

BRENDA FAYE MCGADNEY
AND JUDITH ASIBI NIBEWUN-TARKO

Woman Displaced in Conflict in Northern Ghana

Voices of the Konkombas

In Northern Ghana, during a six-month period December 1994–95, the most severe war commenced over conflicts due to land ownership, chieftaincy, and representation between numerous ethnic groups, several majority and a minority, The Konkombas.¹ The outcome of this war, known as the Guinea Fowl War, was tremendous internal displacement and loss of life, community, property, and economic development. In response to a need to document indigenous knowledge about the conflict from the perspective of the minorities, this field study examined qualitative responses from internally displaced Konkomba women to four study variables: early warning signs of impending conflict; push factors that caused the conflict; reactions and responses to outbreaks; and conflict effects, including pre and post-displacement lifestyle. The significance of study findings² is that rarely has the voices of Konkomba women been documented. Findings highlighting the indigenous knowledge and resources of these internally displaced women may be used to expand knowledge base regarding displacement and role of women in arresting conflict. And, it is believed that an awareness of cultural sensitivities may be derived from the findings and be useful to develop ethnic and gender-specific peace-building resources and conflict resolution curriculum, as well as training materials for use by students and educators seeking to work effectively in social welfare and development in locations with similar dynamics. It is believed that to effectively engage in peace-building activities and efforts, women representing minority groups, such as the Konkombas, must be included in the process of active engagement and dialogue to resolve conflict in their communities.

Study Background

The impetus of this study grew out of a field study on conflict³ in 2002 (Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie). The purpose of this study was to document

existing local Northern Ghanaian methods of building and brokering peace, and managing and containing violent conflict in a manner that supported the development of Ghanaian-sensitive training and curriculum materials based on local indigenous methods. Representative data was collected in Northern Ghana by a team of scholars, including the first author of this paper, from chiefs, policy-makers, opinion leaders, stakeholders, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the Northern Region Youth and Development Association (NORYDA), and internally displaced women (IDW) representing majority ethnic groups of the Dagombas and Nanumbas (McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzi⁴). Following the completion of the project, the first author of this paper sought to present a balanced perspective of the impact of the 1994/95 on internally displaced women, who are largely underrepresented and referred to as 'minority group' in spite of their numerical superiority (Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie).

In 2005, to present a balanced perspective of women involved in the Guinea Fowl War, a field study on IDW from a minority ethnic group of survivors, *The Konkombas*, was conducted.⁵ This conflict gravely inflicted the rights of women and dependent children (Ahadzie; Mahama,; McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzi; UNICEF). More than a decade later, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) were still displaced and living and suffering in squalor conditions (McGadney-Douglass 2006a, 2006b, 2005).

Africa: Internal Displacement of Persons

Africa in 2008, due to an explosion of conflicts, including civil wars, human rights violations, and inter-communal violence, had the misfortune of having about 45 percent or 11.6 million of the worlds' IDPs, mostly women and dependent children; compared to an estimated 26 million IDPs in the world (GIDP; UNHCR 2009c). The largest numbers of IDPs in Africa reside in nineteen countries⁶ (GIDP). Also, the continent in early 2009 reportedly was home to nearly 2,659,000 refugees and asylum-seekers or persons of concern (UNHCR 2009a, 2009b).

Despite the increased awareness of IDPs worldwide, there is still a lack of written documentation of their plight and experiences, especially personal Indigenous knowledge⁷ from women and ethnic minority⁸ groups, that can be used to effectively assist peacekeepers, NGOs', policy makers, educators, practitioners, in developing best-practice conflict resolution methods and peace building training and curriculum materials (McGadney-Douglass 2004b; McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzi). The goal is to understand and arrest violent conflict. Oftentimes, the communication of ideas and information is largely restricted to indigenous oral exchanges between locals, frequently to the exclusion of representative voices from minority groups, such as the ID *Konkomba* women (McGadney-Douglass 2002; McGadney-Douglass, Apt and Ahadzie).

Ghana and Ethnic Conflicts: Internal Displacement and Study Purpose

Domestic conflicts in Ghana are universal (UNICEF). The most memorable violent conflict involving more than 16 ethnic groups in Ghana occurred in the North. It is reported that a *Konkomba* quarreled with a *Nanumba* man over the purchase of a *guinea fowl* in a market which led to the six-month war, 1994-95.⁹ Dominant ethnic groups (who had chieftainship governance hierarchies) sought to impose their ethnic superiority on and discriminated against the minority and chiefless Konkomba (Boaten). The clashes resulted from longstanding grievances over land ownership and prerogatives of Chiefs (Martinson; McGadney-Douglass 2004a; McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzi): constituting over 40 percent of cases before land courts and the High Court of Justice, resulting in sporadic attacks, often resulting in serious injury and death (Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie; Fosu). Most of the serious violent conflicts have occurred in Northern Ghana comprising two-fifths of the country's landmass. Today, tensions and demands for representation continue to play a key role in these conflicts; 13 such outbreaks since 1979 (Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie; Boafo-Arthur; UNICEF).

The most recent violent conflict, commencing March 27, 2002, led to the murder of the second most powerful Chief and King or "Lion" of Dagbon, Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II (on the throne for 28 years in the northern city of Yendi) due to a chieftaincy dispute¹⁰ between two royal clans (Adam 2002). The conflict also involved the killing of more than 40 members of his entourage, burning down of 40 houses including the palace of the Ya-Na, and displacement of about 3,498 people ("State of emergency in Dagbon extended"; Gyan-Apenteng and Fuseini; Hope; "IRIN focus on the Yendi crisis"). Reportedly, the worst affected have been the women. For example, the more than two-year-old military curfew (2002-2005) curtailed the women's income-generating projects, which included cooking and serving food to night travelers (Adam 2003; "IRIN focus on the Yendi crisis"; McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie).

