

The Church and Gender Equality in Africa: Questioning Culture and the Theological Paradigm on Women Oppression

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Abstract

Pope John Paul II made a historic apology to several groups oppressed by the church since its inquisition started. The late pontiff's apology to women as a group was as a result of the obnoxious and oppressive denial of women's human right by the Church and the greater society because of the wrong interpretation of the "submission" clause in the Bible. The subsequent re-interpretation of the submission clause in the Letter to the Ephesians strongly confirmed and affirmed the equality of man and woman and established the theological and philosophical basis for questioning oppressive cultural ethos in Africa and demanding for a theological paradigm shift which will help Africa to address the centuries old inequities, inequalities and injustices suffered and still borne by women in the 21st century. This article captures the religious role and position of the church and defines the basis for calling for a new gender approach within the Church that will achieve gender equality in Africa.

Keywords

Gender; Culture; Christian Theology; Change; Submission Clause and Equality

1. Introduction

The oppression of women has been centuries old; in fact, it is as old as biblical history. Reasons adduced for the oppression had ranged from the philosophical untenable arguments as well as superstitious cultural myths, humanities and man-made traditions that lack empirical evidence and smack of uncritical thinking. The ironical

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bend to this history derived from the fact that man has always respected and honored “truths” from religion and theology as sacrosanct and unquestionable. The theological interpretation of man’s relationship to woman is regarded with the same unquestionable awe with which all church derived biblical canons are treated: regarded as the law of God which mere mortals cannot question. But the interpretation of the Bible by the Church was carried out by a special group of men inspired by God’s word—yet they are human mortals and subject to human errors of faith and reasoning. This brings into sharp relief a transformative turn around in the established infallibility doctrine of the church which only could explain why the late Papal Pontiff Pope John Paul had to make a historic apology to women for the centuries of obnoxious and oppressive treatment meted out to women by the Church as a result of a dogmatically inspired wrong misinterpretations of the biblical gender related constructive texts, specifically the “submission clause”.

Just as the Church has been fallible and culpable in basing and justifying the institutional and social denials of women’s rights on misinterpreted scriptures, our African culture and some of its abhorrent provisions and traditions have also been indicted by scholars and gender rights activists for having oppressed African women with exploitative customary mores and traditions. While women in Africa looked up to the colonial church as saviour that will liberate and restore their tradition-denied human rights and opportunities for human development, the Church supported the ancient and modern bearers of the culture to draw up and sustain a paternalist gender structure and constructs that perpetuated inequality and injustices against women. In spite of a rich ontological and cosmological system of values that have a healthy balance of respect and recognition of the mutual equality of the two sexes in African theistic humanism (Dukor, 2010: p. 35) the male guardians of the customs did not deem it fit to protect women from unnecessary harm and oppression against their gender. This paradox of ontological values recognized by Professor Dukor and the raw custom sanctioned by selfish patriarchal lords has led to a vicious cycle of customary mistakes that continue to threaten the lives of women and treat them by the society as second class citizens. This position of cultural paradox was also acknowledged recently [Lola Shonayin \(2012: p. 98\)](#) in *The African Report*, No. 44 when she observed with pain that:

Africa has not deemed it necessary to protect its women. In Africa, generation after generation, the same mistakes are repeated because we prefer to plaster over these atrocities or justify them with unhelpful traditional beliefs.

One can effectively posit a hermeneutical problem of misinterpretation of both biblical and African cosmological values had been responsible for the worst form of oppression and maltreatment against women for centuries in Africa. For millennia, people believed that women’s traditionally assigned unequal status of inferiority and second class citizenship in relation to men was God directed and biblically supported ([Ani, 2013: pp. 21-24](#)). Research into this gender hermeneutics has exposed the truth behind such errors of misinterpretation. In the first place, there are scripture passages which are derogatory to women but such passages reflected the exigencies of culture and tradition of the times and the particularly contexts of both the authors and interpreters ([Uchem, 2005: p. 11](#)).

Secondly, it is to be noted that such often quoted passages used to fortify feminine oppression, justify inequality and sustain injustice were in fact not divine commands but man’s interpretation to sent a time specific culture demand which cannot pass the sustainable logical tests of God’s verities, values and genuine theological canons of the Church.

