

Conflicts and Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS: Gender Dimension in Rain Forest Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract : Conflict and HIV/AIDS infection have had a profound impact on the Sub-Saharan African societies, individually and collectively. Nigeria has been experiencing several violent conflicts in many communities across the geographical spread of the country. These conflicts which often lead to loss of lives, properties and loss of livelihoods are mainly felt by women in terms of increased responsibility towards affected family members with attendant decrease in livelihood options. Despite these, conflict issues have not really received enough focal attention by Nigerian academics. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to describe the respondents, the most prevalent conflict repercussions and most prevalent STDs, in conflict areas. Data were collected using interview schedule to elicit a response from 122 respondents in Southwest Nigeria, through a multi-stage sampling technique involving stratification of respondents into violent conflict areas (VCA) and non-violent conflict areas (NVCA). The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Results revealed that majority (86.5% and 70.5 %) of the respondents were in the age bracket of 10-39 years in both the VCA and NVCA respectively; 35.5% and 40.2% of the respondents were literate in VCA and NVCA, respectively while 76.5% and 55.8% of the respondents were in the lower income groups in VCA and NVCA, respectively. HIV/AIDS and gonorrhoea were the more predominant (75.2% and 55.6% respectively) STDs in the VCA as against 33.2% and 38.3% respectively in the NVCA. Further, significant ($p < 0.05$) correlation existed between conflict incidence and spread of HIV/AIDS, rape and torture, maltreatment of women as well as sexual harassment; in both VCA and NVCA among others. The study concluded that conflict situations in the study area aggravated incidence of HIV/AIDS and made the women more vulnerable to inhuman treatments such as rape, torture and harassment with attendant reduction in sources of livelihoods. The study recommended among others that sensitisation on control and preventive measures of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases should be included in programme designed to mitigate against conflicts in the study areas.

Keywords : conflict, gender dimension, HIV/AIDS epidemiology, Nigeria

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