Study Significance

Ghana, often coined as the "gateway to West Africa" and seen as a peaceful¹¹ country worldwide, opens its doors to hundreds of thousands of tourists yearly. The need to arrest ongoing domestic conflicts in Northern Ghana is critical for sustainable economic and social development, locally, regionally, and globally. One only has to look at countries in the region such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and now the Ivory Coast to get a glimpse of what can happen if violent disputes over representation are not arrested. With a population of more than 20 million, ethnic rivalries of the pre-colonial era, the impact of colonialism upon different regions of the country, and the uneven distribution of social

and economic amenities in post-independent Ghana have all contributed to present-day ethnic tensions with devastating effects.

This multi-ethnic conflict described previously as the Konkomba or Guinea Fowl War, led to tremendous losses of property and lives, negatively affecting the country's economy and infrastructure (shelter, health,¹² and sanitation) (Agarwal et al.; Apt and Grieco; Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie; Mahama; McGadney-Douglass 2005, 2006b; Nyinah and Fuseini). It principally affected agricultural areas with family farmers seeing years of effort in their livestock and properties destroyed,¹³ including entire communities and villages (442+) (Katanga). The Northern Region is the largest producer of cattle, sheep and pigs; second largest producer of goats; and third largest producer of poultry. It has been estimated that approximately 1,000 people were killed (registered at the morgue), leaving many widows and orphaned children (Kantanga; Steinburg). And, reportedly more than 200,000 people were internally displaced¹⁵ or left homeless, with countless others migrating to urban centers for safety; mostly women and dependent children (Mahama; McGadney-Douglass 2006a, 2006b; UNICEF).

Regardless of ethnic group, majority or minority, women in the 1994 conflict were most affected through the killing of family members, mostly males, and property losses, leading to disruption of income generating activities¹⁶ and self-sufficiency.¹⁷ This included loss of their senior "caretakers" (husbands, father, uncles, brothers, son, and nephews) and all their properties since they tended to be the first to leave for safe areas (Mahama; Nibewun-Tarko). In addition to not having basic needs met such as food, household utensils, clothing, shelter, and means for production, these women also suffered from untreated mental trauma. However, even with this background, women in conflict zones are an untapped resource of strength and survival. In fact, women—the majority of IDPs—play a vital role in prevention of conflict, building and sustaining peace, reunification, alleviation of poverty, and enhancement of overall well-being. However, ID women (IDW) without protection and assistance available to refugees by the UN and international humanitarian groups, are vulnerable and largely excluded from decision making processes that ensure the survival of themselves, their families, and communities (Krill; Toole). Thus, as strategies are being developed and implemented to prevent conflict, arrest war, and stabilize regions damaged by conflict, it is essential that the voices and rights of women to full participation in political, economic, social, and peace-building activities, be supported and included (Refugees International 2006a, 2006b; Martin 2004). Peacekeepers need to understand gender-based vulnerabilities, indigenous knowledge, and strengths of IDW through greater integration of females into peacekeeping forces.

The relevance and significance of study findings is very important. In Ghana most authorities believe that continued rumblings in the Northern Region are due to a failure to resolve the problems between warring factions since the 1994/95 *Konkomba*-Guinea Fowl conflict. It is feared that these

tensions could lead to a civil war affecting the entire country and could spread into neighboring states. To date, mainstream information that has been documented on the combatants in the Guinea Fowl War are generally biased towards presenting the impact of the war on majority groups and thus often report negatively, or in a stereotypical manner, about the outcome on the “minority” *Konkombas*, even though they are the largest ethnic group in Northern Ghana (Mahama). Thus, it is believed that much can be learned from those who are most affected by the conflict, especially internally displaced women from the minority ethnic group, about indigenous practices and consequences of the conflict, prevention, intervention and peacekeeping, and peace-building approaches to alleviate future violent outbreaks of conflict in local communities. Additionally, primary data collected will allow for the preliminary development of curriculum materials for Ghanaian students and scholars that have been authenticated by local Ghanaian authorities. Further, the training of Ghanaian students and scholars in indigenous methods may not only be used as a preventive strategy in Ghana but also have tremendous impact on helping persons in the western world to learn about the complexity of managing conflict in emerging countries. Finally, study findings have implications for policy makers, researchers, educators, and practitioners. For peacekeepers, using culturally-sensitive and gender-specific indigenous knowledge of internally displaced women can effectively prepare them to become effective practitioners in development and social welfare in Ghana. Thus, they’ll have the knowledge and skills to manage and arrest violent conflict, while facilitating sustainable peace, social justice, and economic development.

Methods

In the 2002 study, a series of workshops and focus groups were held in the northern region of Ghana with stakeholders resulting in the development of the following qualitative questions designed to collect data from respondents, especially majority Dagomba and Nanumba IDW (Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie; McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie):

1. What are the early signs of conflict?
2. What are the underlying push factors or causes of the conflict?
3. Responses/reactions to outbreaks?
4. What are effects of the outbreaks?

In the 2005 study, to maintain consistency, generalizability, and replication, the above questions were posed to the minority *Konkomba* IDW (McGadney-Douglass 2006a, 2006b). In both studies, findings from respondents’ Indigenous knowledge were assessed through qualitative analyses of their oral statements and themes.