Thirdly, the discovery of such errors of biblical interpretation has generated a worldwide awareness and civil society advocacy that men and women are in fact equal and this realization should be translated into action ([Uchem: p. 45](#)). Among other programs of action, the United Nations Millenium Goals Declaration came up with goal number three, which is to “end all forms of gender inequality and to empower women”. Therefore the first step of ending inequality and therefore injustice against women, and the best way of empowering them is to create awareness of certain hermeneutical errors fostered by organized partisan interest groups within biblical literature and cultural core. Not many people are aware that these supposedly canonical truths of theology and culture used to intensify and sustain feminine injustice are in fact proven errors of Church misinterpretation which the late Papal Pontiff John Paul II reinterpreted in accordance with true canonical rules of logic, faith and truth. [Uchem \(2005: pp. 11-12\)](#) points further, in the passages below, to these hermeneutical challenges of biblical, theological, social, interpretation and misinterpretation with their descriptive, ascriptive and prescriptive connotations for gender equality:

“The major obstacle to change in this area has been the problem posed by some scripture passages, which are derogatory to women in tune with the times and cultures of their authors and interpreters. Regardless, newer in-

sights into the nature of the world, which have put into question some of the biblical claims, for example, the shape of the world, some have continued to use the authority of the bible to support discriminatory practices against women. They do not seem to realize that those bible passages are not prescriptive but rather descriptive (of the world in which the authors lived). They are not directives on how Christians should act. Therefore there has been a due need for resources to stimulate the Christian imagination, to take it beyond its cultural mire so as to promote the church's agenda for social justice. The need is to reinterpret those death-dealing, anti-women biblical passages in a manner more constant with the life-giving good news of Christ. The late Pope John Paul II gave the lead in 1988 when he reinterpreted those Biblical passages that are often used to advance the subjugation of women such as Gen.2: 18-23. He re-established the fact that the Genesis creation account should be reinterpreted to illuminate the divine usage in women (Maleris *Digitations*, 1988: pp. 6-8). He also corrected the "submission" clause in Ephesians 5: 21-33-attributed to St Paul that: "all the reasons given in favour of the subjection of woman to man in marriage should be understood as mutual subjection of (man and woman) to one another out of reverence to Christ" (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1988: p. 24).

We would direct and use our hermeneutical expositions of the Bible and African culture to prove that genuine biblical passages, in fact, demonstrate equality and that the theistic humanist values, well embedded in African cosmology and ontology as African philosophy, demonstrate the existence of a pre-colonial pure culture with deep-seated core socio-ethical values that recognizes mutual respect for the two sexes as ordained by God (Dukor, 2010: p. 20).

2. Culture: An Albatross on Women in Africa

Borrowed feminist ideas of the Western Europe that emanated from the famous feminist rights struggles seem to forget and overlook the rich ontological and cosmological respect for the coexistence of the two sexes in pre-colonial African societies (Ani, 2011: p. 45). This pre-colonial equality, seen as a core African value, in the context of its theistic humanism, has always existed to support women in their metaphysical roles as the mothers and carers of a refined and civilized society of the future. This pristine African theistic value gives a place of pre-eminence to women and oppresses them as a subjugated class without rights. African cosmology spawns ontological core values of metaphysical equality that give mutually supportive but different roles to male and female to create a peaceful and harmonious society. African core values support a cooperative ontology rather than aggressive adversarial cosmology in which men and women fight each other over right claims. While recognizing a cooperative right accepting of each other, true African ontology is anti-thetical to the concept of mutually exclusive and adversarial right claims of western feminism in which one sex must win over another sex; or the self gains over others: resulting in either injustice against women or men. African gender philosophy recognizes a genuine culture of core values that flow from the verities of communalism that give existential source and stream of recognition that each sex is given a role that brings out their metaphysical, physical and social abilities. The feminist rights thesis in Professor Dukor's theistic humanism (2010: p. vi) reflects the true humanistic gender super-structure and what should constitute gender discourse in African epistemology. This is the true cultural position that reflects the genuine interpretation of African culture as related to gender discourse of the issues and challenges in the continent.

