



# BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP

*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

*Assessing Nigeria's Progress Toward Achieving  
Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality*



February  
2026

Prepared by

**SimpleFix  
Nigeria**

*for Policy Literacy &  
Public Benefit*



Contributors

**Chike Donald Ibewuike  
Oyindamola Adebayo**



[www.simplefixnigeria.org](http://www.simplefixnigeria.org)  
[contact@simplefixnigeria.org](mailto:contact@simplefixnigeria.org)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nigeria stands at a critical juncture in its pursuit of gender equality. Despite constitutional guarantees and ratification of major international instruments gender inequality continues to define the nation's political, economic, and socio-cultural landscape. With the 2030 SDG deadline approaching, Nigeria's progress remains critically insufficient. The country ranks 125th of 148 on the 2025 Global Gender Gap Index. Women hold only 4% of National Assembly seats; the lowest in Africa. Over 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor, with women bearing a disproportionate burden. Child marriage affects 30% of girls nationally but exceeds 70% in North-Western states.

Legal frameworks meant to promote equity, such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 and the Child Rights Act of 2003, are undermined by poor implementation, especially where states have failed to domesticate them or where enforcement mechanisms are weak or absent. The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, which would provide a stronger legal foundation for gender justice, has faced repeated rejections in the National Assembly, reflecting persistent resistance rooted in cultural and religious opposition.

These legislative setbacks are further reinforced by systemic issues: the absence of gender-responsive budgeting, underdeveloped data systems for tracking inclusion, and a political space that remains overwhelmingly male-dominated. The National Gender Policy (2021–2026), Nigeria's overarching domestic gender governance framework, is technically well-designed but structurally ineffective, because the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs lacks the authority, fiscal leverage, and institutional independence to compel compliance from more powerful peer ministries. Critically, this policy expires at the end of 2026 with no visible successor development process underway, creating a potential governance vacuum at the most urgent moment in Nigeria's SDG 5 trajectory.

This brief calls for coordinated action: passing the GEOB and pursuing constitutional amendments; strengthening institutions and establishing Gender Equality Tribunals; institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting with a "no data, no budget" rule; and partnering with traditional and religious leaders to drive community-level change. Gender equality is not optional—it is foundational to Nigeria's development.

***The moment for bold action is now.***

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>01</b>
<b>Legislative &amp; Policy Frameworks</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>Gaps, Weaknesses &amp; Implementation Failures</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Learning from Peer Countries</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Synthesis: What Nigeria Can Do Now</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Framework</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Conclusion: A Call to Action</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Immediate Priorities</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Image Rights</b>	<b>59</b>

# Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030. For Africa's most populous nation, this goal represents both a moral imperative and an economic necessity. Yet, as 2030 approaches, Nigeria's progress remains critically insufficient.

With over 133 million Nigerians classified as multidimensionally poor and many policy decisions made without transparency or citizen engagement, gender inequality intersects with broader governance failures. Women remain underrepresented in political decisionmaking, face legal discrimination in inheritance and marriage, and bear disproportionate burdens of poverty and violence.

Gender equality is not merely a women's issue — beyond the female gender, it is foundational to national development. Research consistently demonstrates that countries with greater gender parity experience stronger economic growth, more stable governance, and better outcomes across all development indicators (Iqbal et al., 2022; Olugbemi & Ola, 2022; Liu & Liang, 2025).



## Why Gender Equality Matters

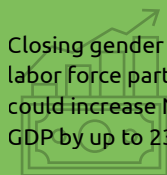
The evidence is clear. McKinsey Global Institute's 2015 study of 95 countries found that advancing women's equality could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025. In a scenario where women participate in labor markets equally to men, the gain rises to \$28 trillion; a 26% increase in global output. For Sub-Saharan Africa, closing gender gaps could boost regional GDP by 10-12%.

Women's political participation also improves governance. Research on local councils in India found that women-led councils delivered 62% more drinking water projects than those led by men. A 2023 Georgetown Institute study found women's representation strongly correlated with democratic health—free elections, checks on power, and reduced political violence.

For Nigeria, the implications are significant: closing gender gaps in labor participation alone could increase GDP by an estimated 23%, while greater women's representation could strengthen democratic institutions still fragile after decades of military rule.

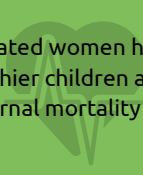
### Economics

Closing gender gaps in labor force participation could increase Nigeria's GDP by up to 23%



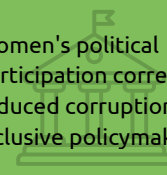
### Health Outcomes

Educated women have healthier children and lower maternal mortality rates



### Governance

Women's political participation correlates with reduced corruption and more inclusive policymaking



# SDG 5 Progress in Nigeria

## Introduction (cont'd)



### Nigeria's Current Standing

Nigeria ranks 125th of 148 countries on the 2025 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index, placing it in the bottom third globally. The country scores particularly poorly on political empowerment (136th) and educational attainment (138th). This contrasts sharply with regional peers: Namibia ranks 8th globally and South Africa 33rd, both nations demonstrating that transformative change is achievable on the African continent within a generation (WEF, 2025).

### Beyond the Indices: Female Quality of Life

Nigeria's Gender Inequality Index value (UNDP) is among the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting high maternal mortality, low contraceptive prevalence, significant gender gaps in secondary education, and minimal representation in decision-making structures at every level of government (UNDP, 2025).

### The Cost of Inaction

*Every year that gender inequality persists, Nigeria forgoes economic output, suffers preventable maternal deaths, keeps millions of girls out of school, and elects legislatures that do not represent half the population. **The 2030 deadline** for the SDGs represents a rapidly closing window for structural reforms that will take years to fully take effect.*



# LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FRAMEWORKS ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY IN NIGERIA

*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

## 1. National Legal Instruments

Nigeria possesses a complex web of laws addressing gender equality, yet their effectiveness is undermined by gaps in coverage, conflicts between legal systems, and weak enforcement. The country operates a plural legal system encompassing statutory law, customary law, and Islamic (Sharia) law, a structure that creates as many opportunities for evasion as it does avenues for redress.

### A. The 1999 Constitution

Nigeria's Constitution provides foundational guarantees of equality under the law. Section 42 prohibits discrimination based on sex, religion, or ethnicity, a clause often cited in gender litigation. However, the Constitution lacks explicit and enforceable gender equality clauses, does not define or outlaw indirect discrimination, and provides no affirmative mechanisms to redress historical imbalances.

Section 6(6c) renders socio-economic rights non-justiciable, weakening the enforceability of gender-related provisions in health, education, and welfare. Crucially, Section 275 legitimises customary and Islamic legal systems, which often uphold patriarchal norms, thereby creating a legal pluralism that undercuts statutory equality guarantees. The Constitution's silence on key issues, including marital rape, child marriage, and equal inheritance rights, reflects its fundamentally gender-blind architecture.



*Repeated attempts to amend the Constitution to recognise gender quotas or to allow Nigerian women to confer nationality on foreign spouses have been **rejected** by the National Assembly, most recently in March 2022, when **five pro-women constitutional amendments were voted down** in a single session (Adebayo, 2022).*

## SDG 5 Progress in Nigeria

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

## B. The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill

The GEOB, first introduced in 2010 and reintroduced multiple times since, seeks to domesticate the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and embed its principles into national law. It proposes a 35% affirmative action threshold in appointive positions, equal opportunities in education and employment, equal rights in marriage, inheritance, and land tenure, and comprehensive protection from gender-based violence.

## C. Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP), 2015

The VAPP Act represents a significant milestone in gender-based violence legislation. It criminalises rape (including spousal rape), female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, harmful widowhood practices, and emotional abuse, offering broader definitions than the outdated Penal and Criminal Codes. It also provides for compensation, protection orders, and community service for offenders.

However, the Act applies only in the Federal Capital Territory unless domesticated by individual states.

As of 2026, only Kano state is yet to domesticate the law, a significant improvement from just 18 states in 2021, achieved through intensive advocacy (Ihyongo, 2025). Yet enforcement remains deeply uneven, particularly in Northern states where the infrastructure to support survivors (shelters, specialised police units, survivor-friendly courts) remains minimal or absent. The absence of this support means that many survivors cannot access justice even where the law formally applies.

Despite its progressive provisions, the GEOB has failed to pass due to sustained opposition from religious and cultural conservatives, particularly in the North, who argue that it conflicts with Islamic and customary family law, especially regarding inheritance and gender roles in marriage. Only a handful of progressive states (including Ekiti, Kogi, Anambra, Imo, and Plateau) have passed their own Gender and Equal Opportunities laws, covering only a fraction of Nigeria's population (AfricaCORE, 2024).

### The Legislative Gap

*The GEOB's failure symbolises Nigeria's legislative unwillingness to align national law with international gender justice standards. With only 4% of federal legislators being women, the lowest proportion in Africa, the very body that should champion these reforms is structurally least likely to pass them.*

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

## D. Child Rights Act (CRA), 2003

Enacted to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the CRA prohibits child marriage and child labour, sets 18 as the legal age of marriage, and guarantees girls' rights to education and protection. Currently, all states plus the FCT have accepted the CRA. However, only 26 states have fully gazetted the Act as of March 2025, with many Northern states still holding out due to conflicts with Sharia law and cultural acceptance of child marriage.

Child marriage prevalence exceeds 60% in states like Bauchi and Zamfara, reflecting the fundamental gap between legal norms and cultural practice. Even in states that have passed the CRA, enforcement mechanisms are weak due to underfunded child protection units and poor inter-agency coordination. Nigeria still records the highest absolute number of child brides in Africa, approximately 24 million.



