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Reviewing the Ideological Foundations of Gender Inequality in sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

The attainment of gender equality by the year 2030 is one of the primary targets of the sustainable development goals. Efforts to achieve these goals have yielded some positive results is some sectors like educational attainment, economic participation and opportunity, where more women have been absorbed. However, in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, key sectors like political participation have shown very little progress. Curious enough, a good number of countries in this region have put in place some affirmative action plan designed to encourage larger women participation in political administration. In many of these countries, such affirmative action plans have been largely ineffective, with men absolutely dominating the political administration landscape. This paper argues that this failure is owing to certain cultural practices that were dormant within indigenous societies, but amplified with the advent of colonialism. The paper further argues that, even though these practices have a foundation in indigenous societies, they are inconsistent with the metaphysical and ideological belief systems of these indigenous societies. Thus, the paper concludes that, in order to attain gender parity in political participation in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a need to evaluate and re-emphasize indigenous metaphysical and ideological worldviews to properly ground the action plans towards the attainment of equal participation in political administration.

Keywords: Gender equality, sub-Saharan Africa, African cosmology, African communalism.

1. Gender disparities in political space of Sub-Saharan Africa: Background to the problem

The attainment of gender equality by the year 2030 is one of the primary targets of the sustainable development goals agenda. According to the United Nations Development Program, the goal of gender equality is important because "ending all discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, it's crucial for a sustainable future," and one of the key targets towards attaining this goal of gender equality is ensuring equal opportunities for full and effective participation of women at various levels of political and economic leadership (UNDP, n.d.). Thus, the task is set for every country around the world to move towards attaining a point where women can occupy, at least, 50% of the political offices in the country. Rishi Goyal and Ratna Sahay note that greater representation of women in management positions has led to increased productivity and improved performance. They note further that there is progress in women representation in parliamentary and ministerial positions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the West. However, they note that representation of women in these political positions is far below the desired 50% mark in all regions of the world (Rishi Goyal; Ratna Sahay, 2024).

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What the foregoing suggests is that, though gender equality is desirable in political administration, and even though there is progress towards attaining this desirable position in some parts of the world, there are still very significant lapses to be addressed. The fact that there is progress should not be allowed to mask the reality that the current position is far away from the desired goal. According to the United Nations website on the sustainable development goals, "There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030" (UNDP, 2023). If one considers some available reports on the progress achieved in the area of female presence in political positions, what is observed is that, compared to Europe and America, countries in sub-Saharan Africa still lag behind in having women holding political leadership positions. The following statistics is very informative in this regards:

> Across the 19 editions of the index, Political Empowerment has seen by far the most improvement, with the gap narrowing by 9.0 percentage points — from 14.3% in 2006 to 23.4 % in 2025 — among the 100 economies continuously included in every edition. At the same time, at the current pace it will still take 162 years to fully close this gap. Northern America has made the most progress in the Political Empowerment sub-index, where it places third in 2025, with a score of 29.7%, narrowing its political parity gap by 19.3 percentage points… In Political Empowerment, Sub-Saharan Africa ranks fifth, with a score of 22.2%. At the launch of the index, the region scored zero for years with female head of state; yet in 2025, this indicator has reached 3.2%. Women now hold 40.2% of ministerial roles and 37.7% of parliamentary seats, although Rwanda is the only economy in the region to achieve full parliamentary parity. (World Economic Forum, 2025)

The statistics presented above shows how far sub-Sahara Africa is from the 50% target in 2030 of the Sustainable development goals. It thus calls for concerted affirmative action from the major political actors in the various countries that make up the region. It is important to note, however, that there are some African countries that are doing pretty well in terms of the progress of gender equality in politics. For instance, the 2025 WEF report indicates that Namibia sits in the 8th position in the global ranking with a 12.2 and 3.2 percent increase in women ministerial and Head of State positions from the previous ranking, even though there was a 10.8 percent reduction in parliamentary parity. But the country sits with a total of 81.1 percent in its general gender parity index. The report shows, for instance, that the percentage of women participation in parliament for the first ten sub-Saharan African countries ranked in the report ranges from 61.25% (Rwanda) to 33.89% (Cameroon). In fact, seven countries out of these first ten already have above 40% women participation in parliament. This makes for good reading and shows the steady progress these countries are making towards achieving the sustainable development goal in terms of gender equality, especially in terms of women participation in parliament. Report shows that Rwanda is the only economy in the Sub-Sahara African region to achieve full parliamentary parity, with South Africa (81%) and Cape Verde (80%) close behind. While countries like Rwanda are moving steadily towards gender equality in political participation, there are other sub-Saharan African countries that are still very far off from achieving this target. For instance, though Nigeria has an encouraging trajectory for workforce parity, the country does not progress in the other three sub-indexes, with the most significant regression occurring in Political Empowerment (-2.9 points) due to diminished representation of women in ministerial positions, which declines from 17.6% in 2024 to 8.8% in 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2025).