The Kingpins of custom and the chief priests of the male domination of women have chosen to wrongly interpret the gender values as revealed in the theistic humanism of African philosophy. This wrong interpretation pure theistic value of respect for women in African culture, entrenched by patriarchal authority, had fostered an albatross that had created gaps in African gender discourse which distorts African cosmology and ontology. These gaps in interpretation gave rise to a rash of oppressive cultures, and customs, traditions and malpractices against women that started from the pre-colonial, colonial, neo-colonial and continues till the 21st century. It is the tension of right culture and wrong culture which had existed side by side in Africa through pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial periods that European gender discourse had failed to identify or recognize. African culture is simply lumped together as one monolithic whole that together oppresses women without a critical having a critical distinction of metaphysical recognition of women's rights and roles in African ontology and the abuse and injustice brought about by a core of traditional creations borne by selfish un-African interpretation of politically minded chiefs, patriarchal fathers, colonial exigencies, unsupported beliefs and religious accretions from the colonial missionaries. Professor Dukor (2010: p. 147) recognizes this distinction and seeks to open a new theoretical and humanistic platform for gender discourse in which the African man in his pristine and existential

philosophy recognizes God, man, woman and equal values as the source of societal harmony, happiness and development:

“An inquiry into the ontology of critical consciousness in African philosophy is long over due. Hitherto discourse on gender problems lost locus because of the tendency to leave out the gaps in culture created by colonial experience, modernity’s assaults and un-Africanness in ontology and essence. It is argued here that the fulcrum for a legitimate feminist doctrine is theistic humanism, the philosophy of African philosophy that exposes the epistemological and metaphysical basis of the rightful and ethical place of women in the society without injury, injustice and abuse on womanhood. Theistic humanism as an ontology and cosmology abhors class struggle between husbands and wives, sons and daughters etc. class struggle between men and women degenerated from the oneness of being ontology and gender community where husbands and wives were happily married with different complementary roles for the preservation of the society”.

Professor Dukor’s contribution to gender discourse constitutes an opening of another horizon with deeper substratum of the metaphysical, cultural and social ontology of feminism that justifies, validates and sustains woman hood in every social context in the society (Dukor: p. 148). Feminist justice in this context of pure traditional African philosophy reflects this normative deontology that respects and distributes natural inclinations of creation and gifts of God on the platform of theistic humanism (God and love of man). Women have an ontological place in this stream of socio-cultural justice that permeates every facet of the socio-economic, political and ontological pattern of relations in African society. Thus, we can state that feminism in African philosophy recognizes and promotes the rights of women under this cognitive humanistic paradigm that gives women equal gender value. Postmodernism and western discourse have failed to recognize that “the problem of gender discrimination either does not exist in African social structure or culture, or is not understood properly as post colonial, social and ontological aberration” (Dukor: p. 149). This non-recognition of ontological aberration that gave rise to cultural misinterpretation by selfish chiefs and men gave rise to the multifaceted problems of injustice and oppression against women. These mistakes of cultural misinterpretation were first neglected, later sustained and still fostered the very atrocities for which women in Africa had become the traditional victims. Africa has a responsibility to use this reconstructed gender philosophy under African philosophy to solve the emerging African gender problems of injustice. Has Africa deemed it necessary to apply the new gender philosophy to foster new gender values that would have corrected the errors and mistakes of the past and repositioned the Church to redraw its gender doctrines? The answer is a connotative negative response. Shoneyin (2012) argues and calls these mistakes of culture as unhelpful traditional beliefs thus:

But Africa has not deemed it necessary to protect its women in Africa, generation after generation, the same mistakes are repeated because we prefer to plaster over these atrocities or justify them with unhelpful traditional beliefs. This web of silence continues to indict those in authority. If not their consciences then perhaps the future will hold them accountable. When is Africa going to have the courage to stand up and say “enough!”?

The ontological and metaphysical errors and mistakes that made culture an albatross on the feminist struggle for gender justice, rights and equality is unacceptable and should be challenged. The answer is the theistic humanism that generate, new core values that recognize the dignity, self respect, self-value, honour, empowerment and self-determination that gives women equal treatment in African gender consciousness. As the Church corrects the mistakes of misinterpretation that gave rise to the oppression of women, African cultural patriarchy and its wrongly labeled anti-women customs needed to be reconstructed and reformed. But we need to take a finer brush to distil what is true or false in the Church’s interpretation of the gender roles and rights in the context of the relevant gender related passages in the Bible.