Source: Her Story, Our Story (2024)

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

## E. Other Key Statutory Laws

- **Matrimonial Causes Act (1970):** Governs monogamous marriages but excludes customary and Islamic marriages, which cover the majority of unions in Nigeria. It does not guarantee equal matrimonial property rights and fails to protect women in informal unions.
- **Labour Act (2004):** Prohibits employment discrimination but does not provide for equal pay for equal work, nor explicitly outlaws workplace sexual harassment, a significant gap given the prevalence of both in Nigerian workplaces.
- **Penal and Criminal Codes:** Still contain provisions that excuse or trivialise violence against women. Most critically, Section 55 of the Penal Code permits a husband to physically 'correct' his wife 'as allowed by custom', a colonial legacy that has never been reformed.

## 2. Nigeria's International Commitments

Instrument	Date Ratified	Domestication Status	Key Limitation
CEDAW	1985	Not domesticated	Limited applicability in domestic courts; CEDAW Committee has repeatedly raised concerns
Maputo Protocol (ACHPR)	2004	Not domesticated	Sporadic implementation; access to safe abortion (guaranteed under protocol) remains criminalised
SDG 5, Gender Equality	2015	Committed, not enforced	Nigeria ranks bottom third globally due to weak institutional coordination and low budget allocations
UN Convention on Rights of Child	1991	Partially domesticated (CRA)	All states have passed the CRA, however, only 26 states have gazetted the law

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria



## 3. Contradictions and Gaps in Domestication & Implementation

The co-existence of statutory, customary, and religious legal systems creates an uneven application of gender rights. While statutory laws may criminalise child marriage or marital rape, customary and Islamic courts often continue to adjudicate cases based on patriarchal norms, leaving women without effective recourse. State-level discretion in Nigeria's federal system allows local authorities to delay or dilute gender legislation based on local custom, resulting in geographic disparities in legal protection that track almost perfectly onto cultural and religious geography.

Furthermore, the lack of monitoring mechanisms, political will, and institutional coordination, particularly between the Ministry of Women Affairs, the National Assembly, and subnational governments, weakens enforcement even where laws formally apply. Civil society actors play a critical role in advocacy and service provision, but state institutions frequently underfund or resist their initiatives, treating them as foreign interventions rather than domestic partners.



## Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

### 4. The National Gender Policy (2021–2026): Nigeria's Overarching Framework

Of all the instruments in Nigeria's gender equality architecture, the National Gender Policy (NGP) is at once the most comprehensive and the most consequential, and yet the most consistently overlooked in public discourse on gender reform. Though not a sector-specific statute like the VAPP Act or the Child Rights Act, nor a bilateral treaty obligation like CEDAW, it is something more fundamental, acting as the overarching domestic policy framework within which all other gender equality instruments are supposed to be coordinated, resourced, monitored, and enforced.

That being said, the NGP's current iteration (2021–2026) is, by any technical standard, a sophisticated and progressive policy document. It diagnoses the right problems, prescribes the right instruments, and sets the right institutional responsibilities. However, it lacks the institutional architecture to compel compliance from the very ministries it is designed to govern.

### History of the NGP: From 2006 to 2021

The National Gender Policy was first introduced in 2006 under President Obasanjo's administration, a product of sustained advocacy by civil society organisations and international partners, particularly UN Women and UNFPA, following Nigeria's ratification of the Maputo Protocol in 2004. The 2006 NGP established gender mainstreaming as a formal objective of the Nigerian state, created the institutional expectation that all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) would integrate gender considerations into their planning and budgeting, and mandated the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA) as the coordinating body for implementation.

The 2006 policy had significant structural limitations. It lacked a dedicated implementation fund, contained no enforcement mechanism for non-compliant MDAs, and was produced during a period of acute institutional instability. Successive administrations treated it as aspirational rather than operational. By 2015, no systematic national review of its implementation had been published, gender-responsive budgeting remained absent from federal budget processes, and the Ministry of Women Affairs' influence over peer ministries had not materially increased.

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

## History of the NGP: From 2021 till date

The 2021 revision, produced under the Buhari administration with technical support from UN Women, was designed to address these structural failures directly. It incorporated lessons from the intervening fifteen years, aligned explicitly with the SDG 5 framework and its 2030 deadline, and introduced more granular implementation architecture including sector-specific action plans, an M&E framework, and explicit targets across six thematic pillars. It is a materially stronger document than its predecessor.

The critical question the 2021 revision did not answer is the same one the 2006 policy left unresolved: by what mechanism does the FMWA compel a more powerful ministry, e.g., Finance, Agriculture, or Defence, to integrate gender considerations into its budget when the political incentive to do so is absent? The revised policy though more sophisticated in diagnosis is lacking power in enforcement. And a policy without enforcement is merely a preference.

## Architecture of the 2021–2026 NGP: The Six Thematic Pillars

The 2021–2026 NGP is structured around six thematic pillars, each containing specific policy commitments, responsible institutions, and expected outputs.

Pillar	Key Mandates	Responsible Institutions
<b>1. Legal Frameworks &amp; Human Rights</b>	Domesticate CEDAW and Maputo Protocol; pass the GEOB; harmonise statutory, customary, and Sharia laws; establish gender equality enforcement mechanisms	FMWA, Ministry of Justice, NHRC, National Assembly
<b>2. Economic Empowerment</b>	Equal access to land, credit, and markets; gender-disaggregated economic data; affirmative measures in formal employment; address unpaid care work	Ministry of Finance, CBN, Ministry of Agriculture, NBS
<b>3. Education &amp; Skills</b>	Close gender gaps in secondary and tertiary enrolment; eliminate gender-biased curricula; address school dropout due to child marriage and pregnancy	Ministry of Education, UBEC, state governments
<b>4. Health &amp; Sexual/Reproductive Rights</b>	Reduce maternal mortality; expand access to contraception; address adolescent birth rates; eliminate FGM	Ministry of Health, NPHCDA, state health ministries
<b>5. Political Participation &amp; Leadership</b>	Achieve 35% women in public appointments; enforce electoral gender quotas; build pipeline of women in governance	INEC, Office of the SGF, political parties, FMWA
<b>6. Peace, Security &amp; GBV Prevention</b>	Full implementation and enforcement of VAPP Act; establish survivor support infrastructure; gender-sensitive security sector reform	Ministry of Defence, NPF, Ministry of Justice, FMWA

# Legislative & Policy Frameworks Addressing Gender Inequality in Nigeria

## Architecture of the 2021–2026 NGP (cont'd)

Three cross-cutting commitments underpin all six pillars and represent the NGP's most operationally significant, and most comprehensively ignored mandates:

- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB):** The NGP explicitly requires all MDAs to prepare Gender Budget Statements as part of their annual budget submissions. It further endorses the 'no data, no budget' principle; that budget approval should be conditional on sex-disaggregated data and gender impact analysis. These appear as mandatory requirements of the policy framework.
- **Gender Mainstreaming Across All MDAs:** Every ministry (not only the FMWA) is required to designate a Gender Focal Point, integrate gender analysis into sectoral planning, and report annually to the FMWA on gender outcomes.
- **Data Collection and M&E:** The NGP establishes an explicit M&E framework with indicators, baseline targets, and review cycles. It tasks the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) with producing annual gender-disaggregated statistics and the FMWA with consolidating cross-sectoral reporting into a National Gender Equality Progress Report.

## All Bark, No Bite

*Read in isolation, these mandates constitute a comprehensive, technically sound gender governance architecture — almost identical in substantive content to the recommendations that the most advanced gender equality policy systems in Africa, Rwanda, South Africa, and Namibia, have institutionalised. The difference is not what Nigeria's policy says. The difference is that in Rwanda, GRB is embedded in the Organic Budget Law and carries legal force. In South Africa, gender equality oversight is constitutionally independent. In Nigeria, these commitments live in a policy document whose coordinating ministry has no authority to enforce them on more powerful peers.*

*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

# GAPS, WEAKNESSES, AND IMPLEMENTATION FAILURES



**SIMPLE FIX**  
*Nigeria*

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 1. Limitations of Key Gender Equality Laws

Nigeria's gender equality challenges extend well beyond inadequate laws to fundamental failures in implementation. These gaps manifest across legal, regional, institutional, fiscal, and data dimensions, reinforcing each other in a cycle that keeps progress incremental at best.

### A. The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill

The GEOB was first introduced in 2010, rejected in 2016, and rejected again in 2021.

Conservative lawmakers have argued that existing constitutional provisions are 'sufficient' or that the Bill conflicts with religious laws, for example, that equal inheritance rights violate Sharia principles (Ikhenaoke, 2022). This religion-based resistance, especially from northern senators, reflects a major structural shortcoming: Nigeria's plural legal system allows personal (customary and Islamic) laws to supersede gender-equal statutes.

The result is that the GEOB's robust measures, including 35% gender quotas in politics and equal property and inheritance rights, remain unenacted federally. In most states, women lack this comprehensive legal protection. The repeated failure of the Bill exposes a structural gap in achieving uniform gender rights: Nigeria's federal architecture provides cover for legislative inaction at both national and subnational levels.



***Repeated attempts to amend the Constitution to recognise gender quotas or to allow Nigerian women to confer nationality on foreign spouses have been rejected by the National Assembly, most recently in March 2022, when five pro-women constitutional amendments were voted down in a single session (Adebayo, 2022).***

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 1. Limitations of Key Gender Equality Laws

### B. The VAPP Act, 2015

The VAPP Act represented a landmark law, but its initial scope was limited to the Federal Capital Territory. This structural hurdle of federalism led to sluggish uptake: six years after enactment, only about 18 of 36 states had adopted it. Many northern states were slow to legislate, citing perceived conflicts with existing penal codes and socio-religious norms. Through intensive advocacy by the Ministry of Women Affairs, UNICEF, and civil society organisations, all 36 states had domesticated the Act by late 2025, but the time lag itself reflects the weakness of implementation architecture.