Data Collection

Of major concern was the recruitment of ID female *Konkombas* by a westerner and non-Ghanaian/African. Thus, to assure authenticity, a clan leader and female ID research assistant (RA), both *Konkombas*, under the supervision of the Principal Investigator, recruited and screened the displaced *Konkomba* women from the Guinea Fowl War. It is believed however, that selection bias was minimized based on the skills, competencies, and comments from the interpreter and RA. Thus, IDW selected were representative of displaced *Konkombas* and met the need of study objectives.

Relative to the IDW, it was anticipated that poor literacy or desire to speak in native language and little previous experience with social or epidemiological research would characterize most respondents. Thus, a detailed, quantified response to abstract questions was avoided.

To assure authenticity, a *Konkomba* woman displaced from the Guinea Fowl War was engaged as a research assistant for the project. This woman, a social worker enrolled in graduate school, spoke the local language,¹⁸ acted as interpreter for the Principal Investigator and respondents. Acting in the capacity of Research Assistant, this woman assisted in conducting and transcribing the interviews and provided her own personal narrative supporting findings from the IDW. Although several respondents spoke and responded in English, most of the interviews were conducted in the local language of the *Konkombas*. The RA provided simultaneous translation to the appropriate language.

The IDW were interviewed on two occasions (focus group and individual); procedures for the interviews were given by the Principal Investigator. Both the Principal Investigator and RA recorded (note pad and photos only) respondent statements during the interview. Fully informed consent was obtained orally based on standards for human subject research evaluation from the funding agent. Respondents signed their signature or marked an X on the receipt given as documentation of agreement to participate in the study. Other issues of concern that posed problems for the study were related to privacy and confidentiality. Like respondents in U.S.-based studies, the respondents were given monetary compensation with the amount announced and given at the conclusion of the interview. To address these issues and help these women to feel comfortable and safe telling their stories, interviews were held in a private location (chop bar¹⁹) with only females present.

Limitations

Several limitations in the study, affecting generalizability of findings, are consistent with those generally identified in field research projects. These limitations include problems with verification, memory recall, database, selection bias, and subject literacy level. For example, most of the IDW did not know their date of birth (day, month and/or year). Also, verification of experiences

and population of IDW was limited due to little data documenting IDPs from the 1994/95 conflict. However, the indigenous ID *Konkomba* RA/translator, having worked with the IDW for years, was able to verify and authenticate the responses of IDPs and life in displacement communities.

Profile of the Sample and Selection

A convenient sample of eleven (N = 11) ID *Konkomba* women from Northern Ghana were recruited and interviewed at a chop bar at Agboghloshie (Agboloshie) market, Accra, Ghana, July 2005. This market is in an urban area blighted with poverty with hundreds of vendors selling primarily yams mostly by displaced *Konkomba* women and girls. The IDW were selected on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and ID from the 1994/95 conflict.

A demographic profile of the IDW in this study show that they have (1) a mean age of 46, ranging age from 30 to 65; (2) mothers of two to five children (mean 3.6); (3) marriages with more than half that are polygamous.²² All were

No.	Age ²⁰	# of children ²¹	Husbands No. of wives	Religion	Occupation	Northern City Displaced
1.	45	5	1	Catholic	Yam seller	Salaga
2.	30	2	3	Moslem	Trading and yams	Tamale
3.	35	7	1	Moslem	Yam seller	Wulensi
4.	33	3	1	Evangelical Presbyterian	Seamstress	Wulensi
5.	55	4	1	Catholic	Yam seller	Bimbilla
6.	36	4	2	Assemblies of God	Yam seller	Tamale
7.	40	3	1	Evangelical Church of God	Yam seller	Tamale
8.	35	4	2	Evangelical Church of God	Yam seller	Tamale
9.	65	3	3	Anglican	Yam seller	Tamale
10.	50	3	2	Catholic	Sell cooked food	Tamale
11.	36	2	2	Christian	Yam seller	Bimbilla
Mean %	46	3.6	1.7	82% Christian	82% Yam seller	54% Tamale

practicing a religious faith (majority Protestant) and occupations that consisted of selling yams (tubes) as their primary source of income. A few participate in other income generating activities such as sewing, small trading, and selling cooked food. Most of these women, 54.5%, were displaced from the northern Capital city of Tamale.

More than half had relatives killed in the 1994/95 multi-ethnic conflict. All of these women were now poor. Although only three had no formal education all were able to effectively communicate, mostly in their local language, personal stories in response to study questions.

As petty vendors, these women made a great sacrifice to meet with us all day, minimizing their ability to earn a living. These IDW are hard workers and are best described by Ghanaian researcher Christine Oppong:

A case in point is provided by the studies in North East Ghana.... Women were observed to be both weeding men's grain crops, which they had not done before, and farming more on their own account. In addition they were also earning more from small incomes off the farm. Women were described as now working harder than men in farming activities and earning income ... doing it to stave off impending starvation and as a response to stress.... The fate of most women is to combine different types of workloads throughout a 12 to 16 hour day ... in response to impoverishment and the need for cash, increasingly monetized economies. These excessive burdens are noted to be having negative impact on women's health and nutritional status ... many women are coping alone without husbands or other relatives to help them. Pressures, to earn needed cash, made them take on several different jobs. Their fatigue was aggravated by the heavy burdens of farm produce and water and wood, which they had to carry for long distances each day. (46-49)