2. The challenge for women participation in politics in Sub-Saharan Africa

In a 2015 report for the International Peace Institute, Mireille Affa'a Mindzie identifies some factors that negatively impact the goal of achieving a more balanced ratio of women participation in political administration (Mireille Affa'a Mindzie, 2015). These include economic, political, and cultural factors. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, these factors are greatly

pronounced as they create significant obstacles for women and make it more difficult for African women to gain firm standing within the political landscape. For instance, the political terrain in many sub-Saharan African countries is dominated by older men who have a long history of monopoly of political power. Given the fact that these old men have seized the reins of power and continue to perpetuate themselves, it is difficult for women, and even younger men, to break into the political circle. One may think of the likes of Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea (45 years of rule), Paul Biya of Cameroon (42 years of rule), Denis Sassou Nguesso of Republic of the Congo (40 years of rule), Yoweri Museveni of Uganda (38 years of rule), etc., as examples of leaders who have remained in power as heads of government for a very long time (Agence France-Presse, 2022). Even though many of these African countries operate democratic systems of government, these old elites have very significant influence on election processes and they are thus able to keep political power and influence away from new entrants, especially women and younger men.

Financial constraint is one economic factor that also limits women's participation in politics. This shows why the economic parity between the two gender divides is also essential to attaining political parity. It is not traditional within many African societies for women to have financial autonomy. This economic constraint makes it difficult for women to compete with men who tend to be richer and are more experienced and influential on the political plane. The implication of this is that many women lack the material resources that are required to make them significant players in the political bustles and tussles of their various countries. While more women are getting educated in many African countries, this has not really translated into closing the economic gap between men and women, especially in African countries. Some of the factors responsible for this may include the traditional patriarchal structure of many African countries. This structure usually prevents many women, especially married women, from owning personal properties, or inheriting properties. Culturally speaking, the subjugation of women in many cultures with practices such as early marriages for girls are also inhibiting factors that have to be addressed if the sustainable development goal of gender balance in political participation is to be achieved. For instance, in the tradition of the Igbo people of the South Eastern part of Nigeria, women are not allowed to participate in political gatherings or decision making (Marie Pauline Eboh, 1998; Rachel Kidman et al., 2024).

Even though there is progress in integrating women into decision making and politics generally, the tradition of undermining the relevance of women in political gatherings and decision making still hunts the sub-conscious mind of many African peoples. This is probably why there are still very few women who have succeeded in winning elective positions in African societies. Expectedly, a lot of factors are involved in determining the winners of elective positions. One such factor involves the belief of the people. Besides the factors already identified earlier, there appears to be a sub-conscious presupposition or belief that men are superior to women in many traditional African societies and that leadership positions are the exclusive reserve of men. This sub-conscious belief appears to be grounded on the age-long practice of excluding women from political administration and decision making.

A number of African countries have made conscious attempts to encourage women participation in politics over a long period of time. Shireen Hassim notes that the transition from apartheid to democratic government in South Africa transformed the fortunes of women which was already crumpling at that point. The African National Congress (ANC) created the Women National Coalition (WNC) as a national representative structure to articulate the requirements for equal consideration of women within the party's structure and inclusion of women at all levels of decision making. This opened negotiations between political parties and allowed gender specific claims to be better articulated, ensuring more visible participation of women in politics. The WNC was able to harness the cooperation of various groups in the country to develop the Women's Charter of Equality which was designed to aggregate the demands of individual women and

women organizations and which was adopted in June 1994. Among other things, the Women Charter retained demands for substantive equality such as full participation of women in economic decision making and greater female representation in legislature. This had a significant effect on the drafting of the constitution which established The Commission on Gender Equality to monitor and promote the implementation of Gender equality (Shireen Hassim, 2002).