Enforcement is uneven and often nominal. Many states still lack the family justice infrastructure (family courts, shelters, trained police gender-desk officers) to fully operationalise the VAPP Act. Conviction rates for gender-based violence remain low, and survivors face systemic barriers of cost, distance, stigma, and institutional indifference.

### C. The CRA, 2003

The CRA encountered deep cultural resistance in parts of the North from the moment of its passage. It took nearly two decades for most states to comply. By 2022, the holdouts had dropped to two (Kano and Zamfara), but only under sustained federal and international pressure. Full first-level compliance by 36 states and the FCT was attained by 2025. However, only 26 states have gazetted the law.

The lengthy delay reveals political shortcomings: children's rights were not prioritised against conservative norms, leaving millions of girls unprotected from child marriage and exploitation for years. Nigeria's child marriage prevalence exceeds 50% in the North-East versus about 10% in the South-East — a disparity that maps almost exactly onto the geography of CRA acceptance.

## Broader Legal Framework Gaps

*Nigeria's Marriage Act sets no minimum marriage age, effectively permitting child marriage. The northern Penal Code still allows physical 'correction' of wives. Marital rape is not explicitly criminalised under the Penal or Criminal Code. Women face legal disadvantages in conferring citizenship to foreign spouses. These are not peripheral gaps — they reflect the foundational gender-blindness of legal frameworks inherited from colonial rule and never substantially reformed.*

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 2. Regional Disparities in Implementation

Nigeria's federal structure and diverse cultural landscape have produced pronounced regional disparities in gender equality outcomes. Southern states have generally embraced gender reforms while many Northern states have lagged or resisted, creating a de facto geographic inequality in the rights women can access.

Indicator	North-West	South-East	National Average
Child Marriage Rate	~50%	~10%	33.40%
CRA Domestication	Incomplete	Complete	36/36 states
VAPP Act Domestication	Largely complete (late)	Complete	35/36 states
Female Secondary Enrolment	Low	High	Varies
GBV Service Infrastructure	Very limited	Better developed	Inadequate nationwide

The underlying drivers of these disparities are deep-rooted cultural and religious norms. Northern Nigeria's predominantly Muslim population and the application of Sharia law in 12 states have tended to uphold conservative gender roles. Traditional authority figures, emirs, religious leaders, have at times openly opposed gender-equality measures: the Sultan of Sokoto and other northern leaders publicly criticised the GEO Bill as 'anti-Islamic.' In contrast, southern states have shown comparatively greater acceptance of secular legal reforms on gender, partly due to higher female literacy, stronger civil society infrastructure, and a different history of missionary influence.

The outcome is stark: a woman in Lagos or Enugu is far more likely to benefit from laws protecting her from domestic violence or child marriage than a woman in Kano. This geographic inequality in rights protection is itself a governance failure, it reflects the limits of a federalism that allows local authorities to override national commitments without consequence.

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 3. Weaknesses of Key Actors

### A. National Assembly

The federal parliament has proven to be a major chokepoint for gender reforms. Women currently occupy only about 4% of National Assembly seats, the lowest proportion in Africa, and one of the lowest in the world. In March 2022, legislators rejected five pro-women constitutional amendments in a single session, citing constitutional technicalities and the protection of religious values. This pattern of legislative resistance, repeated failure of the GEOB, blocking of gender-related constitutional amendments, weak oversight of gender law implementation, reflects an institutional culture that structurally marginalises gender issues.

The National Assembly's committee system and oversight functions have also been weak: there is minimal accountability reporting on how states implement federal gender laws, and budget oversight rarely interrogates ministries on how funds advance women's rights. Many legislators appear more inclined to maintain patronage networks, which are overwhelmingly male-dominated, than to champion women's empowerment.

### B. Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

The Ministry of Women Affairs is the primary government organ for coordinating gender policy, but it faces structural and capacity limitations that severely restrict its effectiveness.

Historically under-resourced and politically sidelined, its budget allocation is small relative to other ministries, and its influence over core economic or security decisions is minimal. While the Ministry has produced important frameworks, including the National Gender Policy (first in 2006, revised in 2021), it lacks enforcement authority to ensure other ministries and state governments carry out these recommendations.

Implementation councils and inter-ministerial committees exist on paper but frequently fail to translate policies into action. For instance, while the National Gender Policy urges all ministries to integrate gender considerations and mandates gender-responsive budgeting, compliance from powerful ministries (Finance, Defence, Agriculture, Education) has been scant. The Ministry's field presence at state level is inconsistent, and it often depends on the priorities of individual state governors rather than having an independent mandate.

### C. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

The NHRC can investigate and document cases of rights violations but cannot prosecute offenders or enforce remedies, those functions remain with the police and judiciary, which often fail women. The Commission has advocated for laws like the VAPP Act and GEOB, but it suffers from inadequate funding, over-centralisation in Abuja, and insufficient public awareness of its services. In states where women's rights are most threatened, the NHRC's presence is weakest, and cultural barriers deter women from seeking its help.

## Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

### 3D. Judicial and Law Enforcement Systems

Nigeria's courts and police represent a critical weak link in the gender equality chain. Many police officers are not adequately trained or willing to pursue cases of domestic or sexual violence, treating them as 'family matters.' Prosecutions for rape or domestic assault frequently face delays, are settled informally, or are simply not pursued. The absence of female representation in upper judiciary and police leadership contributes to institutional insensitivity (Onyejekwe, 2008; Hussaini, 2025).

The judiciary's technical approach, requiring corroboration in rape cases, not consistently recognising spousal rape, treating victim credibility as a threshold rather than evidence issue, further weakens the impact of progressive legislation (Gbadamosi & Nasir, 2023). This institutional inertia means that even when good laws are on the books, women may not see justice or changes in their daily lives, perpetuating a cycle of distrust and under-reporting that further weakens the statistics used to justify reform.

Furthermore, customary and Sharia court systems, which handle the majority of family law matters affecting women, present additional challenges. These courts often apply interpretations of customary or religious law that disadvantage women in divorce proceedings, child custody disputes, and inheritance matters. Women appearing before these courts may lack legal representation, face pressure from family members to accept unfavorable settlements, and encounter adjudicators who privilege patriarchal interpretations of tradition or scripture.



# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 4. Budgeting and Data Deficits

### A. Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Deficit

Nigeria's budget process remains largely gender-blind, treating citizens as a homogeneous mass rather than recognizing the differentiated impacts of public spending on women and men. There is no mandatory requirement for ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) to conduct gender impact assessments of proposed expenditures or to report on gender outcomes of implemented programmes.

While the National Gender Policy calls for gender-responsive budgeting and the Budget Office has issued guidelines on gender mainstreaming, compliance remains voluntary and rare. Civil society analyses consistently show that only a tiny fraction of federal and state budgets (typically less than 1%) explicitly target gender gaps or women's empowerment (DRPC, 2025). Even programmes nominally designed for women often lack adequate funding, clear implementation mechanisms, or monitoring frameworks.

Critical sectors, agriculture, education, infrastructure, security, rarely incorporate gender equity goals into their funding decisions. Capital projects are planned without consulting women's needs, and economic programmes lack components to ensure women benefit equally. Without earmarked funding, laws like the VAPP Act or CRA cannot be effectively implemented: establishing shelters, training welfare officers, and running public awareness campaigns all require sustained budgetary support that is currently absent.

### A. Poor Data and Monitoring Systems

A robust data system is essential for diagnosing gender inequalities and tracking progress, yet Nigeria faces major challenges here. There is a dearth of reliable, up-to-date gender-disaggregated data across many sectors. National surveys and administrative data often fail to capture the differential conditions of women and men. According to Open Data Watch, Nigeria's databases lack sex-disaggregation for approximately 12% of key indicators and have no data at all for roughly 35% of gender-related indicators (Open Data Watch, 2019).

Issues like women's land ownership, gender pay gaps, and local political participation are not systematically measured. Even where data is collected, it may not be analysed: election results were not comprehensively broken down by gender of candidates until recently, and several states do not report gender-based outcomes of programmes. The 2021–2026 National Gender Policy recognises these issues, but turning that recognition into action requires investment in statistical capacity and inter-agency coordination that has not yet materialised.

## The Data-Policy Feedback Loop

*Without evidence, planning is done blindly. If there is no reliable tracking of how many girls drop out of school due to child marriage in each state, it is easy for officials to downplay the problem or for resources never to reach those areas. The absence of rigorous monitoring means successes are not scaled up and failures are not corrected. What gets measured gets done, and Nigeria is not measuring enough.*

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures



## 5. The NGP and the Compliance Architecture Problem

The preceding gaps are not merely the product of insufficient laws or weak institutions in isolation. They reflect a deeper structural failure at the centre of Nigeria's gender governance system: a National Gender Policy that is technically well-designed but institutionally incapable of producing compliance. Understanding this compliance architecture problem is essential to understanding why Nigeria's gender equality crisis has persisted despite two decades of policy frameworks.

### A. The Coordination Problem: Coordinating Without Authority

The preceding gaps are not merely the product of insufficient laws or weak institutions in isolation. They reflect a deeper structural failure at the centre of Nigeria's gender governance system: a National Gender Policy that is technically well-designed but institutionally incapable of producing compliance. Understanding this compliance architecture problem is essential to understanding why Nigeria's gender equality crisis has persisted despite two decades of policy frameworks.

The result is predictable and consistent: MDAs treat gender mainstreaming as a compliance exercise when it is convenient — typically during international reporting cycles (CEDAW, SDG reviews, Beijing+) — and deprioritise it in the core work of annual planning and budgeting. Gender Focal Points, where they exist, are frequently junior officers without decision-making authority, budget influence, or direct access to ministry leadership. They produce gender statements that do not affect resource allocation decisions and reports that do not trigger corrective action.