Differential Views about the Konkombas: Con vs. Pro

Traditional Perspective: A Ghanaian Non-Konkomba

Throughout Ghana, there are differing views of who are the *Konkombas*. Thus, for the purpose of balance, opposing views as defined by two Ghanaians will be presented. First, a summarization from the *Anthropology on Africa* offers the following comments about the *Konkombas*, including continued causes of ethnic conflict, and behavioral characteristics (Boaten):

1. A minority, the *Konkomba* ethnic groups are widely distributed among the well-established ethnic groups such as the *Dagombas*, the *Nanumba*, and the *Gonjas* in Northern Ghana. Due to the fact that they are "not of the soil,"²³ or there is no historical fact that they are

original settlers: a) The land tenure system among the other ethnic groups regard the *Konkomba* as landless; and thus b) can only have clan heads as their leaders. (1)

2. The wild *Konkombas* who lived in villages were supposed to pay allegiance to the *YaNa* and the *Dagomba* sub-chiefs who were the original owners of the land. Though the *Konkombas* have lived among the *Dagombas* for a long time, the latter had never regarded them as owners of the land. The *strangers*, that is, the *Konkomba* are not centrally organized, therefore talking to them has always been a problem. When they take up arms, it becomes difficult to stop them because it is not easy to talk to a group of people who are organisationally disjointed. The *Konkomba* are now being empowered to develop chiefship. (1)

3. The *Konkombas* ... employed their aggressive attitude to start the conflict ... they were able to cause mayhem on the people amongst whom they live. The *Konkomba* are feared not only as archers but also as good marksmen when they hold the gun. (4)

4. The peculiarity of the Northern conflict ... emanates from the fierce ethnic *Konkomba* ... who are materially rich because of their hard work, mainly as yam farmers. The wealth they amassed had given them a false sense of superiority over the other ethnic groups amongst whom they lived. (5)

Traditional Perspective: A Ghanaian Konkomba Woman

The following narratives from a displaced *Konkomba* woman (Nibewun-Tarko) provides the contrasting description of the ethnic group, patterns of living amongst the majority ethnic groups in Northern Ghana, and evidence of discrimination, exploitation, and intimidation:

We have the extended family system with patrilineal ties, where it is a common place to see a man, his wife, with their children. Because of our patrilineal inheritance, the sons marry and bring their wives into their homes, which is close to their fathers' home.... The fathers ... head of the family ... facilitates ... decisions to prevent any disasters. (9)

...[F]armers who tend to acquire vast land for their farming activities anywhere they settled, with each farmer living quite a distance from the others.... These coupled with their desire for hunting is the reason why the *Konkombas* settled in the hinterlands instead of the cities or central parts of any community. (5)

...[T]heir own beliefs and values, a small number are traditional worshippers while others take to the Islam belief and a majority are Christians ... living patterns gave rise to *Konkombas* becoming victims of abuse, humiliation due to their values and beliefs which they hold on to, and exploiting them by draining off their labor and resources. They therefore, suffered in the hands of their neighbors, (the Nanumbas/Dagombas) the merchants, who characterized them as being different in regards to the values they hold on to, hence tend to despise them. (5)

I remember, during my primary and secondary days, when I sometimes had to hide my identity as a *Konkomba*, and I made very few friends for fear of intimidation. There were occasions when we were on a school farm, all the school children of the Nanumbas talked about is abusing and despising *Konkombas* regarding them as people who are uncivilized. They however, did not care if their colleagues were affected by their behavior or not. Other *Konkombas* denied their identity and want to be like the other person who feels superior (some *Konkombas* cannot speak the language to pass as a non-*Konkomba*). Nevertheless, the merchants married *Konkomba* women because such women are reputed to be hardworking and loyal to their spouses. (7-8)

Fifteen years (1979) prior to eruption of the 1984 conflict, the narrator states the following incident relative to discrimination and early warning signs:

...[D]uring the vacation when students are to go back to their parents, in a public bus I experienced considerable harassment and maltreatment from the neighbors and towards the other *Konkombas*, who may be in the bus. Others would not want to sit close to them, though they may be traveling far distance coupled with the dusty roads or from their farms to the market center. Insulting and irritating comments like “hay Konkomba, kulma aya aya mbu gun?” Meaning, “is this your home? Go back where you belong,” were commonly heard from our neighbors. These threats were some of the warning signs of impending conflict. (8)

Study Findings

The Early Warning Signs of Impending Conflict

The *Konkomba* women's group reported several early warning signs of the onset of the 1994 violent conflict. They reported that they knew that a violent conflict would commence when the *Konkombas* stopped providing support to

the Chiefs and when properties were looted. Evidence of looting properties consisted of stealing of livestock. In an effort to arrest mistreatment and gain representation, the *Konkombas* ceased to do the following free or at a significantly reduced rate to the majority group members and/or chiefs: pay taxes or fees on goods sold, give the fattest part or leg of meat shared from hunted animals, offer home-made pito or local alcoholic drink, farm with only one break a year, and put thatch roofs on their huts.

Push Factors or Underlying Factors or Causes of Conflict

Although, the underlying causes of the 1994 conflict varied among the respondents, the most prominent responses reported were mostly mistreatment, lack of representation and land ownership, and refusing to do uncompensated things/projects for the chiefs such a farming. The IDW were very vocal in describing reported mistreatment and discrimination from majority groups stating: (1) “*we are like slaves to them or settlers’ farmers*”; and (2) “*we are regarded as minorities*”; and (3) when in public, we “*can’t sit next to them*” on the State bus or *trotro* (bus). Relative to lack of representation and feelings of powerlessness, one woman stated “*we settle in large numbers,²⁴ and the Dagombas (minority in numbers) come over and be Chief over us.*” In regards to who owns the land and its relationship to onset of the conflict, a woman reported that the *Dagombas* and others thought that they (the *Konkombas*) should move off the land, so the owners or majority leader(s) planned to move them off the land at an unannounced time when they insisted on their rights for land and freedom.