3. The Church and Gender: The Truth and the False

The distinction between sex and gender is critical to understanding the challenges of achieving gender equality in Africa. Sex is a biological function that comes with functional attributes and values that inform and form femininity or masculinity. It cannot be changed, even when western technology has made biological sex change possible for both men and women. Gender, on the other hand, is a socio-cultural, politic, economic constructs made by society that define the roles, responsibilities and general societal expectations for both men and women. Gender equality goes beyond biological struggle for sex sameness, rather it is about giving both men and women equal opportunities to contribute to societal development through the recognition accorded to individual expertise, training, education, experience, exposure, abilities and competencies, regardless of the person’s biological

sex attributes. In Africa, oppressive, cultural and socio-economic practices coupled with theological misinterpretation of key religious literature such as the Bible have encouraged centuries old injustice and inequality that have denied the recognition of women's roles in development. These theological and scriptural basis for justifying inequality and injustice against women in African rested upon inadequate and false misinterpretation of biblical passages. The late Pope John Paul had assiduously exposed the new exegesis of key biblical passages and had proven that they cannot be used as proof texts to justify the subjugation of women (Uchem: p. 13). Two key passages had been variously quoted to commit the errors of gender injustice and equality. Uchem (2005: pp. 46-47) identifies these two passages and makes some allusions to the role of patriarchal system, explaining, while doing so, how culture and religious institutions support the cultural aberration brought about by it:

“In African societies, the traditional gender roles are usually maintained by a system of patriarchy which sees men as pre-eminent human beings and women as secondary whose roles are meant to complement those of men. Men are not generally seen as complementing women and this one sided notion of complementarity is, therefore, problematic: women are perceived as existing for men and not really as human beings in their own right. The patriarchal system is sustained by the economic, educational system and the mass media. Sometimes Bible passages are selectively quoted to support the belief in and practice of male superiority and female inferiority, for example Ephesians 5: 21-33 and Colossians 3: 18 are often used for wedding ceremonies without reflecting the re-interpretation offered by Pope John Paul II.”

Gender equality was argued in this research article with keys in the fact that men and 3 women should be equally recognized, respected and appreciated as human beings who are given equal opportunities for self and societal development of human potentials. It is a wholesome construct that talks about equality of opportunities in the socio-economic, cultural, political and religious domains of human relationships and activities for both men and women. Biblically, gender equality, according to Uchem (2005) is “rooted in the fact that men and women are equally made in God's image: God said, let us make (the human) in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves” (Genesis 1: 26):

1) Equality of men and women, based in God's image;

2) God created (the human) in the both image of (God's self), In image of God, (God) created (them) male and female God created them (Genesis 1: 26-27) thus both the male and the female originate from God;

3) The biblical notion of woman as a helpmate to man. The biblical notion of “woman” as a helpmate to “man” derives from a literal reading of the second account of creation wherein Yahweh God said, “it is not good that (the human) should be alone” (Genesis: 2: 7, 18, 21-22): Yahweh fashioned (the human) of dust from the soil. Then (God) breathed into the nostrils a breath of life and thus (the human) became a living being Yahweh God said it is not good for (the human) to be alone ... I will provide a helpmate and while (the human slept, (God) took one of (the) ribs and enclosed it on flesh. Yahweh God built the rib into a woman.

According to Uchem (2005: pp. 48-49), this story was used to explain why men and women were attracted to each other and became one. However, “with time it picked up the cultural gender biases of male superiority and female inferiority of the communities of the authors and their subsequent interpreters”. The further degeneration of this pure concept that described the subject of a loving companion and helper to a man was then used by the Church Fathers to perpetuate gender inequality and all of its associated injustices against women as a result of a pedantic literal interpretation given to the biblical passage in Genesis. A genuine and deeper insight into this biblical tool of oppression which came about as a result of misinterpretation and exegetical illogicality has been further exposed by biblical scholar Uchem (2004), when she poignantly observes that:

“A literal mindset, opposed to the symbolical and mythological consciousness characteristic of the milieu in which it arose, was imposed on the story. Over time, the symbol of the rib, meant to convey a sense of oneness became a tool of oppression. The symbol of the rib is taken to denote weakness, inferiority and a secondary place in creation. However, those who advanced these views fail to reason that the woman who was supposedly made from ‘human stuff’ (the rib) the might be superior to the man who was supposedly made from ‘dust’. Moreover, those who argue that man is pre-eminent because he was created before the woman need to remember that wild beasts were created before the man and would therefore be considered superior to the man. Regardless that God is our ‘helper’ par excellence, the biblical notion of woman as ‘helper’ has, for many years, been understood as an indication of her lesser status in relation to the man. In my view, this has been at the root of gender inequality in the Church and has reinforced myths of male superiority, and female inferiority and functionality in the different cultures of the world. This is evident in the numerous anti-women sentiments and teachings of many Fathers of the Church. As long as this notion of ‘helper’ remains in force, it will continue to

undermine the realization of gender equality in the church and in the society”.