### Womens' Ministry Positioning

*The FMWA's structural position is analogous to a company's Diversity Officer who reports to middle management, has no budget authority over other departments, and whose annual report goes to a committee that has no power to sanction non-compliance. The organisation can claim, truthfully, that diversity mainstreaming is policy. However, it cannot claim, honestly, that the policy governs organisational behaviour.*

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 5. The NGP and the Compliance Architecture Problem

### B. The Budget Disconnect: Policy Without a Fiscal Spine

The NGP's gender-responsive budgeting requirement, its single most operationally consequential mandate, has no legal grounding. It is not embedded in the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2007 (which governs federal budget processes), it is not referenced in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework guidelines, and it is not a condition of budget approval by the Budget Office of the Federation. This means the Federal Ministry of Finance has no legal obligation to enforce GRB requirements on MDAs, and no institutional incentive to do so.

The consequences are cascading. Without GRB as a legal budget requirement, the Ministry of Finance does not build GRB compliance checks into the budget cycle. Without those checks, MDAs do not experience GRB non-compliance as a risk. Without that risk, Gender Focal Points cannot use the budget process as leverage for gender integration. Without that leverage, the FMWA's GRB mandate is decorative.

### Critical Structural Gap: The Missing Link Between Policy and Budget Law

The NGP's GRB mandate exists as policy text only. Until it is embedded in the Fiscal Responsibility Act or an equivalent instrument, it cannot function as a governing requirement. Every Nigerian budget cycle that proceeds without mandatory Gender Budget Statements is a cycle in which the NGP's most important mechanism is structurally bypassed. As of 2026 — the NGP's own terminal year — this legal embedding has not been pursued.

### C. The Data Paradox: A Policy That Cannot Monitor Itself

The NGP establishes a comprehensive M&E framework, assigning the NBS responsibility for gender-disaggregated data production and the FMWA responsibility for cross-sectoral reporting. The stated output (an annual **National Gender Equality Progress Report**) has never been produced, comprehensive sectoral coverage, or the state-level disaggregation that the framework specifies.

The underlying problem is a data paradox in the fact that the NGP's M&E framework requires data that Nigeria's statistical system does not systematically produce. An M&E framework built on indicators that are not tracked cannot generate the feedback loops that make policy learning possible. This creates a self-reinforcing failure cycle: the absence of data means policymakers cannot demonstrate the cost of non-compliance; the inability to demonstrate cost means there is no political pressure to invest in the statistical infrastructure; the absence of political pressure means the data gap persists.

Nigeria's NGP is attempting to operate as an evidence-based policy framework in a data environment that is structurally incompatible with evidence-based governance. This is not a failure of the policy document, but rather, of the institutional ecosystem in which the policy was embedded without the prerequisite investments in statistical infrastructure, fiscal integration, and enforcement architecture that would make it functional.

# Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

## 5. The NGP and the Compliance Architecture Problem

### D. The Federalism Fragmentation Problem

Nigeria's federal structure introduces a further layer of compliance failure. The NGP is a federal policy. Its implementation, however, depends critically on state-level governments that have no constitutional obligation to domesticate or implement it. State Ministries of Women Affairs, where they exist in meaningful form, vary enormously in capacity, political priority, and budget. In northern states where gender equality reforms have faced the strongest cultural and religious resistance for instance, state-level gender policy machinery is often the weakest, creating precisely the inverse relationship between policy need and policy capacity.

Without federal fiscal transfers conditional on state NGP compliance, or constitutional mandates compelling state action, implementation expectations are aspirational rather than enforceable. States that choose not to implement the NGP face no consequence. The result is a patchwork of implementation that maps, almost perfectly, onto the existing geographic inequality of women's rights documented throughout this brief.

### E. Analytical Findings: What the NGP's Track Record Reveals

#### **Nigeria has a gender governance problem, not a gender policy one**

*The content of the NGP is not the obstacle to progress. The institutional, fiscal, and legal conditions that would make the NGP's mandates operational have never been created. Designing better policy documents without addressing these conditions will produce more sophisticated documents with the same compliance outcomes.*

#### **The NGP has inadvertently provided political cover for inaction.**

*Because a comprehensive gender policy exists, administrations can credibly claim to international reviewers, to civil society, to donor partners that gender equality is a formal policy priority. The existence of a policy without an enforcement architecture permits the performance of commitment without its substance.*

#### **Nigeria does not need new answers to the gender problem, but moreso, the will to engage.**

*Several of this brief's recommendations are already mandated by Nigeria's own NGP — and have been since 2021, or since 2006. Gender-responsive budgeting. The 'no data, no budget' principle. Cross-MDA gender mainstreaming. Annual National Gender Equality Progress Reports. These are not new ideas requiring political persuasion. They are existing policy commitments requiring political execution.*

#### **The NGP's compliance failure is not uniform across pillars**

*The health pillar has seen more consistent MDA engagement, partly because international funding (PEPFAR, GAVI, Global Fund) creates parallel incentive structures for Ministry of Health compliance. The economic empowerment pillar has seen the least engagement, precisely because it requires the most cross-MDA coordination with the most powerful and least gender-sensitive ministries: Finance, Agriculture, and Trade.*

#### **Nigeria's NGP implementation failures are not unique**

*They reflect a globally documented pattern in gender mainstreaming governance: the 'velvet ghetto' dynamic, in which gender equality is institutionally confined to a dedicated but under-resourced ministry while remaining structurally peripheral to the core economic and fiscal decisions that most directly determine gender outcomes. South Africa's decision to locate its gender mandate within the Presidency was an explicit institutional response to this dynamic. Nigeria has never made that structural choice.*

## Gaps, Weaknesses, and Implementation Failures

### 5F. The 2026 Sunset Crisis: An Expiring Policy with No Visible Successor

The 2021–2026 NGP expires at the end of 2026. This is not a minor administrative matter. The NGP is the overarching framework within which Nigeria's gender equality commitments are supposed to be coordinated. Its expiration without a successor policy in active development would leave Nigeria without a domestic gender governance framework at precisely the moment when the SDG 5 deadline is four years away and the pace of structural reform most urgently needs to accelerate.

The history of the transition from the 2006 to the 2021 NGP is instructive and alarming in equal measure. The 2006 policy's notional five-year implementation period expired in 2011. The revised 2021 policy was not launched until a decade later. In that intervening decade Nigeria nominally operated under an expired gender policy framework, with gender mainstreaming dependent entirely on the priorities of individual administrations and ministers rather than on institutional policy continuity.

As of early 2026, no public process for developing the successor to the 2021–2026 NGP has been announced. If Nigeria repeats the 2011–2021 pattern, the resulting policy vacuum would undermine every institutional mechanism for gender mainstreaming across MDAs. Given that the SDG 5 deadline falls within the prospective period of the next policy cycle (2027–2031), the successor NGP is arguably the single most important gender policy instrument the current administration can produce.



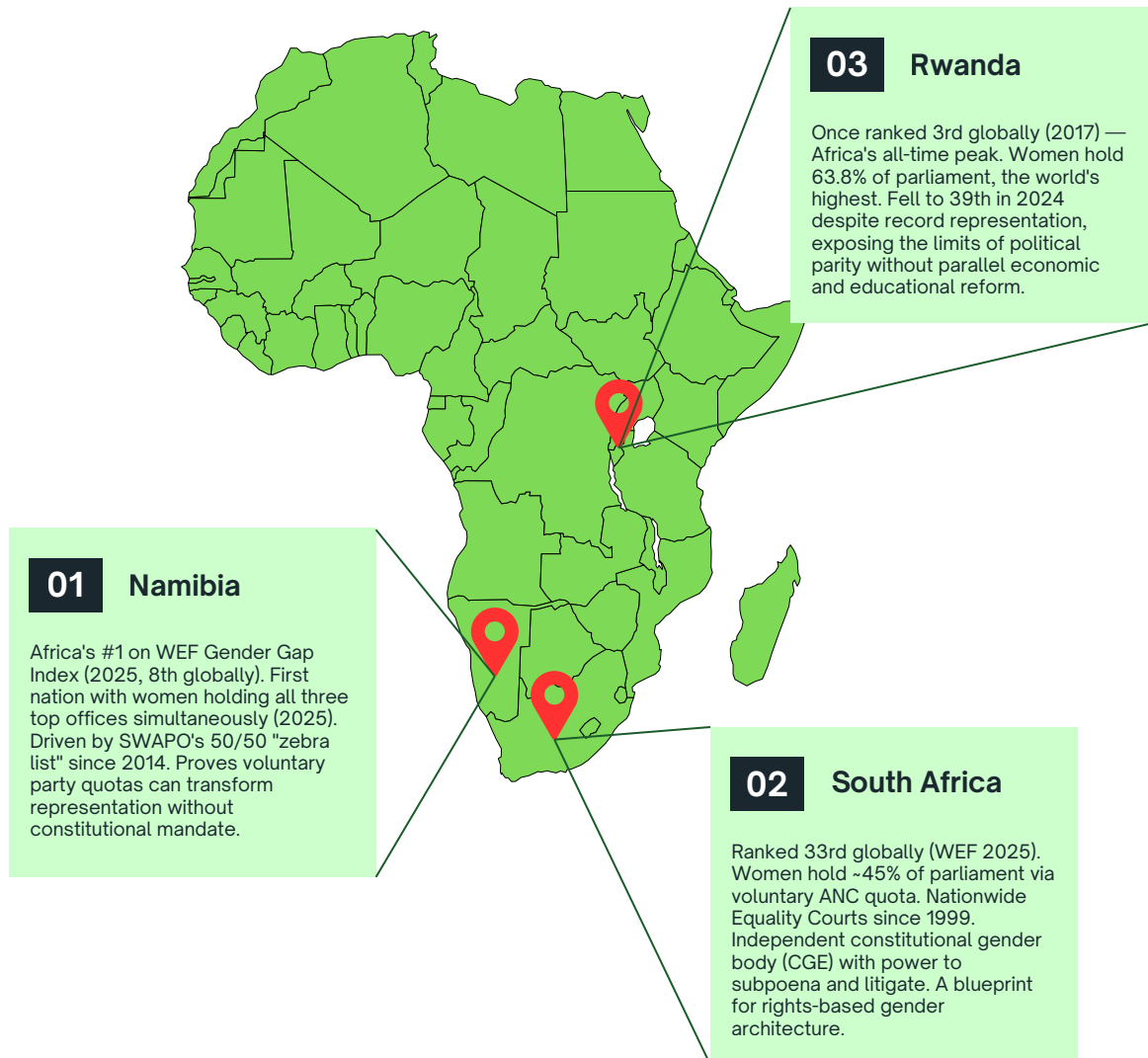
**SIMPLE FIX**  
*Nigeria*



# LEARNING FROM PEER COUNTRIES: COMPARATIVE PROFILES

*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

# Learning From Peer Countries: Comparative Profiles



## Preamble

Nigeria's path toward gender equality can be meaningfully guided by examining three African peer countries — Namibia, Rwanda, and South Africa — that offer distinct and instructive models of progress. Collectively, they demonstrate that transformative gender inclusion is achievable across varying political systems, cultural compositions, and resource environments. Crucially, they also illustrate that progress is never permanent: the conditions that generate gains must be continuously defended, or regression follows. Together, they offer Nigeria both a blueprint and a warning.