Finally, the *Konkomba* women said that members of their community refused to honor the Chief through a number of actions or push factors that propelled the likelihood of a violent conflict with majority ethnic group members: (1) refusal to farm for the Chief where they (the *Konkombas*) first settled; (2) having to give all their royalties from farming to the Chief; (3) having to give the fattest part of the beast to the Chief when someone dies in the majority group; (4) as a farmer, they must farm and give a portion of their crop to the Chief, if unable to farm then they must bring a male child to farm on their behalf; and (5) the belief that no matter where they settle, they can’t sit closer to the origin (“the Chief” or majority group members) of the land, and thus are considered strangers (foreigners) and treated like slaves.

Additionally, the project’s RA further corroborated the push factors, mainly discrimination by majority groups, reported by the ID female survivors as initiating violent conflicts that led to the Guinea Fowl War (Nibewun-Tarko):

These neighbors tend to capitalize on the good gesture of the Konkomba people, especially during funeral celebrations when they offer meat to their neighbors who would come to console them. So on every such occasion, this gesture is given to the leader of their neighbors to share amongst them.

However, these neighbors tend to exploit the situation by making it mandatory on the part of the Konkombas to make such offer.

Furthermore, information collected from the women indicated that during farming seasons, the *Konkombas* would gather together to clear the land for each one of them for farming. They did that in turns whenever someone required the assistance of the group. In like manner they considered it reasonable and good neighborliness to do the same for their neighbors (representing majority group), their neighbors the merchants, who would like to farm at the same time. This pattern soon evolved into a trend (or mandatory practice) in which *Konkombas* began to farm for the Chief who is the leader of the *Nanumbas*.

My auntie who was popularly known as “Pito Chairman” in the ’70s had lots of pots of “pito” (a locally alcoholic brewed beverage) on each market day for sale ... enable them buy kerosene, salt, onions, smoked fish popularly called “Keta school Boys” some “*broni waywo*” that is used cloths for their farming activity... Also come to the market to enable them attend to the only health center in the community. On their way to the market place they (*Konkomba* women) were easily identified as they walked in groups, Council workers who are *Nanumbas* check their land pool receipts or the merchants who will buy their farm produce would stop them. In the process of transacting business, they tend to go through humiliation and abuse from their neighbors who further determine the prices of their farmer’s products. (If they sell five bowls of peanuts then actually will have to give them seven bowls receiving money for five bowls only). If the women challenged them, they refused to buy or call them names)... These treatments meted out on them, tension continue to mount and so they decided not to walk alone.... (6-7)

Responses/Reactions to Violent Conflict in Northern Ghana

When the 1994 conflict erupted, the women in northern Ghana stated that they ran for their lives to the bush and the soldiers evacuated them by trucks and then helicopters to Tamale, Wenchi (Brong Afro region), and then south to Accra. One young woman, speaking in English, gave the following account of her flight:

Konkomba kindergarten children came to the Konkomba JSS3 students in my classroom, seeking to be taken home because there was trouble. Their teachers—“the sisters [Catholic]”—told them to go home. There was a trick [joke often told] about one boy in our class that we would know if the war broke out because he would be the first one killed. Initially, they

were not killing girls but only boys. I walked through the school with my younger sister and told the boys to run. I walked home normally, “quietly to my place” with my younger sister and although I was scared, I believed that nothing would happen to me because many people (neighbors, including those from minority ethnic groups) knew us. However, our place had been looted by the time we arrived home from school. We escaped to Accra (where Auntie and grandmother lived) in a car. We were told not to take any schoolbooks, names that could identify us as Konkombas were inside, thus I did not finish school although one exam away. We hide our younger brother and later a historian helped to get him to Accra.

Similarly, RA has vivid memories of an earlier violent conflict of how her father escaped from northern Ghana with his life:

It was rather unfortunate that in 1979, the conflict started in the night; there was no time for the family head to reach others in order to discuss the problem and to arrive at a consensus on how to manage the situation. Fortunately, some well being people woke the head of the family, my father,²⁵ Mr. Pigya Nibewun. He dramatically escaped otherwise he would have been brutally slaughtered.... The escape strategy involved moving through the bush in a disguised manner for several days and nights. He fled naked, crawling and climbing trees in the process till he was able to obtain some clothes and some money which enabled him to arrive safely in Accra. (Nibewun-Tarko 9)

Effects of the Conflict

IDW and dependent children have to survive as best they can during and after violent conflicts. The effects of outbreaks of conflicts tend to be harsher on women and children who are often left widowed or abandoned when husbands migrate to the southern Ghana to work or marry another wife. The economic burden, frustration, trauma, and distress that IDW face making new lives after a violent conflict and displacement are indeed harsh. The IDW in this study identified several themes that indicated they were and continue to be severely affected, especially suffering from post-traumatic stressors, more than a decade following their ID.

The *Konkomba* women in the study were very friendly, dignified, and demonstrated a great deal of strength when they vocalized their stories about personal experiences at the onset of the conflict and following their uprootment from their local communities. They spoke about killings, death of relatives, property loss, displacement, and concerns of not generating enough money from selling yam and trading to maintain their families with food, clothing, and shelter. These vibrant survivors, all mothers, discussed their living and working condi-

tions often in unsanitary squatters' sites so far on the outskirts of metropolitan Accra that they often sleep in the 'chop bar' due to limited resources to make the return pilgrimage to their families daily.