The truth is that “wo”-man was created from the rib as a helper, companion, friend, ally, and co-equal of “man”—meaning “red earth” (dust). The claims of superiority should have been the other way round because what was created from human flesh (man’s rib) must be superior and better stuff than what was created from “red” earth with God being the fulcrum around which the two creations evolved and manifested. This argument is not the intention of the article to prove. Both arguments: male superiority or female superiority are results of the logical errors of misinterpretation of symbol and allegory that should convey the equal sense of two companions meant to help each other to sustain God’s creation on earth.

4. Church and Culture: Driving a New Paradigm Shift for 21st Century Development in Africa

4.1. The Church and the Need for Change

The church needs to be dynamic and gender sensitive with a view to drawing newer insights into biblical inspiration and revelation in relation to the challenges posed by lived experiences of injustices suffered by women as a result of past misinterpretation. The fact that Church Fathers justified oppression of women based upon this and other wrong interpretations of biblical core did not make that judgment right nor exonerate the oppression against women based upon the wrong and literal judgment. After all, for many years, the church teachers supported and defended the practice of slavery on the basis of scriptures taken literally especially the “Dentero-Pauline” Letters (Uchem: 2004: p. 26). Ratzinger (2004) went ahead to recognize that the 2004 Vatican document on the collaboration of men and women still carries this wrong and biased functional view of women as “inferior helper” But interpreting scripture passages the hermeneutic way and using the wrong interpretation to oppress and suppress other groups in the society, either through racial slavery or oppression of women, does not make the interpretation still right. Just as the church turned round and did right in its interpretation when it condemned slavery and injustice against women as wrong. Hence there is a growing consciousness of social justice and the promotion of human rights in the church (1971 Synod of Bishops Document—“Justice in the World”, 1971). A cursory look at the Catholic social teachings over the years clearly illustrates this point which emphasizes the need for change as the Synod of Bishops reflected this concern for social justice for women from rest of the human community where the themes of equality, freedom and participation have been emphasized and promoted in the following historical words: action on behalf of justice and transformation is a constitutive dimension of preaching the gospel (Synod of Bishops, 1971: p. 6). As observed by Uchem (2004: p. 102), this growing sense of criticality, awareness of justice, rights and gender equality has led both the Church and non-church traditional advocates of human rights and gender equality to rethink the Biblical interpretation and practice of looking down in woman as inferior and non-persons:

“In grappling with lived experiences of social injustices that are often supported with proof-texts from the Bible, some women have developed a critical consciousness. Referring to the biblical practice of disregarding women’s presence and treating them as non-persons, some have had cause to ask: Did God inspire that one too?”

God could not have sanctioned injustice and used the Bible as sources of its oppressive support of injustice against women. The error was therefore traceable to the errors of human interpretation and the selfish interests of male chauvinists who hid under canonical and biblical canons of interpretation to disguise their hatred for women. Nothing could be truer from that embarrassing truth gender biblical heresy gainst God love and regard for men and women as equals.

4.2. Tradition and Culture: Rethinking Injustice and Reconstructing the Basis for Equality

Gender inequality was not, and could not have been supported by the Creator as seen from the foregoing arguments, evidence and documentations in this article. In the beginning all genders were equal but differ in terms of functional difference (Idoyorough, 2005: p. 7). The role of patriarchy and the selfish interests of chiefs in Africa in giving a wrong interpretation to African ontological culture that recognizes and promotes gender justice, equality and party had been variously recognized (Dukor, 2010). The ontological purity of African culture whose cosmological values affirm gender equality is at par with the pure biblical passages that recognize gender equality. Thus the role of patriarchy, power hungry traditional authority and political goons in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post modern state in compromising these core African values had been documented both by