Steady Ascent: Africa's Consistent Leader and a Global Top-10 Performer

## Spotlight: Namibia



### African Unicorn for Gender Inclusion

Namibia's achievement is perhaps the most instructive model for Nigeria precisely because it was built neither on post-conflict reconstruction nor on a dramatic constitutional founding moment, but on deliberate, sustained political will embedded within a functioning democracy.

### Global Gender Gap Index Ranking (2025)

# 8th

Africa's #1 for 4 consecutive years (2021–2025). First nation with women simultaneously holding President, VP, and Speaker roles (2025)

Since independence in 1990, Namibia enshrined equality in its Constitution and has spent three decades converting that principle into practice at every level of governance. The result is a country that has held a top-10 position on the WEF Global Gender Gap Index for four consecutive editions (2021–2025), ranking first in Africa in all four, and that in March 2025 became the first nation in the world to have women simultaneously holding its three highest offices: President, Vice President, and Speaker of the National Assembly.

*This is not the outcome of a single reform, but of a compounding architecture of gender-conscious policies built across generations of political leadership. It offers Nigeria a model of what patient, institutionalised commitment produces over time.*



Steady Ascent: Africa's Consistent Leader and a Global Top-10 Performer

## Spotlight: Namibia



”

### Institutional Mechanisms

The **Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare** functions as the central coordinating body for gender policy. Its mandate extends beyond advocacy to include monitoring compliance by other ministries and departments. A **UNDP Gender Strategy 2022–2025** has further structured Namibia's international gender commitments into actionable domestic targets. The **Electoral Commission of Namibia** has also played an active role in gender-responsive electoral reform, including in enforcing party-level quota compliance.

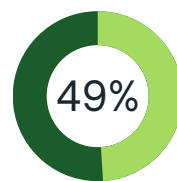
## The 2025 Milestone — and Its Limitations

The inauguration of President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah alongside a female Vice President and a female Speaker of the National Assembly in March 2025 marked a global first. Yet this moment has been accompanied by honest reckoning within Namibia itself. Women's parliamentary representation, which peaked at 53.2% in the 7th Parliament, has declined to 38 of 104 members in the current 8th Parliament — a regression that Namibia's own Minister for Gender Equality publicly described as "a call to action, not cause for celebration." The representation gap is sharper at the regional governance level, where women occupy only 17% of regional council seats. The gender pay gap persists at 11–14%, and gender-based violence remains endemic, with over 5,000 cases reported in 2024 alone.

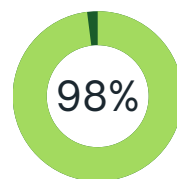
This serves as a vital corrective to any simplistic reading of Namibia's success. Symbolic milestones at the apex of state power do not automatically translate into structural transformation for ordinary women, particularly in rural areas, informal settlements, and care economies.



Nation globally with women simultaneously holding top three state offices



**Political Representation**  
Women in National Assembly



**Girl Child Primary School**  
Net Enrolment Rate

## Spotlight: Namibia

### 1. Legal and Policy Architecture

**Constitutional foundation (1990):** Namibia's 1990 Constitution embedded gender equality from the first day of independence, guaranteeing equal protection under law and prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sex. This constitutional baseline has proven durable across administrations, providing a floor below which no subsequent policy could fall.

**The Zebra List Policy (2014):** The most transformative single reform in Namibia's recent history was the adoption by SWAPO, the ruling party, of a 50/50 "zebra" candidate list system in 2013-2014 (Amupanda & Thomas, 2020). Named for the alternating pattern of its stripes, the system mandates that party candidate lists for parliamentary elections alternate between male and female candidates. Critically, this was a party-level decision, not a constitutional mandate — demonstrating that even voluntary internal reform, when applied consistently by a dominant party, can fundamentally reshape the composition of a legislature. The result was an increase in women's representation in the National Assembly from under 30% to approximately 46–49%, positioning Namibia among the global leaders in female legislative representation.

**Local government quota law (1992, amended 1997):** A legislated quota for women in local authority councils was introduced as early as 1992, revised upward in 1997, and extended further thereafter. This means Namibia has had over three decades of experience with gender quotas operating at different levels of government simultaneously.

**Affirmative Action Act (1998):** This law mandates that designated groups, including women, must be represented in the workforce proportionately, applying to both the public sector and private employers with more than 25 employees. It created economic accountability for gender parity beyond the political sphere.

### C. Key Lessons for Nigeria

**Voluntary party-level quotas can be transformative, without waiting for constitutional amendments**

SWAPO's zebra list produced near-parity in the National Assembly as a party decision alone. Nigeria's major parties — the APC and PDP — could adopt similar mechanisms through internal reform immediately, without requiring constitutional change. This is the fastest available lever for closing the representation gap.

**Constitutional embedding since independence creates durable baselines**

Namibia's 35 years of constitutional gender equality guarantees have generated a political culture in which gender parity is treated as a non-negotiable norm, not a concession. Nigeria's Section 42 prohibition on discrimination provides this foundation but has never been operationalised with the institutional depth that Namibia's constitutional framework produced.

**Representation at the top does not automatically produce equity at the bottom**

Namibia's current experience warns that having women in the presidency and cabinet, while important, does not substitute for structural legislative protection, economic parity, and grassroots enforcement. Nigeria must pursue all three dimensions simultaneously.

**Regional and local-level quotas are as important as national ones**

Namibia's local government quota system, operating since 1992, built a pipeline of women experienced in governance long before they reached the National Assembly. Nigeria's local government structures, currently among the most male-dominated governance tiers in the country, represent an untapped entry point for the same strategy.

## Spotlight: South Africa



### Built to Last, Built to Scale

South Africa's gender equality gains are inseparable from its post-apartheid constitutional settlement. When women's rights advocates successfully embedded explicit gender equality provisions into the 1996 Constitution, they created a justiciable legal architecture through which courts, independent commissions, and civil society have repeatedly forced state action on gender equity.

### Global Gender Gap Index Ranking (2025)

# 33rd

Africa's strongest rights-based gender architecture built on a justiciable constitution. Women hold ~45% of parliament

South Africa's experience is especially instructive for Nigeria because it operates under structurally similar conditions: a federal-style government with strong provinces, a constitutionally recognised system of customary law, a highly plural religious landscape, and a vibrant civil society. Yet South Africa has achieved gender parity in secondary education, a parliament approaching gender balance, and landmark court decisions that dismantled discriminatory customary practices, not by abolishing cultural diversity, but by insisting that no cultural norm overrides constitutional equality.

*This is not the outcome of a single reform, but of a compounding architecture of gender-conscious policies built across generations of political leadership. It offers Nigeria a model of what patient, institutionalised commitment produces over time.*

## Spotlight: South Africa



### Institutional Mechanisms

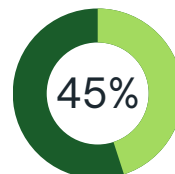
Institutional mechanisms in South Africa are anchored by several bodies that combine oversight, enforcement, and executive coordination. The **Commission for Gender Equality (CGE)**, established under the Constitution of South Africa, functions as an independent Chapter 9 institution with investigative powers, including the authority to subpoena witnesses, initiate litigation, and audit both public and private bodies for gender policy compliance through annual public reports.

Legal enforcement is further supported by the country's **Equality Courts**, which operate within magistrates' courts using simplified procedures that allow individuals to bring gender discrimination complaints without legal representation.

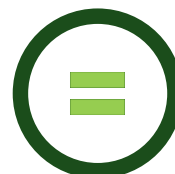
At the policing level, specialised **Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units** investigate domestic violence and sexual offences using victim-centred protocols. Within the executive branch, the **Department for Women in the Presidency** anchors gender policy coordination, giving the mandate direct access to executive authority and the capacity to require compliance from other departments.



Equality Courts were Established in 1996



**Political Representation**  
Women in National Assembly



**Female:Male Ratio**  
1:1 Secondary School Enrolment

## Spotlight: South Africa



### A. Legal and Policy Architecture

**Section 9 of the 1996 Constitution:**

Explicitly prohibits unfair discrimination on grounds of gender, sex, pregnancy, and marital status. Section 9(4) extends this prohibition to private actors — employers, landlords, and institutions can all be held to constitutional account. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000) gives operational content to this clause, establishing Equality Courts to enforce it nationwide.

**Domestic Violence Act (1998):** Provides for protection orders, criminalises psychological abuse, and places mandatory duties on police to respond. In a landmark 2021 Constitutional Court ruling, the police were held in breach of constitutional obligations for systemic failure to enforce the Act and ordered to submit a remediation plan. No comparable judicial accountability mechanism exists in Nigeria.

**Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998):** Recognises the legal validity of customary marriages while simultaneously requiring compliance with equality provisions. Women in customary marriages are entitled to equal capacity to own, manage, and dispose of marital property — directly overriding discriminatory customary norms without erasing the institution of customary marriage itself. This is precisely the legislative model Nigeria needs for its own customary law reform.

**Voluntary Party Quotas:** South Africa did not constitutionally mandate gender quotas. The ANC adopted a voluntary internal quota of 50% women on candidate lists, and the Economic Freedom Fighters operate a "zebra" system of alternating genders. The result — approximately 45% women in the National Assembly after the May 2024 elections — demonstrates that even voluntary party-level action, if consistently applied, can drive near-parity representation without constitutional amendment.

### B. Key Lessons for Nigeria

**A rights-based constitution works, but only if courts enforce it**

Nigeria's Section 42 already prohibits sex discrimination, but has rarely been used to strike down discriminatory laws. South Africa's Section 9 has been litigated hundreds of times, forcing government compliance on marital property, police conduct, and inheritance. Nigeria needs not just stronger constitutional text but a judicial culture — and accessible legal aid — that makes constitutional litigation a practical option for ordinary women.

**Equality Courts make justice accessible without high procedural barriers**

South Africa's Equality Courts accept walk-in complaints without legal representation, use simplified procedures, and require judges to actively assist complainants. This model directly addresses Nigeria's most-cited barrier to gender justice: formal courts that are inaccessible, slow, expensive, and culturally hostile. Gender Equality Tribunals in Nigeria modelled on this approach would dramatically improve access to legal remedy.

**Customary law can be harmonised, not abolished, without losing cultural legitimacy**

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act retained the institution of customary marriage while requiring equality compliance. The Constitutional Court's *Bhe v Magistrate Khayelitsha* ruling (2004) struck down discriminatory customary inheritance rules without dismissing customary law as a whole. This respect-based approach offers Nigeria a replicable model for reforming practices like female disinheritance while engaging, rather than alienating, traditional authorities.

**An independent constitutional gender body creates genuine accountability**

Rwanda's *Isange* One Stop Centres mean a survivor visits one facility for police reporting, medical care, counselling, and legal aid. Nigeria's fragmented infrastructure — with these functions spread across separate agencies with poor coordination — is a key reason GBV prosecution and conviction rates remain critically low.

**Reform customary law through legislation, not just advocacy**

Rwanda reformed land and inheritance law nationally, making equal property rights apply regardless of ethnic or religious community. Nigeria's approach of hoping customary and statutory law will eventually align has not worked. A Law Reform Commission on Gender Equality, with a mandate to identify and recommend repeal of discriminatory customary provisions, is the necessary structural step.

From Africa's Champion to a Cautionary Tale  
— and the Lessons in Both

## Spotlight: Rwanda



### Bold Gains, Fragile Foundations

Rwanda's story is one of the most complex and instructive in the global gender equality literature, because it contains both an inspiring ascent and a sobering regression. In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, Rwanda consciously embedded gender equality into its national reconstruction.

### Global Gender Gap Index Ranking (2025)

# 39th

Once ranked 3rd globally  
— Africa's all-time peak  
Holds the world's highest  
female parliamentary  
representation at 63.8%.

Women, who were disproportionately victimised by the genocide and disproportionately responsible for rebuilding society, were given an institutional stake in governance that few countries in history had extended so rapidly. By 2017, Rwanda had climbed to 3rd position globally on the WEF Gender Gap Index, the highest any sub-Saharan African nation has ever achieved having risen consistently through the top 10 for nearly a decade.

*Between 2022 and 2024, however, Rwanda dropped 27 places in a single year, falling from 6th to 39th. This decline was not the result of a reversal in women's parliamentary representation, which remains the highest in the world at 63.8%.*





From Africa's Champion to a Cautionary Tale  
— and the Lessons in Both

## Spotlight: Rwanda



### Institutional Mechanisms

The *Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)* functions as the central coordinating authority for gender policy in Rwanda and holds a direct advisory role to the Cabinet, including conducting gender impact reviews of major policies before adoption. Oversight is reinforced by the *Gender Monitoring Office*, an independent statutory body that audits government agencies annually for gender responsiveness and publishes public scorecards. The *Imihigo performance contract system* further embeds accountability by requiring district governors and ministry heads to meet gender-related targets tied to public evaluation and career advancement.

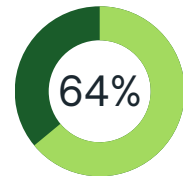
## Rwanda's Regression: What Went Wrong

Rwanda's fall from 6th to 39th in 2025 is explained primarily by declines in two sub-indices: **economic participation** and **opportunity**, where women remain concentrated in low-productivity subsistence agriculture and informal sectors, and educational attainment, where persistent gaps at secondary and tertiary levels were reflected in the data. The political empowerment sub-index, where Rwanda remains globally dominant, could not compensate for these structural deficits. The lesson is stark: a country can have the world's highest share of women in parliament and still fall more than 30 places in an overall gender equality ranking when its economic and educational structures continue to disadvantage women.

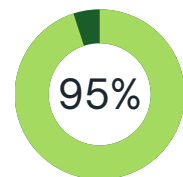
This reveals a fundamental truth about gender equality indices, and about gender equality itself. **Parliamentary parity, however remarkable, is not a substitute for equal wages, equal access to secondary education, equal representation in formal employment, and equal participation in economic decision-making.** Rwanda built the most impressive political architecture for gender equality in the world, then discovered that architecture alone cannot compensate for structural economic inequality.



Highest-ever Global Gender Gap Ranking (WEF 2017 historical peak)



**Political Representation**  
Women in Parliament, Highest Globally



**Girl Child Primary School**  
Net Enrolment Rate

## Spotlight: Rwanda



### A. Legal and Policy Architecture

**Constitutional mandate:** Rwanda's 2003 Constitution (revised 2015) mandates a minimum of 30% representation for women in all decision-making bodies. This is a justiciable constitutional requirement, not a soft target. The result at the parliamentary level has consistently exceeded the minimum by double — 63.8% of lower-house seats are held by women, the highest proportion globally.

**Organic Budget Law (2013):** Gender-responsive budgeting was embedded directly into Rwanda's national budget law, making it a legal requirement for every ministry to submit a Gender Budget Statement alongside annual estimates. Gender equity became a core criterion of sound public financial management, not a development add-on.

**Land and Inheritance Reform (2005 and 2016):** The 2005 Land Law and 2016 Matrimonial Regimes Law guarantee women equal rights to own, inherit, and transact land. A mass titling programme registered millions of parcels with joint spousal ownership.

**GBV Law (2008, amended 2018):** Explicitly criminalises domestic violence, marital rape, sexual harassment, and harmful traditional practices. Created a network of Isange One Stop Centres — 44 integrated facilities providing medical, psychological, legal, and police services to survivors under one roof.

### B. Key Lessons for Nigeria

**Constitutional quotas produce measurable breakthroughs — but must be accompanied by economic reform.** Rwanda's 30% constitutional quota produced a parliament exceeding 60% women. But the 2024 ranking collapse demonstrates that political parity unaccompanied by parallel gains in women's economic participation and education cannot sustain overall gender equality progress. Nigeria must pursue constitutional quotas alongside economic and educational reforms simultaneously.

**Link budget approval to gender data, make it legally non-negotiable** Rwanda's "no gender budget statement, no budget approval" rule transformed bureaucratic behaviour across all ministries. Nigeria's National Gender Policy recommends this approach but has never enacted it as law. A similar amendment to Nigeria's Fiscal Responsibility Act would immediately shift incentives across every MDA

**Independent oversight with statutory teeth drives compliance in ways advisory bodies cannot** The GMO has investigative authority, produces public scorecards, and can compel corrective action. Nigeria's Ministry of Women Affairs can only advise. Rwanda's model of an independent Gender Equality Commission with statutory powers is the accountability structure Nigeria most urgently lacks.

**Integrated survivor services reduce barriers to justice** Rwanda's Isange One Stop Centres mean a survivor visits one facility for police reporting, medical care, counselling, and legal aid. Nigeria's fragmented infrastructure — with these functions spread across separate agencies with poor coordination — is a key reason GBV prosecution and conviction rates remain critically low.

**Reform customary law through legislation, not just advocacy** Rwanda reformed land and inheritance law nationally, making equal property rights apply regardless of ethnic or religious community. Nigeria's approach of hoping customary and statutory law will eventually align has not worked. A Law Reform Commission on Gender Equality, with a mandate to identify and recommend repeal of discriminatory customary provisions, is the necessary structural step..