Relative to loss of life, one woman talked about what happened to her grandmother:

When we ran, we ran and left our grandmother—the fighters were pulling at her dress and making mockery of her—later on she was found and brought to Accra where she died soon after.

The projects' research assistant's account of her schoolgirl days in 1979 facing violent conflict support the long-term effects of killings and ongoing trauma on children derived from witnessing war that was experienced by the IDW in this study:

When the conflict started, all the male *Konkombas* fled to Bimbilla township.... The first *Konkomba* man they killed was traveling through the Bimbilla town that night not knowing what had happened (conflict started night before), he was butchered to death. As a young girl, I was severely traumatized when I witnessed the first time a human being created in the image of God was cut into pieces. The body laid there 'til it started decomposing the next day before it was taken away. Later, after my father fled to an unknown destination, the next morning I saw was extensive looting of the belongings of the *Konkombas* who fled. Initially women were not affected and since I stayed with my father's sister, and we were only women in the house we were left unharmed. (Nibewun-Tarko 10)

Relative to the death of family members of study respondents, almost all reported persons who died were males: husbands, sons, grandfather, cousins, son-in-law, uncle, and brothers. Reportedly, three men did not die of injuries but were traumatized. This included two husbands who died while running away from the conflict. And, a son had convulsions while running away from the conflict and died. Although, one woman's grandfather was carried away on a bike out of harm's way, he refused to go further, and later became a "ghost (dead)." Relative to the brothers, reportedly, one was working with the Roman Catholic mission and was separated from the white missionaries and killed. The remaining brothers were all related to a respondent and killed in different villages during the conflict.

In addition to the immediate effects of the multi-ethnic conflict, respondents also discussed their current lives relative to lifestyle, shelter and food, and evidence of self-sufficiency after more than a decade of being internally displaced.

<p>Lifestyle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •they had a better life before the conflict; •without farms, they are really suffering; •they make so little selling yams that they can only stay on the outskirts of Accra and often don't earn enough money to pay for a <i>TroTro</i> (van/bus) ride to and from the market; •their husbands (or senior brothers and sons) don't earn enough to care for their families even though they work hard when the "yam lorry [truck]" comes from the north .. they remove the yams from morning to evening earning "small, small" making 2,000 Cedis per day or removal of 100 yams or tubers; •they are very poor and only get help from the Catholic Church and clan heads from whom they may receive clothes, rubber boots, blankets, sleeping mats, corn, and soap.
<p>Shelter and Food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •they can't afford a home so most are squatters in peoples' uncompleted buildings; •they are not as healthy (as before displacement); as squatters don't eat or live well; •without their own land or farm, unable to plant vegetables in garden, especially squatters site. Garden helped them to have food to feed and keep families healthy when no money was available.
<p>Self-sufficiency and income generating projects/ activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •where they previously farmed vast amounts of land, including yams, etc. and livestock, now they don't have income-generating projects to sustain them in a healthy lifestyle and they have to work hard as head porters and sell yams on credit and pay back owners; earning little; •many days don't earn anything. [Buying on credit: If buy one yam for 10,000 Cedi then must sell it for 11,000 to make a profit; often because so many people are selling yams (the price goes down and down); to make any money to pay the creditor they may sell the yam for 8,000 Cedi, for example; still owing the creditor 2,000.]

Summary of Findings

IDW in this study were concerned about loss of livelihood for their families and belief that due to lack and nature of work, increasingly ID *Konkomba* males no longer farming from sun up to sun down, are unable to provide for their families because they now engage in excessive drug use and drinking as coping strategies. On the other hand, the women were clear that they work hard and rely on their religious faith to cope with their current lifestyles, saying: “Each day I pray to God to give daily bread and if nothing to sell; someone will have pity and dash me something.”

Here is the RAS’ narrative of how she coped with ID from violent conflicts:

I have not gone back (since 1994/95 conflict)! This is because one has to travel through Dagomba settlements before getting to where my people now live. The conflict wrecked havoc on my education and traumatized my family and me. This however compelled us to move and abandon our homes and made us refugees in our own country.

I had to cope with the practicalities of finance and housing both after the conflict and the loss of my husband.²⁶ Friends and family help to share the emotional burdens sympathetically. Due to the circumstance I found myself in, is a state where I had to take responsibility of my own care in school through selling cooked food and keeping the profits to buy books and other things I would require for school. At a point, I fell into a dilemma of dropping out of school because I could not cope any more with the financial demands and staying in the market to continue selling cooked food. I later got encouraged to get back to school when I found support and help from schoolmates. It became obvious that I had to cope and adjust to the new life.....

Though I was determined to further my education, the conflict limited my mobility and restricted my capacity for other social and creative activities. This has affected me so much that it has jeopardized my social life for fear that I would be identified (as a *Konkomba*) by someone and get hurt in the process. By trying to escape these problems confronting me I was compelled to get married prematurely instead. Now in my forties, I am left with a (male) teenager and a nine-year-old son to support. In a situation like this, I decide to put the children first, because when I am distressed they become unhappy. (Nibewun-Tarko 12-13)

Conclusion

The relevance of study findings is important for several reasons. First, overall, the findings from this study of IDW suggest that the initial objectives of the project were met. Although generalizability is limited to the country of origin,

study findings can have relevance for builders of peace in violent conflict zones who desire perspectives from minority combatants, especially where communities of IDW reside. Data collected can be used to influence the development of curriculum and training materials for Ghanaian educators, policymakers, students, and peacekeepers. Thus, recipients can be informed about indigenous knowledge of conflict and problem-solving strategies authenticated by local Ghanaian authorities, especially IDW representing the minority ethnic *Konkomba* group from Northern Ghana (McGadney-Douglass 2006a, 2006b).