Mireille Affa'a Mindzie reports that, in Senegal, the adoption of the Parity Law in 2010 contributed to the election of a record number of women into parliament. It further led to the election of a woman as Prime Minister, while some other women were appointed as members of the cabinet. This was a mark of progress, even though parity has not been achieved. In 2022, Rwanda had the highest percentage of women in parliament at 61.25%. This can be taken as the outcome of a series of affirmative actions. Jennie E. Burnet (2008) notes that, in September 2003, the people of Rwanda elected 39 women into parliament, out of the 80 total parliamentarian seats. By so doing, Rwanda overtook Sweden to become the country with the highest percentage of women parliamentarians all over the world (Jennie E. Burnet, 2008). This record shows how well Rwanda had progressed in this regard even in 2022. Similarly, in some other countries, various affirmative action plans such as conventions, rules, compromises have been put in place to formally encourage women participation in politics. While these various plans have yielded positive results in some places, in some other places, the results have been abysmal. Besides, as noted earlier, the few cases of progress should be allowed to mask the reality that many countries in the sub-Sahara African region are very far from the target.

The foregoing revelations raise tons of questions. Why have the various forms of affirmative action adopted towards gender equality had minimal impact in many sub-Saharan countries? What needs to be done to address this challenge? What is the relation between gender equality in governance and the beliefs of the people of sub-Saharan Africa? Why does it seem as if many of these countries traditionally regard women as incapable of holding key leadership positions? Are there ideological foundations for the gender inequalities that characterize the political scenery of these countries? What is the place of women in the indigenous political organization of communities in sub-Saharan Africa? Are women even rated equally with men in terms of personhood within the thought system of these countries? These questions can be linked together, and in order to address them, it is important to examine the philosophical foundation of the beliefs of the African people and use this to develop a theoretical foundation for addressing the challenge of gender inequality in political participation in sub-Saharan Africa.

3. Being and value in an African place

In the primordial account of the nature of being in the universe, various African communities have varying accounts of the nature of the universe as well as the place of human beings within that universe. However, there are some outstanding similarities that have been conceptualized by philosophers who have paid attention to these accounts. One of such similarities is the belief that there is a close relationship among the order of beings in the universe. This relationship is usually presented in a hierarchy with God (The Supreme Being) at the apex, followed by lesser deities or divinities. The deities are followed by ancestors or living dead spirits, and these are followed by human beings. Human beings are followed by non-human animate beings, while inanimate beings occupy the bottom of the hierarchy. All categories of beings in this hierarchy are believed to have valuable roles to play in maintaining the balance of the cosmic order. None of the category of beings is believed to be insignificant, as there is some causal dependency and a relationship of force among them (Edwin Etieyibo, 2017; Placid Tempels, 1945).

The doctrine of the hierarchy of beings in African cosmological thought reveals that there is no hierarchical relationship when it comes to the being of man and woman. In other words, since human beings, both men and women, occupy the same level in the hierarchy of existence as

the doctrine of hierarchy of beings, there is no distinction between the place of men and women in that hierarchy. In effect, there is no cosmologically grounding for inequality between men and women in African thought system. What this suggests is that the political structure within African societies ought to be without gender inequalities. However, despite that there is no cosmological grounding of gender inequalities in African thought system, experiences of people within these communities reveal a lot of gender disparity in access to economic and political positions and benefits.

Some scholars have attributed the rise of gender inequality in Africa to the advent of colonialism. For instance, Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí argues that the introduction of western education and missionary activities marked the rise of gender binary in African societies. This educational system, designed to aid evangelism and the spread of western civilization, targeted men as competent agents for these tasks. Thus, women were educated in a way that prepared them to focus on the domestic space while men were educated to take up available economic and political spaces. This, for her, marked the origin of gender discrimination and gender role ascription in Africa (Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, 2016). A number of other scholars corroborate this view that blames the origin of gender inequality in Africa on the advent of colonialism.(Olayinka Akanle et al., 2018) In fact, O. W. Ogbomo had expressed this view more emphatically by noting that contemporary gender relations in Africa do not reflect the true nature of the influence and exercise of power by women in the past (Onaiwu W. Ogbomo, 2005: 50). The implication of this view is that gender hierarchy was not a part of indigenous Yoruba social structure. Owing to this perceived lack of gender hierarchy in indigenous Yoruba societies, N. Wane notes that women had independent status and did not contest any role with the opposite gender (Njoki Wane, 2011). With particular reference to Yoruba culture and belief system, scholars have argued variously that women had revered status, equal access to land based on clan and family structures, equal access to political as well as spiritual leadership positions, and that Yoruba language, in contrast to English language, is gender-neutral (Cheryl Johnson, 1982; Mahmood Mamdani, 1996; Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí; 1997, 2002, 2016; Sefina Aliyu Dogo, 2014; Walter Rodney, 1972). It is important to note that this perception of gender structure in indigenous Yoruba societies as neutral aligns with the lack of ontological grounding of gender inequality in African societies.