Uchem (2005):

“Nature has made male and female to be complimentary and interdependent beings of the one human specie, such that each is indispensable for the survival of humanity. In terms of importance and indispensability, therefore, all genders are equal, but they may differ in terms of functions. Also in terms of common origin, God created humans male and female, each to mirror His (God’s) image in creation, according to the priority account of the origin of creation. Jesus Christ himself defended gender equality and reminded people that the creator made them male and female in the very beginning (Mathew 19: 3-10, Gen: 1: 27). In the beginning was gender equality, but inequality was introduced along the line due to the patriarchal quest for power and privileges, and sustained by erroneous interpretations and false ideologies. To put a stop to gender inequality, men and women must confront patriarchy and power monopoly, with which men lay claim to superiority and perpetrate inequalities and injustice”.

In Africa gender injustice and inequality have manifested as constructs of power and privileges within the cultural patriarchy of power mongers (Murphy, 1994). So we can categorically state with (Umoren: pp. 57-91) that: certain socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices imposed and sustained by patriarchy would probably account for a large percentage of injustices arising from gender inequality, would be true in Africa. The writers and Researchers on gender issues bordering on oppression of women in Africa have sufficiently x-rayed the many injustices suffered by women as a result of gender inequality (Umoren: p. 60). The many faces of African gender inequality had been well documented: (ECOSOC, 2010); (Oduyoye, 1984); and Fiorenza (1984). In Africa Gender inequality, as oppression against women, manifest in the following wrongful practices:

- 1) Harmful traditional practices (HTP) that affect women such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and harmful delivery practices (trial women to squat during delivery);
- 2) Food taboos (not allowed to eat certain foods or some choicest parts of meat such as gizzard);
- 3) Early girl child marriages;
- 4) Forced girl child prostitution for family economic survival;
- 5) Forced girl child labour;
- 6) Forced girl child soldiers/combatants in conflict;
- 7) Girl childhood scarification of the face;
- 8) Male child preference over the girl child;
- 9) Unequal Access to Education (girl child education suppressed/Denied her);
- 10) Denial of property inheritance rights to the girl child/ daughter;
- 11) Wrongful widowhood practices—such as inhuman and degrading treatment of women who have lost their husbands;
- 12) Exclusion of women from governance and socio-economic policy planks;
- 13) Denial of reproductive health rights to women;
- 14) Sexual and other forms of (marital rape etc.) Domestic influence;
- 15) Political marginalization of women in Africa (non-impletation of affirmative gender rights in political appointments etc.);
- 16) Electoral violence against women;
- 17) Embedded Bias against women in the legal system and other professional associations;
- 18) Patriarchal dogma and biased interpretation of Africa cultural cosmology and ontology of gender equality.
- 19) Stoning women to death as a result of adultery of alleged (Madu, 2010: p. 31).

5. Conclusion: African Women in Post 2015 Empowerment Framework

In many parts of the world, gender relationships have understood the situation of injustice and systematic disadvantages against women. However, the genuine empowerment of women in Africa in a post 2015 MDG era should start with the correct interpretation and reconstruction of the theological and cultural errors as contained in the different religions and societies that operate in Africa especially Christian interpretation of key biblical passages that had been used to justify oppression of women even within the bounds of oppressive cultural practices. A new gender theology and hermeneutical exposition should inform a paradigm shift that sees the bible as theistically whole and a valuable good news not just for modern man but for the African modern woman. This should give rise a new modern African gender theology that seeks to score for feminine justice and equality that gives a complimentary place to the two sexes as created by God seen as companions working to develop Africa.

Furthermore, the tragedy of cultural errors that were derived from ontological and cosmological aberrations of paternalistic chiefs, colonial slavery and the complexity of modernity and post-modernity should be equally reversed and reconstructed to reflect the true African metaphysics, religion and ontological values that respect and validate African woman hood. The reconstruction of the theology and culture of gender discourse should enable the church and the traditional African society to prepare new structures and institutions that empower women (Rowland, 1997: p. 129) and make them companion force for the rebuilding and development of Africa after the 2015 state aimed towards the ending of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development for all (Waliggo, 2002: p. 8). There is need for both women and men to pull their collective gender resources and energy, on the even keel of equality and mutual respect to achieve the African potential in the millennium.

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