Secondly, given the staggering and growing numbers of IDW's worldwide, findings from this study have implications for stakeholders such as combatants, NGOs, policy-makers, researchers, educators, and practitioners who are interested in learning more about indigenous ethnic and gender-based approaches to build and sustain peace. These very strong women, eleven years after the conflict, are struggling to survive in unhealthy living quarters. They are troubled by concerns about their children and spouses, education, lack of income-generating jobs, substance abuse, migration, food, water, sanitary conditions, safety, and post-traumatic stress. Since these women are the backbone of their community, supported by wisdom and indigenous knowledge, they are the most likely ones to discourage the males from becoming involved in another violent conflict. If these *Konkomba* IDW are allowed to actively participate in the decision-making process in times of trouble, such violent conflicts as the Guinea Fowl War, may be arrested and multi-ethnic groups and social and economic development may be sustained (McGadney-Douglass and Douglass). These women know that their men will continue to fight to gain social and economic justice; they want peace. Thus, much can be learned for the development of peace-building curriculum materials from the indigenous knowledge that these women shared on conflict, such as the early warning signs, losses, reactions, gender-based coping mechanisms, and effect on family survival, education, and long-term protection and assistance.

In conclusion, stakeholders who are interested in developing evidence-based sustainable peace and conflict resolution models should not ignore the voices of minority groups, especially women. Affirmative actions should be initiated to bring all stakeholder groups involved in facilitating or arresting ongoing conflicts to a common peace-making round table. Korn (1999) notes that both

Francis Deng²⁷ and the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan have emphasized race, language, religion, or culture are not in themselves the cause of conflict. Deng has pointed out that "it is never the mere differences of identity based on ethnic grounds that generate conflict, but the consequences of those differences in sharing power and the related distribution of resources and opportunities.... The role of leadership at all levels, from local to national, is pivotal (Cohen and Deng, 1998a, p. 21)." And Annan (1996) stated in an article, "The Peacekeeping Prescription": "In societies where they are accepted and

respected, people of vastly different backgrounds live peacefully and productively together. Ethnic differences become charged ... when they are used for political ends (p. 176).” Problems most frequently arise when a dominant group seeks to impose its identity on others or advance its interests over those of others--when political leaders exploit resentments, prejudices, and passions in their attempt to gain or retain a hold on power. (Korn 7)

Thus, as Deng has stated, a common denominator for internally displaced persons is “a crisis of national identity,” a crisis, he indicates, “that generates cleavages between the affected population and the controlling authorities, governments, or insurgent groups.”

Peace may be sustained if best-practice models are developed demonstrating how conflict can be arrested based on gender-specific indigenous knowledge. This peace-building model should seek to improve the quality of life of IDW, focusing on awareness and assessment of post-trauma stress, violence, settlement community, health care, reunification and reconciliation, income generation, and development. And, lastly, research on IDW's should include an assessment of both minority and majority combatants and an extended evaluation of the impact of recent gender-specific UN initiatives offering more humanitarian protection and assistance from local governments and/or international aid organizations, such as *Guiding Principles on Human Displacement* (a restatement of international law); and *Guidelines for the Protection of Refugee Women* (not legally binding; ensures equal access and protection and assistance) on improving the quality of life of IDW worldwide (Refugee International 2006a, 2006b). However, durable solutions will continue to be compromised due to insecurity, lack of basic services and infrastructure in areas of return, limited livelihood opportunities, and land and property issues (GIDP). Furthermore, inter-communal tensions and conflicts that flare up between indigenous groups in Kenya, Sudan (Darfur), Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Somalia, and Zimbabwe must be avoided in Ghana, especially with the recent discovery of oil, to maintain security, economic and social development, and peace.

The paper is dedicated in memory of Judith Asibi Nibewun-Tarko, BSW-University of Ghana, Adult Education Graduate Student, University of Ghana at the time of her untimely death, June 2006.

An earlier version of this paper appeared as “The Guinea Fowl War: Indigenous Knowledge from Internally Displaced Combatants from Northern Ghana,” by Brenda Faye McGadney-Douglass and was presented at the Third Annual Plowshares and Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA) National Student Peace and Justice Conference (Engaging Empire in Activism, Education and Community Strategies).

The 2005 study was funded by the University Research Award Fellowship (URAF), University of Toledo, Ohio.

¹Multiple spellings: Konkomba(s), Komkomba(s), and Kokomba(s)

²In the initial Oxfam funded study conducted in 2002 only internally displaced women representing the majority ethnic groups, Dagombas and Nanumbas, involved in the conflict were interviewed (see McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie). It was determined after data collection and during analysis that women representing an opposing view or minority ethnic group were excluded by the selection process and remained voiceless; thus the 2005 University funded study was conducted on The Konkombas.

³Principle Investigator is Nana Araba Apt, Ph.D., University of Ghana-Legon, West Africa; funded by Oxfam International-Great Britain.

⁴McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzi are the principle interviewers and data analysts of the Dagomba and Nanumba IDW.

⁵Principle Investigator is Brenda F. McGadney-Douglass, Ph.D., funded by The University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio.