Contrary to the preceding view, a number of scholars have insisted that elements of gender inequality have been present within indigenous (pre-colonial) African societies, though the advent of colonialism contributed to widening the gender gaps in these societies. For instance, Felix Meier Zu Selhausen and Jacob Weisdorf (2016) note that during the first half of the colonial period in Uganda, gender inequality became more pronounced because the gender norms that were prevalent in the pre-colonial Uganda community allowed men to quickly get access to literacy and, consequently, white collar jobs within the European set-up. Women took a bit longer to access literacy, and thus took longer to access the economic benefits that came with having white collar jobs within the colonial arrangement, and even beyond (Felix Meier Zu Selhausen & Jacob Weisdorf, 2016) Lungiswa Memela (2005) has a closely related view about how culture influences gender inequality in the society. Using the Xhosa culture, she highlights how the processes of socialization, traditional wedding and marriage practices, as well as sexual rights are used to affirm gender disparities with men having the luxury to dominate women within those practices (Memela, 2005).

With particular reference to the indigenous Yoruba society, a number of scholars have argued that gender inequalities were present, and that these inequalities were simply amplified with the advent of colonialism. Some of these scholars consider certain indigenous practices like family structure, marriage practices, political and social arrangement of indigenous Yoruba societies. Based on these practices, these scholars argue that there were clear evidences of male domination over women because of the patriarchal structure of these societies. O. Oladipo puts the description mildly by noting that hierarchical structures create gender roles even though these

gender roles did not necessarily imply the subjugation of women (Olusegun Oladipo, 2023). This view is also corroborated by A. M. Fasiku *et al,* who argue that the patriarchal structure of Yoruba society often positions women in subordinate roles across various spheres of life (Adesola Mercy Fasiku et al., 2025).

Scholars in these two divides do not disagree about the facts of the varying roles that are assigned to different genders in indigenous Yoruba societies. What they largely dispute is the implication of these gender roles. Besides, both sides of the divide agree that colonialism amplified gender inequalities in Yoruba societies to the extent that even gender roles that did not cause dissent and discontentment in indigenous societies became so amplified that dissent began to rise. This has led to various waves of feminist agenda within contemporary Yoruba societies as well as all over Africa. One conclusion that can be drawn from the foregoing is that certain cultural practices within indigenous and postcolonial Yoruba societies have led to gender inequalities in contemporary Yoruba societies, as well as in other African societies. This has created wide distinctions along gender lines in these societies. These distinctions that were tolerated and largely ignored in indigenous societies became largely intolerable as various African nations began the drive towards independence. Thus, for instance, gender issues became central to the democratic transition and issues relating to understanding citizenship in the drive for South Africa to build a decentralized state post-apartheid (Cheryl McEwan, 2001: 49). A similar story may be said about post-genocide Rwanda where, according to Burnet, key members of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) "recognized the need to protect the rights of the thousands of genocide widows and orphans" (Jennie E. Burnet, 2008: 377).

The inconsistency of the gender disparity that is characteristic of the socio-economic and political organization of many African nations with the cosmological account of the place of human beings in reality calls for serious review. This is because gender disparities do not align with the fact that the there is no distinction, hierarchical or not, between man and woman in the order of beings in the African thought system. As such, gender disparity in African nations have no theoretical foundation in African belief system. Thus, the socio-economic and political systems in contemporary African nations need to be purged of any structures that places unnatural distinctions and segregation on the basis of gender. This is important because the social relations and social structures within a society is dependent on the metaphysical idea of their being or ontological status (Symphorien Ntibagirirwa, 2009: 298). Given the lack of metaphysical grounding of gender disparity in African thought system, it is logical to conclude that gender discrimination is inconsistent with indigenous African cultural beliefs.