# Cross Country Comparison of examined African Countries

Indicator	Namibia	Rwanda	South Africa	Nigeria
Global Gender Gap Rank	8th of 148 (WEF 2025; Africa's #1 for 4 consecutive years)	39th of 148 (WEF 2024; down from historic peak of 3rd in 2017)	33rd of 148 (WEF 2025)	124th of 148 (WEF 2025)
WEF Gender Gap Score	0.811	0.762 (recovering; was 0.757 in 2024)	0.785	0.649
Women in Parliament	-49% peak (7th Parliament); declined to -37% in current 8th Parliament	63.8% (Lower House) — globally highest	-45% (National Assembly, post-May 2024 elections)	4.05% (19 of 469 seats, National Assembly 2024); ranked 178th of 182 globally by IPU
Constitutional Gender Equality Provision	Explicit equality guarantee enshrined at independence, 1990 Constitution; prohibits sex discrimination	30% minimum quota in all decision-making bodies; justiciable constitutional requirement	Explicit, justiciable, Section 9; extended to private actors under PEPUDA (2000)	Section 42 prohibits sex discrimination; no affirmative mechanism; no enforceable quota
Party-Level or Legislated Gender Quota	SWAPO "Zebra List" — voluntary 50/50 alternating candidate lists; adopted 2014; extended to all parties by electoral regulation; legislated 30% quota at local government level since 1992	Constitutional 30% minimum — legally binding at all tiers; consistently exceeded at parliamentary level	ANC voluntary 50% candidate list quota; EFF zebra system — no constitutional mandate, but consistently applied by dominant party	No major party has adopted any gender quota; Reserved Seats Bill passed second reading July 2024 but not yet enacted
Mandatory Gender-Responsive Budgeting	Not yet legally mandated, developing under UNDP Gender Strategy 2022-2025; gender mainstreaming embedded in national development plans	Mandatory since 2013 — embedded in Organic Budget Law; every ministry must submit Gender Budget Statement for budget approval	Women's Budget Initiative active since 1995; gender expenditure tagging in place; not constitutionally mandated but institutionally embedded	Not mandated; National Gender Policy recommends it; no MDA required to produce gender budget statements; compliance near zero
Independent Gender Oversight Body	Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare — executive-level; not constitutionally insulated from political interference	Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) — independent statutory body; audits all agencies annually; publishes public scorecards; can require corrective action	Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) — Chapter 9 constitutional body; equivalent standing to Electoral Commission; can subpoena, investigate, and initiate litigation independently of executive	Ministry of Women Affairs — advisory only; no enforcement authority; no investigative powers; no public accountability mechanism
Female Head of State / Top Executive Representation	First female President, Vice President, and Speaker of National Assembly simultaneously inaugurated March 2025 — a global first	Female President of Senate; women hold 52% of Cabinet positions	No female president to date; women hold approximately 44% of cabinet positions	No female president; no female governor in any of 36 states; women hold 4 of 48 ministerial positions in federal cabinet
Maternal Mortality Rate	-195 per 100,000 live births	-210 per 100,000 live births	-127 per 100,000 live births	-1,047 per 100,000 live births (WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA/World Bank 2023 joint estimate; second-highest total maternal death burden globally)
Girls/Boys Secondary Enrolment	Near parity achieved; girls slightly outnumber boys in secondary enrolment	-46% net girls' secondary enrolment; improving steadily	Full parity achieved; ratio -102:1	Significant gap; varies sharply by region; large North-South disparity
Female Land Ownership	Progressive land tenure legislation; women increasingly accessing formal ownership though disparities persist in rural areas	-54% of registered land parcels in women's names or joint ownership (up from near zero pre-2000, following 2005 Land Law and mass titling programme)	Legal equality in property ownership under Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998) and Matrimonial Property Act; implementation gaps persist	Very low; no systematic national data; customary and Islamic law frequently override statutory equality guarantees in practice
GBV Legislation and Survivor Infrastructure	Combating of Domestic Violence Act (2003); national GBV policy in place; over 5,000 GBV cases reported in 2024; survivor infrastructure developing	GBV Law (2008, amended 2018) criminalises marital rape, domestic violence, harmful traditional practices; 44 Isangre One Stop Centres providing integrated medical, legal, police, and psychosocial services nationwide	Domestic Violence Act (1998); police held in Constitutional Court breach ruling (2021) for systemic enforcement failure; FCS (Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences) Units in all provinces	VAPP Act (2015) domesticated in 34 of 36 states; marital rape not explicitly criminalised in Penal and Criminal Codes; no integrated survivor service centres; gender desks in some police stations only; conviction rates critically low
Access to Gender Justice	Civil courts; no dedicated gender tribunals; legal aid access limited particularly in rural areas	Community-level gender focal points in all 30 districts; national legal aid programme; Abunzi (community mediation) integrated with gender cases	Equality Courts nationwide since 1999 — accept walk-in complaints without legal representation; judges have active duty to assist unrepresented complainants; simplified procedures in magistrates' courts	No equivalent to Equality Courts; formal courts inaccessible to most women due to cost, distance, procedural complexity, and cultural hostility
Customary Law Reform	Constitutional floor applies; informal cultural pressure; no comprehensive legislative harmonisation equivalent to South Africa's model	Land and inheritance rights reformed nationally by legislation (2005 Land Law; 2016 Matrimonial Regimes Law); equal rights apply regardless of ethnic or religious background	Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998) — retains institution while mandating equality compliance; Bhe v Magistrate ruling (2004) struck down discriminatory inheritance rules without dismissing customary law	Statutory, customary, and Islamic laws co-exist with unresolved conflicts; Section 275 of Constitution legitimises customary and Sharia systems; CEDAW and Maputo Protocol ratified but not domesticated; no Law Reform Commission on gender
Key Regression Warning	Parliamentary representation declined from 53.2% (7th Parliament) to -37% (8th Parliament) despite historic top-leadership milestone; gender pay gap persists at 11-14%; GBV endemic	Overall GGG rank fell 27 places in a single year (6th to 39th, 2023-2024) despite retaining world's highest female parliamentary representation — economic participation and educational attainment sub-indices declined significantly; score recovering in 2025 (0.762) but structural vulnerability remains	High GBV rates persist despite strong legal framework; economic gender gap remains wide; customary law abuses continue outside formal legal channels	Women's representation declined 19% after 2023 elections; 2 states still without Child Rights Act; VAPP Act domesticated but structurally unenforced; 35% of gender indicators have no data at all

# Synthesis: What Nigeria Can Do Now



Namibia, Rwanda, and South Africa each demonstrate that the conditions for transformative gender equality are not unique to wealthy or culturally homogeneous nations. What distinguished their trajectories was a convergence of political will at the highest levels, legal architecture that was enforceable rather than merely declaratory, and independent institutional mechanisms that could outlast any single administration.

Rwanda's regression from 3rd to 39th adds a critical dimension that was absent from earlier comparative analysis: progress is reversible. Countries that achieve high rankings on the back of political representation gains while neglecting economic and educational reforms remain structurally vulnerable to decline. Nigeria must therefore resist the temptation of measuring success in representation alone. The goal is not a better WEF ranking but to improved the lived reality of women across all 36 states and the FCT.

Reform Area	Namibia Model	Rwanda Model	South Africa Model
Party-level gender quotas	Zebra list (voluntary, 50/50, since 2014)	N/A (constitutional mandate)	ANC 50% list quota (voluntary)
Constitutional basis	Equality from independence (1990)	30% mandatory quota in all bodies	Justiciable equality clause (Section 9)
Parliament	~49% women; first all-women top leadership	63.8% women; highest globally	~45% women; ANC quota-driven
Independent oversight	Ministry of Gender + UNDP Strategy	Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)	Commission for Gender Equality (CGE)
GRB	Developing; not yet mandatory	Mandatory in budget law since 2013	Women's Budget Initiative + tagging
Customary law	Constitutional floor; informal pressure	Reformed nationally via legislation	Harmonised via court decisions + statute
Survivor services	GBV legislation + national policy	Isange One Stop Centres (44 nationwide)	FCS police units + Equality Courts
Justice access	Developing	Community-level gender focal points	Equality Courts in every magistrate's court
Regression warning	Parliamentary representation declined from 53% to 38% (8th Parliament)	Overall rank fell 27 places despite record parliamentary parity	Ongoing GBV rates; economic inequality persists

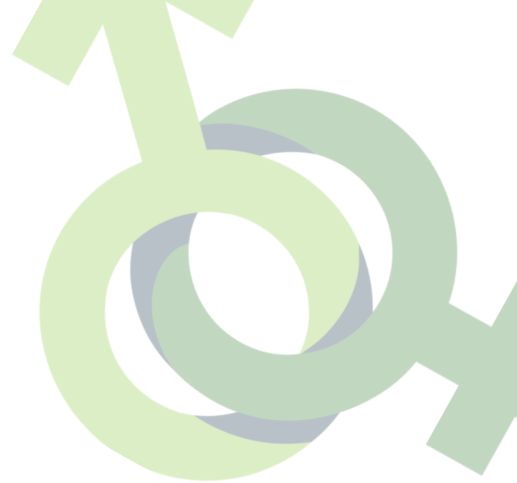
*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

# **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: BRIDGING THE GAP**



Policy

## Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



Nigeria's pursuit of gender equality requires a multi-faceted approach that aligns legal frameworks, institutions, budgets, and grassroots efforts. The following recommendations are actionable and grounded in Nigeria's federal structure, plural legal system, and sociopolitical realities. They draw on successful strategies from within Nigeria and comparative insights from Namibia, Rwanda, and South Africa, adapted to the local context.

A critical lesson runs through all three comparative models: legal reform, institutional capacity, and cultural transformation must be pursued simultaneously. Rwanda's experience is particularly instructive on this point — a country can hold the world's highest rate of female parliamentary representation and still fall more than 30 places in an overall gender equality ranking if economic participation and educational attainment are left unreformed. Political parity is a necessary condition for gender equality, not a sufficient one. Nigeria must resist the temptation to treat representation milestones as proxies for structural change.



# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



## 1. Actionable Legal Reforms

### A. Enact and Implement the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill

Passage of the GEOB should be a top legislative priority. This Bill, first introduced in 2010 and pending at the National Assembly for over a decade, would domesticate Nigeria's commitments under CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol by prohibiting all forms of gender discrimination in both public and private spheres. It guarantees women equal opportunities in employment, education, property ownership, inheritance, and marriage, while protecting the rights of widows and other vulnerable groups. Crucially, it provides for temporary special measures, including a minimum 35% quota for women in political positions and employment, to address historical imbalances.

The international evidence is clear on what such measures produce. In Namibia, SWAPO's 50/50 zebra list policy — a voluntary party mechanism, not a constitutional mandate — raised women's representation in the National Assembly from under 30% to approximately 49% and contributed to Namibia holding the top spot in Africa on the WEF Gender Gap Index for four consecutive years. In Rwanda, a constitutionally embedded 30% minimum quota produced a parliament where women hold 63.8% of seats, the highest proportion in the world. Neither of these outcomes required a culture without patriarchal norms; they required legal and institutional architecture that compelled space for women's participation to exist.



