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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI

إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

Governance with Gender Lenses for a True African Renaissance

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The missing girls of Congo, the high numbers of displaced women and children, the numerous rape cases, forced impregnation, sexual torture and other forms of sexual abuse in both conflict ridden and non conflict zones, the trafficking of women, and the frequent violation of women's rights by the very people who are supposed to protect their rights, the growing feminisation of poverty and the slow progress made on MDG Goal 3- that of gender equality speak to the extent, nature and persistence of gender inequality on the continent. This paper seeks to address how and why gender inequality in this increasingly uncertain age, continues to threaten the possibility of a true African renaissance. The multiplicity of crises- the food crisis, climate change crisis, persistent world inequitable commerce, the post financial crisis resulting in a new 'aid' architecture that the continent is confronted with poses new challenges for governance. The paper argues that unless states become gender inclusive democratic developmental states and governance is carried out with gender lenses, Africa runs the risk of becoming increasingly marginalised and renaissance may remain a mere rhetoric.

In a continent where more than half of the population (women) are still subjected to diverse forms of structural and physical violence and continue to remain largely invisible in most spheres of political life and decision making in both national and international bodies, it is difficult to achieve development and a true African renaissance. This does not suggest that a mere increase in the numerical representation of women in positions of decision making would make a difference in women's lives , but it would if there is a minimum critical mass, contribute to bringing about a transformational agenda. Under circumstances, when people, particularly girls and women do not have voice and power, there is no choice but to question the legitimacy of the state and the diverse governance structures at regional and international level.