Besides the lack of theoretical grounding of gender disparity in African thought system, these disparities are also inimical to the growth and development of African nations. This is because the exclusion of women and some other groups invariably has some grave implications for the growth and development of the societies. On one hand, restricting the participation of women in economic and political activities excludes the contribution of a significant section of the members of the society in the administration of the society. Such inequalities reduce productivity because it reduces the level and quality of human capital available for governance and economic development. It makes women underutilized while men are over utilized, probably to a point of exhaustion (Gaelle Ferrant, 2015). The consequence of this is that the rate of economic development in a nation is further diminished when a significant segment of the population is restricted from getting the chance to contribute to economic and political activities. On another hand, since women constitute part of the society, the rights of women also constitute the rights of some constituents of the society. As such, women, like men, are entitled to participate in the economic and political life of the society. Denying them this is a violation of their rights, and this is an injustice. Thus, it is a duty that society owes women to remove impediments that hinder their participation in the political administration of the society (United Nations ESCAP, 2019).

It is clear from the foregoing that the gains of addressing the gender inequalities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are massive. On the one hand, it opens up more chances for growth and development, and on the other hand, it ensures the protection of the rights of a wider range of members of the society. This is what has led to various forms of affirmative actions in many of the countries in the sub-Sahara African region. The establishment of gender parity requires conscious and deliberate attention and activities in terms of policy formulation and implementation. Whether gender disparity is an offshoot of natural processes or not, establishment of gender parity cannot be left to natural processes. This is why Esther Duflo notes that while economic development may help to reduce poverty, reduction in poverty will in turn lead to empowering more women. This will likely lead to a reduction in the inequality gap between men and women. However, while this will not lead to gender equality, policy action is necessary to stimulate further development in the society (Esther Duflo, 2012). Thus, countries like South Sudan, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Mozambique, Sudan, Nigeria, etc., have some kind of affirmative policy action plan for gender equality in political participation (Jane Kani Edward, 2014).

While the affirmative action plans in places like South Sudan, Rwanda and South Africa are showing effectiveness in ensuring active participation of women in political administration, countries like Nigeria have a challenge implementing the affirmative action plan that have been drawn in that regard. This suggests that ensuring gender equality in politics requires much more than drawing up affirmative action plans. Certain elements are required at the base of such affirmative actions. In South Africa, for instance, one of the key elements that has ensured the success of the drive towards gender equality is the fact that there is constitutional backing for the action plans in that regards. The South African ANC, noting the importance of women, recognized the need for women to participate in constitutional negotiations. This helped to ensure that the constitution was designed in such a way that it catered to the rights and needs of women along with men. It is important to note that underlying this affirmative action in the South African experience are the philosophical ideals of Ubuntu.

4. The place of Ubuntu in the quest for gender equality

As one of the few sub-Saharan African countries making strides in the enthronement of gender equality in political administration, a lot can be learnt from the South African approach. Following the apartheid experience, and the widening of the gender gap that was evident at that point in the history of South Africa, it was important to address the imbalances in gender relations. This is because women constituted a larger percentage of the population of people who were dispossessed among the rural populations. They also suffered inequalities in access to education, employment, and control over land (Shireen Hassim, 2002: 725). Identifying these gender inequalities required that women were seen as significant members of the society. Thus, addressing the ills of the society at that point required addressing the imbalances that had been meted to every woman as constituents of the society. Detecting this imbalance can be largely traced to the fact that the South African society was guided by the ideals of Ubuntu, which provided a good ideological foundation for the social relations within the society. From this ideological viewpoint, women are viewed as part of the community and their rights and privileges are considered important. Thus, it was important to address the injustices that have been perpetuated against this significant segment of the society. This is largely responsible for the success of the drive towards gender balance in politics. It is equally what may be missing in the approaches of some other nations within the sub-Saharan African region. Rediscovering the Ubuntu ideology, or some similar ideological tool available in various African countries, can help to ground the kind of affirmative action that is needed in the countries in the sub-Saharan African region.