⁶Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

⁷Indigenous knowledge is the basis for local decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management, and other activities. It is embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships, and rituals. It is part of everyday life, such as herbal medicines, acupuncture, etc.

⁸Defined in this article as those who lack representation and still may be a numerical majority in their geographical location or conflict zone

⁹Specifically this is how the story is told about how the 1994 multi-ethnic war commenced and how it was named (Apt, McGadney-Douglass and Ahadzie): A trigger event of the conflict occurred at Nakpayili in the Nanumba District. A *Konkomba* quarreled with a *Nanumba* man over the purchase of *guinea fowl* in Nakpayili market. The *Konkomba* ran to their section of the village and invoked a war chant. *Konkombas* rushed to the market in support of their kind. The market dispersed for the day. The next day an innocent *Nanumba* farmer was gunned down in his farm located in a *Konkomba* settlement called Munchini near Nakpayili by an organized group of *Konkombas*. The incident was reported to the District authorities and a military detachment at Bimbilla. The response to the development was lackadaisical from the security forces. War broke out between the *Nanumbas* and *Konkombas* in Nakpayili. Fighting went on for six days without any effective intervention by the security services. The war spread out into the rest of the *Nanumba* District. Then there was a spontaneous attack on Dagbon and Eastern Gonja in the eastern corridors of the Northern region. *Konkombas* ransacked all *Dagomba*, *Nanumba* and *Gonja* settlements they could reach in eastern corridor while *Dagombas* and *Gonjas*

did it against *Konkombas* in Western Dagbon and West Gonja District.

¹⁰Begun as a relatively minor dispute over the celebration of the annual Bugum or fire festival, which marks the beginning of the year for the Islamic calendar, dating back to the fifteenth century.

¹¹Peacekeeping role highly profiled; troops from Ghana have been deployed in Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and DR Congo (BBC News: June 23, 2006).

¹²Recorded 4,536 cases of Guinea worm infection in the first three months of 1997 against 4,877 in 1996. The Sasakawa-Global 2000 eradication program launched in 1990 by the Sasakawa Foundation of Japan and the Carter (President Jimmy) Center in the U.S. was achieving success until 1994, when communal violence resulted in the destruction of wells and water-treatment plants. Many, mostly farmers, are being forced to use their old watering holes infected with the Guinea worm larvae.

¹³Bikes and motorbikes, more prevalent in the north, are used for transporting people and livestock; farming equipment such as tractors are targeted for destruction—generally burned (Adam 2003).

¹⁴Actual number unknown; some report that 35,000 died, approximately 20,000 IDPs from the 1994 conflict.

¹⁵Many now reside on a garbage dump at “Sodom and Gomorrah” and/or are selling yams at a market in Accra, Ghana.

¹⁶Picking of sheanuts, and dawada pots (a type of seasoning used for cooking) stopped. No sheanuts for processing into sheabutter; no groundnuts to produce groundnut oil; and no cotton to spin into yarn.

¹⁷Mahama reported the following on women representing the majority IDW ethnic group—Dagomba’s, Nanumba’s, and Gonja’s: The women in the war zone lost all their properties as they were always the first to leave for safe areas. They left only with the clothes they wore. They left behind them all their properties. They escaped with nothing but their lives. And throughout the war and even well into the second year after the war, women’s income generating activities brought nothing to them as the activities were completely disrupted. The picking of sheanuts, and dawada pots were completely discontinued as the women were either far away from where they were before or they would not risk going into the bush to look for those fruits. Consequently, during the period of the war, Dagomba, Nanumba and Gonja women in the conflict zones lost all their income. They had no sheanuts to process into sheabutter, they had no groundnuts to produce groundnut oil, they had no cotton to spin into yarn, and they had lost everything they had in life except their lives and the cloths they had on at the time their respective villages were attacked by the enemy. These women in the conflict zones having been crippled economically for two continuous years will need a massive injection of capital into their businesses if they are to recover from their huge losses. To some of the women who lost everything, it is not the loss of their property or income-earning activities that worry them, but the loss of their caretakers (husbands and brothers) in the war

that remains on their mind and refuses to go away. Perhaps if they are helped to acquire basic needs in their life—food, household utensils, clothing, shelter, means of production and new social companies, their continuing nightmare might end. Others who suffered a mental trauma may never recover. They have indeed suffered an irreparable damage (227-228).

¹⁸In addition to English, fluently spoke five Ghanaian languages: Konkomba, Dagbani, Hausa, Twi, and a little Ewe and Ga.

¹⁹A small wooden shack with a dirt floor

²⁰Reported age at time of data collection

²¹Number of children when Guinea Fowl War commenced

²²Actual birth date unknown since documentation limited. Did not ascertain number of children living; and some of the husbands were killed in the conflict or returned North leaving displaced first or second wives

²³It is believed that hundreds of years ago persons from this lineage migrated from a neighboring country and thus all descendants are referred to as not being born of Ghanaian soil with no rights and thus no Chieftaincy status.

²⁴Tend to have large families to account for pre-mature death of children and need to have family members work the large farms that they are responsible for planting and harvesting.

²⁵A retired Ghana Airborne Forces personnel; her mother died when she was three years old. Years later, when he returned to the North, with the help of his daughter, Judith, found a small plot of land to farm and a home.

²⁶Husband, Mr. Simon Tarko, died suddenly May 2002, a few days prior to his wife, Judith Asibi Nibewun-Tarko, who was taking final exams at The University of Ghana. Their sons, ages 10 and 19 in 2006, are now orphans.

²⁷In 1992, assigned by UN Commission on Human Rights to advise Secretary-General on how to assist IDPs.

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