to assume that conflict patterns documented in northeastern Nigeria or other regions are identical to those experienced in Ehime-Mbano. The first area of investigation concerns women's participation in community decision-making. Research could identify the institutions through which women participate, the positions they occupy, and the extent to which their contributions influence decisions about community welfare and security. The second concerns women's involvement in preventing and managing disputes. Interviews and documentary analysis could explore whether women undertake informal mediation, support community dialogue, or participate in recognized conflict-resolution structures. The third concerns community resilience. Research could examine how women's associations, economic networks, religious organizations, and informal support systems respond to adversity and contribute to household and community recovery. The fourth concerns barriers to participation. These may include time constraints, unequal access to resources, social expectations, limited institutional representation, or concerns about personal safety. Their presence and relative significance in Ehime-Mbano must be established empirically rather than presumed. The fifth concerns policy implementation. Research could investigate awareness of Nigeria's WPS framework among relevant stakeholders and whether local institutions have mechanisms for supporting women's participation in peace and security initiatives. A context-specific assessment would make it possible to identify existing strengths, understand institutional limitations, and develop recommendations grounded in local experiences.

Challenges Confronting Women's Participation in Peacebuilding

Gender Inequality and Social Expectations

Social expectations may influence the roles women are permitted or encouraged to perform in community life. Where leadership and decision-making are viewed primarily as male responsibilities, women's contributions may receive limited recognition. Women may also be expected to preserve family or community harmony without being given authority to address the underlying causes of conflict. This expectation can create an unfair burden, particularly when women are asked to mediate disputes involving powerful individuals. A rights-based approach should recognize women's freedom to participate in public life and their entitlement to influence decisions affecting their security.

Limited Access to Formal Decision-Making

Women may contribute to peacebuilding informally while remaining underrepresented in institutions responsible for security and community governance. Informal participation is valuable, but it does not necessarily provide access to resources or the authority required to influence policy. Women who provide information or mediate disputes may have little control over the final decisions. Institutional arrangements should therefore create opportunities for women to participate in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Financial and Logistical Constraints

Women's peacebuilding initiatives may depend on voluntary work, personal resources, and informal networks. Limited funding can restrict the ability to organize training, convene dialogue, travel to meetings, or maintain follow-up activities. Where institutions rely on unpaid labour, women may be expected to contribute substantial time without adequate support. Sustainable programmes require realistic budgets, transparent resource allocation, and recognition of the costs associated with women's participation.

Inadequate Recognition of Grassroots Knowledge

Local women may possess detailed knowledge of community relationships, household pressures, and emerging disputes. However, formal institutions may prioritize information from established authorities or professional organizations. Failure to recognize grassroots knowledge can weaken conflict prevention by excluding information that could improve understanding of local conditions. Institutional mechanisms should therefore provide accessible channels through which women can communicate concerns and participate in decisions.

Insecurity and Risks associated with Participation

Participation in peacebuilding may expose women to criticism, intimidation, or other risks, particularly where disputes involve powerful individuals or contested interests. Women who report threats or challenge established practices may require protection and institutional support. Peacebuilding programmes should assess risks before assigning responsibilities to participants. The WPS framework emphasizes that participation and protection are interconnected. Women cannot participate meaningfully when they face threats or lack confidence that their safety will be taken seriously.

Tokenism and Limited Influence

Some institutions may include women in committees or public events without giving them meaningful authority. Tokenistic representation can create the appearance of inclusion while leaving decision-making structures unchanged. It may also place pressure on women to endorse decisions they had little opportunity to influence. Meaningful participation requires access to information, opportunities to shape agendas, and the ability to affect decisions and resource allocation.

Unequal Distribution of Care Responsibilities

Women's contributions to households and communities may coexist with substantial unpaid caregiving responsibilities. Additional peacebuilding duties can increase time pressures and reduce opportunities for education, paid work, and personal well-being. Peacebuilding initiatives should avoid assuming that women can provide unlimited voluntary labour. Practical support may include flexible meeting arrangements, transport assistance, childcare where appropriate, and recognition of the time required for participation.