While the origin of the concept of Ubuntu is primarily traced to the Bantu people of South Africa, an identification of the basic features of this ideology will show that many indigenous African societies had similar features within their ideological systems. Matteo Migheli highlights five key features of Ubuntu. These features are the embeddedness of the individual into the community, we thinking, democratic and inclusive leadership, ethical reciprocity, and social inclusiveness (Matteo Migheli, 2017). What the foregoing suggests is that in a community that is governed by the ideals of Ubuntu, individualism is not a prominent ideology. Individuals define and account for themselves in relation to the community. The existence of the individual is defined by their place within the community. As such, the individual is not autonomous but is essentially embedded in social relationships. This sharply contrasts with the individualism that characterizes neoclassical understanding of human beings as autonomous beings. Resulting from this communal understanding of individuals, collective rationality is emphasized. Individual members of the community reason and act based on shared group interests and prioritize group welfare alongside individual goals. Owing to the communal understanding of human beings, Ubuntu entails empathy and sympathy in the relationship with the community and other members of the community. Again, Ubuntu encourages participatory leadership as opposed to authoritarian leadership. Thus, leaders act as mediators rather than sovereign authorities, and decisions reflect consensus rather than individually imposed power. This also implies that the social and political landscape encourages inclusivity where every individual is given a chance to participate in the political administration of the community. As a result, everybody, including men and women, gets a chance to contribute to community building (Matteo Migheli, 2017: 1214-1223).

The communal elements found in the Ubuntu ideology is present in many indigenous African societies. A number of scholars have noted these communal elements among the Yoruba people. According to Oyěwùmí, indigenous Yoruba communities were grounded in family lineage, seniority by age grades, and collective identity. The role of the individual was determined by their position within the kinship structure and community hierarchy (Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, 1997). A similar view is defended by Segun Gbadegesin who argues that moral and political life in Yoruba society was governed by a shared sense of duty to others, exemplified in practices such as communal land ownership, cooperative work, and elder-led consensus decision-making. For Gbadegesin, this outlook is grounded in a cosmology that maintains an active belief in the ancestral presence and collective destiny (Segun Gbadegesin, 1991).

The foregoing suggests that the presence of gender inequality in sub-Saharan Africa societies is inconsistent with the metaphysical and ideological worldviews of these societies. As such, it is important to evaluate and re-emphasize these metaphysical and ideological worldviews in order to ground a proper interrelation between theory and practice in the African sociopolitical landscape. This is why it is important to emphasize the need for consistent reawakening, at every possible forum, of the ideals of indigenous beliefs that can help to shape the reordering of the sub-Saharan African countries. One of such is the cosmological account of the nature and place of human beings within the order of beings in the world, and the implication of this cosmological account for a proper ordering of the society. This alignment of practice to a theoretical grounding is essential for a proper social reorientation that has become necessary in order to address the gender gap that has become persistent in many African societies. This theoretical grounding is essential to ensure an effective implementation of affirmative action plans aimed at eradicating gender disparities in political participation in sub-Saharan Africa.

5. Conclusion

Gender disparities are rife within the political space of many sub-Saharan African countries. While the aim of the sustainable development goals is to eradicate these disparities by the year 2030, available evidence suggests that many of these sub-Saharan African are not on

course to attain that target. It is important to note that this situation cannot be out rightly attributed to a lack of effort on the part of these countries. Available evidence shows that a good number of these countries have made some efforts, many times including constitutionally instituted policies to ensure gender balance in access to education and political positions. As such, the failure on this part cannot be solely attributed to lack of effort. This is why it is important to examine the ideological and metaphysical grounding of the action plans that have been suggested in these countries. This will help to ensure an alignment of this action plans with the ideological and metaphysical beliefs of the people. Following this approach, the discussion in this paper has revealed that while there are a number of affirmative action plans to combat gender inequalities in sub-Saharan African countries, there are inconsistencies between these action plans and the metaphysical and ideological foundations of the belief systems in these countries. Such inconsistencies make it difficult to properly implement any affirmative action plan leading to the ineffectiveness of such plans. This explains why countries like Nigeria, despite the presence of gender-neutral policies, find it difficult to translate the policies into practice.

Given the lack of grounding of gender inequalities in the ideological and metaphysical belief system of these countries, it is important to evaluate and re-emphasize these belief systems to provide a theoretical grounding for the policies and actions aimed at closing gender gaps, especially in political participation within the society. Re-emphasizing this ideological and metaphysical beliefs helps the people of these countries to internalize the goals and actions in a way that it becomes easier to implement them. This is important if these sub-Saharan African countries are to have any close shot at the goal of eradicating gender disparities in political participation as desired by the year 2030.

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