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Are Women Winning? Does Descriptive Representation of Women in Parliament Lead to Woman-Friendly Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa?

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Oral Presentation O1.1

Are Women Winning? Does Descriptive Representation of Women in Parliament Lead to Woman-Friendly Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa?

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Under what conditions will women's presence in elective office promote woman-friendly policies? The research outlined here will examine this question through a comparison of six Sub-Saharan African democracies (Benin, Botswana, Lesotho, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania). Women have been elected into sub-Saharan African parliaments in record numbers, to descriptive representation, but is this leading to increased substantive representation, or the enactment of policies that focus on and benefit women? Following a Most Similar Systems design, this research develops an original composite scale to measure woman-friendly policy and finds that there is no clear relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. The remainder of the analysis seeks to identify the factors that lead to the breakdown between women's presence and woman-friendly policy. While no relationship between descriptive and substantive representation exists, different institutional and cultural perspectives are at play influencing woman-friendly policy in this region.