Methodological Considerations for Assessing Women's Contributions in Ehime-Mbano

A rigorous assessment of women's contribution to conflict prevention and community resilience requires a research design capable of capturing local experiences and institutional practices. A qualitative case-study approach would be appropriate where the aim is to understand how women participate in peacebuilding, what challenges they encounter, and how community members perceive their contributions. The target participants could include women leaders, members of community associations, religious leaders, traditional authorities, youth representatives, and other individuals with relevant knowledge of local peacebuilding processes. Purposive sampling could be used to identify participants with direct experience of community activities, while maximum variation sampling could help capture differences in age, livelihood, community affiliation, and leadership experience. Data could be collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, relevant documents, and observation of community activities where appropriate and ethically permissible. Interviews could explore women's experiences of conflict prevention, mediation, community support, participation in decision-making, and access to institutional resources. Focus groups could examine collective perceptions of women's roles and identify differences in experiences across participant groups. Documentary analysis could consider relevant policies, organizational records, meeting reports, and community development plans. Researchers should distinguish between the existence of a policy and evidence that it has been implemented effectively. Qualitative data could be analyzed thematically, following the approach described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis could identify recurring themes concerning participation, conflict prevention, resilience, institutional barriers, and community perceptions. If the study includes questionnaires, descriptive statistics may be used to summarize participants' responses. Any quantitative claims must be based on actual data, with the sample, instruments, and analytical procedures reported transparently.

Ethical safeguards are essential. Participation should be voluntary, informed consent should be obtained, and personal information should be protected. Interviews concerning violence, intimidation, or traumatic experiences should be conducted in ways that prioritize participant safety. The researcher should also consider the possibility that participants may feel pressure to provide socially acceptable answers. Confidential interviews, careful question design, and triangulation across different sources can help strengthen the credibility of the analysis. The findings should clearly distinguish participants' reported experiences from the researcher's interpretations. This distinction is particularly important when assessing sensitive questions involving community leadership, gender relations, or local disputes.

Discussion

The literature reviewed in this article suggests that women's contributions to conflict prevention and community resilience can be understood through their participation in social networks, informal mediation, community dialogue, economic cooperation, and local decision-making. These contributions are consistent with the WPS framework's emphasis on participation and prevention. Resolution 1325 recognizes the importance of women's involvement in peace and security and calls for support for their participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (United Nations Security Council, 2000).

However, recognition at the policy level must be distinguished from actual influence. Women may contribute to peacebuilding without receiving institutional recognition, resources, or opportunities to shape decisions. The work of Hudson (2017) highlights the importance of examining how policy language constructs women's roles. If women are represented mainly as vulnerable dependants or as natural peacemakers, their political agency may be overlooked and the responsibility for maintaining peace may be unfairly transferred to them. Durueke's (2025) analysis of Nigeria's WPS action plans further underscores the need to consider rural women's lived experiences when assessing implementation. National frameworks must be translated into locally relevant processes that recognize differences in women's circumstances and priorities. Community resilience provides another important dimension of analysis. Norris et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of social capital, communication, economic resources, and community competence. These concepts suggest that women's contributions should be examined in relation to the networks and resources available to them. Nevertheless, social networks and economic cooperation do not automatically produce peace. Their effects depend on inclusion, fairness, institutional support, and the broader conditions in which they operate.

The proposed study of Ehime-Mbano should therefore examine both women's activities and the circumstances that enable or constrain them. It should identify where women already influence community decisions, where their contributions remain informal or unrecognized, and what institutional changes could strengthen their participation. A further implication concerns accountability. Women's participation should not be used to excuse failures by government institutions or other actors responsible for protecting communities. Women can contribute to prevention and resilience, but they cannot be expected to compensate for the absence of effective public institutions or adequate security provision. The most constructive approach is one in which women's participation is recognized as a matter of rights and democratic inclusion, supported with appropriate resources, and integrated into wider community and institutional responsibilities.

Recommendations

Women's participation should be integrated into community peacebuilding structures in ways that provide meaningful influence over decisions. This requires more than appointing women to committees;

i. Institutions should ensure that women can shape priorities, contribute to planning, and participate in monitoring outcomes.
ii. Community peacebuilding programmes should establish accessible mechanisms through which women can report emerging concerns, share local knowledge, and seek assistance. Such mechanisms should protect confidentiality and ensure that information is handled responsibly.
iii. Women interested in mediation and peacebuilding should have access to practical training in negotiation, communication, conflict analysis, mediation ethics,

and safeguarding. Training should be accompanied by opportunities to apply skills and by clear referral procedures for disputes that require professional or legal intervention.

iv. Economic and community development programmes should recognize the relationship between livelihood security and resilience. Support for women's cooperatives, savings groups, and livelihood initiatives may strengthen community capacity, provided that these programmes respond to locally identified needs and are managed transparently.

v. Local institutions should improve collaboration with women's associations, community organizations, religious institutions, and relevant public authorities. Such partnerships should define responsibilities clearly and avoid placing disproportionate unpaid burdens on women.

vi. Research and monitoring should document women's actual contributions to conflict prevention and community resilience. Evaluations should consider participation, influence over decisions, access to resources, perceived fairness, and the sustainability of peacebuilding activities.

vii. Finally, policy implementation should be grounded in local realities. The experiences of women in Ehime-Mbano should inform the design of peacebuilding initiatives rather than being assumed from studies conducted elsewhere. A locally grounded approach would improve the relevance of interventions and strengthen accountability to the women and communities concerned.

Conclusion

Women, Peace and Security provides an important framework for examining women's rights, participation, and contributions to conflict prevention and community resilience. It challenges approaches that treat women solely as victims of conflict and recognizes their potential roles in mediation, peacebuilding, community organization, and recovery. The literature suggests that women's social networks, economic activities, community relationships, and participation in local institutions can support the capacities through which communities respond to adversity. However, these contributions depend on the resources available to women, the inclusiveness of decision-making structures, and the extent to which their knowledge receives institutional recognition. The experiences of women in Ehime-Mbano Local Government Area must be established through systematic local research. Such an assessment should investigate the activities women undertake, the barriers they encounter, the institutions through which they participate, and the extent to which their contributions influence community decisions and outcomes. The study should also avoid treating women as a homogeneous group or assuming that they are naturally responsible for maintaining peace. Women possess different experiences, interests, and capacities, and meaningful participation requires respect for these differences.

Ultimately, sustainable community resilience depends on shared responsibility. Women, men, community leaders, government institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders must work together to prevent conflict, protect rights, and strengthen inclusive decision-making. By recognizing women's agency, supporting their participation, and connecting grassroots knowledge with institutional resources, peacebuilding initiatives in Ehime-Mbano can be better equipped to address local priorities and contribute to more inclusive and sustainable peace.

References

1. Appleby, R. S. (2000). *The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence, and reconciliation*. Rowman & Littlefield.
2. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101*. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
3. Durueke, O. (2025). Contextualizing universal norms: Evaluating Nigeria's National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 and women's lived realities in rural areas. *Women's Studies International Forum, 109, Article 103045.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2024.100183
4. Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research, 6(3), 167–191.* https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301
5. Hudson, H. (2017). The power of mixed messages: Women, peace, and security language in national action plans from Africa. *Africa Spectrum, 52(3), 3–29.* https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971705200301
6. Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
7. Marshall, K. (2005). *Development and faith: Where mind, heart, and soul work together.* World Bank.
8. New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. (2021). *Holy Bible*. National Council of Churches.
9. Norris, F. H., Stevens, S. P., Pfefferbaum, B., Wyche, K. F., & Pfefferbaum, R. L. (2008). Community resilience as a metaphor, theory, set of capacities, and strategy for disaster readiness. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 41(1–2), 127–150.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-007-9156-6
10. United Nations Security Council. (2000). *Resolution 1325 (2000) (S/RES/1325).* United Nations. https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000)
11. Zehr, H. (2002). *The little book of restorative justice.* Good Books.