Nigeria's GEOB provides this architecture. Its continued absence is the single most identifiable legislative failure in Nigeria's gender equality trajectory.

Given sustained pushback rooted in misperceptions of cultural or religious conflict, government and civil society must invest in awareness campaigns that engage religious and traditional leaders as partners rather than adversaries. The experience of Namibia — a multi-ethnic, multi-faith society — demonstrates that gender equality legislation need not conflict with cultural identity when it is framed around shared values of family stability, community wellbeing, and constitutional dignity.

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap

## 1. Actionable Legal Reforms

### B. Harmonise Statutory, Customary, and Religious Laws

A concerted legal harmonisation effort is needed to resolve conflicts arising from Nigeria's plural legal system. Customary and religious laws must be reviewed and amended to conform with constitutional equality guarantees and international standards. Where inconsistencies arise, formal statutory provisions should prevail.

A practical step is for the National Assembly, in collaboration with state legislatures and traditional authorities, to establish a Law Reform Commission on Gender Equality tasked with reviewing all laws across legal systems and recommending amendments or repeals. Critically, these reforms must be pursued through dialogue with religious and traditional leaders to ensure cultural buy-in, embedding a clause via constitutional amendment or federal legislation that no customary or religious law may deny any person their rights to equality and dignity.

Nigeria's own Supreme Court has validated this approach: its 2014 ruling invalidating an Igbo customary inheritance rule that excluded daughters, citing it as unconstitutional, demonstrates that discriminatory customary laws can be overturned while the framework of customary law is preserved (Library of Congress, 2014). South Africa's Recognition of Customary Marriages Act offers a directly replicable legislative model as it recognised the validity of customary marriage while simultaneously requiring equality compliance, dismantling discriminatory property norms without erasing the institution. The Constitutional Court's *Bhe v Magistrate Khayelitsha* ruling (2004) reinforced this approach, striking down discriminatory customary inheritance rules without dismissing customary law as a whole. Nigeria can adapt both the legislative and judicial pathways from this model.

### C. Constitutional Amendments for Gender Equity

Nigeria's ongoing constitutional amendment process must prioritise gender equality principles. The current 10th National Assembly has shown some appetite for reform, with the Reserved Seats for Women Bill passing second reading in July 2024 and Speaker Abbas committing to constitutional amendments targeting gender inclusion. This political window must be used decisively. Key amendments include the following:

**Equal citizenship rights:** Amend Section 26 so that Nigerian women can confer citizenship to foreign spouses on the same basis as men, a straightforward legal inequality that has no defensible justification.

**Enforceable gender quotas:** Introduce provisions reserving at least 35% of legislative seats and political appointments for women at national and state level. Rwanda's experience shows that well-designed constitutional quotas produce results beyond the minimum threshold.

**Indigeneity and state-of-origin rights:** Modify indigene laws to eliminate discrimination against women, allowing a Nigerian woman to claim indigene status in her husband's state, or better yet moving toward a residency-based model for rights and public office.

**Remove gender-biased clauses:** Repeal Section 29(4) of the Constitution, which deems underage married girls as adults, a loophole that tacitly endorses child marriage and directly contradicts the Child Rights Act's 18-year minimum.

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



## 2. Institutional Strategies

### A. Strengthen the Ministry of Women Affairs and State Gender Machinery

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and corresponding state ministries and offices must be given greater authority, resources, and technical capacity to coordinate gender equity initiatives across sectors. As currently constituted, the Ministry can advise but cannot compel. It can produce policy frameworks but cannot enforce them. This structural weakness is the primary reason Nigeria's National Gender Policy, however well-designed on paper, has produced inconsistent results in practice.

In practice, strengthening the Ministry means significantly increasing budgetary allocations and staffing, elevating the Minister's mandate to include a formal gender impact review function over all federal policies, and ensuring each state has a well-resourced gender affairs office that reports progress to the FMWA on a standardised, mandatory basis.

An intergovernmental Gender Equality Council should be established, chaired by the FMWA but including representatives from key ministries (e.g Education, Health, Finance, Justice) alongside state commissioners for women's affairs and civil society. This body would oversee implementation, set benchmarks, and troubleshoot inter-agency issues, with annual mandatory progress reports required from each state and ministry.



Nigeria should look beyond the Ministry model entirely in the medium term and establish an independent Commission for Gender Equality modelled on South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality; a constitutionally protected body with the same standing as the Independent National Electoral Commission, insulated from executive interference, empowered to subpoena, investigate, initiate litigation, and publish public scorecards on government compliance. Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office demonstrates the same principle in a different institutional form: independent oversight with statutory teeth produces compliance that advisory bodies structurally cannot. An institution that can only recommend will only be heeded when it is politically convenient to do so.

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



## 2. Institutional Strategies

### B. Expand the Authority of the NHRC and Law Enforcement

The NHRC's mandate should be expanded to explicitly cover monitoring of compliance with gender equality laws and handling complaints of gender-based discrimination in both public and private sectors. A specialised Gender Equality Unit within the NHRC, staffed with legal experts on women's rights, should receive grievances and seek redress. Police gender-desks, already introduced in some states, should be expanded nationwide and strengthened so that survivors can report in a genuinely supportive environment.

Improving enforcement also requires internal accountability: measuring police and court performance on handling GBV and discrimination cases, and sanctioning failures or misconduct such as officers who dismiss domestic violence as a 'family matter.' Training programmes on women's rights, GBV case handling, and cultural competency, supported by civil society and international partners, can substantially improve law enforcement responses.

### C. Establish Gender Equality Tribunals

Dedicated Gender Equality Tribunals or Ombudsperson offices should be established at both federal and state levels. These bodies would function as semi-judicial mechanisms where individuals can bring forward complaints of gender discrimination or rights violations without the procedural hurdles of regular courts. A woman denied a bank loan due to gender bias, or a girl expelled from school due to pregnancy, could approach a tribunal for timely justice.



These tribunals should have authority to hear cases and issue binding remedies, including compensation, orders to reinstate rights, or injunctions against discriminatory practices. At the state level, Gender Ombuds Offices could be attached to state human rights commissions, operating with simplified procedures and in local languages, so that women in rural communities can seek redress for customary law abuses. South Africa's Equality Courts, operating within magistrates' courts with active duties on judges to assist unrepresented complainants, offer a directly relevant model. Their defining feature is that they are not separate, expensive institutions but an adapted mandate within existing court infrastructure, making them replicable at scale.

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



## 3. Policy and Fiscal Tools

### A. Institutionalize Gender-Responsive Budgeting

The Federal Ministry of Finance, in coordination with the FMWA, should mandate that every Federal Ministry, Department and Agency incorporate a gender lens in its budgeting process. Each MDA must prepare a Gender Budget Statement as part of its annual budget submission, outlining how allocations address gender gaps and advance women's empowerment. Budget proposals should identify specific programmes benefiting women and girls and justify expenditures in terms of gender equity outcomes.

Rwanda's integration of GRB into its Organic Budget Law in 2013, making gender budget statements compulsory, demonstrates this is achievable (ECDPM, 2017). At the state level, Governors and State Houses of Assembly should implement GRB in their budgeting processes, starting with pilot states to demonstrate success. Capacity-building for budget officers and planners on GRB techniques should be supported through development partners with this expertise.

At the state level, Governors and State Houses of Assembly should implement GRB in their budgeting processes, beginning with a cohort of willing pilot states to demonstrate success, generate learning, and create peer pressure for broader adoption. Capacity-building for budget officers and planners on GRB techniques should be supported through development partners, including UN Women, the World Bank, and bilateral partners with established expertise in this area.



### The 'No Data, No Budget' Rule

*Nigeria's National Gender Policy already recommends this approach: no budget should be approved without sex-disaggregated data and gender impact analysis. Enacting this as a legal requirement through amendment of the Fiscal Responsibility Act would transform bureaucratic behaviour overnight, compelling every MDA to mainstream gender into planning simply to secure their budgetary allocations. Rwanda's integration of GRB into its Organic Budget Law in 2013 demonstrates this is achievable.*

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



## 3. Policy and Fiscal Tools

### B. Create National and State-Level Gender Data Observatories

A National Gender Data Observatory should be established within the National Bureau of Statistics, or as a joint initiative between NBS and the FMWA, to collect, analyse, and publicly disseminate sex-disaggregated statistics and gender-focused research. This Observatory should cover indicators across all sectors: education, health, economic participation, political representation, and GBV incidence. The current state of Nigeria's gender data is untenable for serious policy planning. Approximately 35% of gender-related indicators have no data at all. Without reliable measurement, budget allocations cannot be targeted, legislative priorities cannot be defended with evidence, and progress cannot be tracked or held accountable. Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office and South Africa's annual gender statistics reports both offer replicable models. An annual **"State of Gender Equality in Nigeria"** report, publicly launched each International Women's Day, would institutionalise this accountability rhythm and give civil society a regular basis for scrutiny and advocacy.

Each state should designate a Gender Data Focal Point within its statistics bureau to feed local data to the national platform and produce state-specific gender scorecards. Subnational data disaggregation is particularly critical in Nigeria's context, where regional disparities are so pronounced that national averages routinely obscure the depth of the crisis in the North-West and North-East.

### C. Mandate Gender Impact Assessments

Just as environmental impact assessments are required for major infrastructure projects, Gender Impact Assessments should be compulsory for all significant public policies, bills, and development projects before adoption. A GIA analyses how a policy will affect women and men differently and proposes adjustments to maximise positive and minimise negative gender impacts.

The Ministry of Justice and FMWA should jointly issue GIA guidelines. Any Cabinet memo for a new policy should include a section on gender impact, and the National Assembly should require that every bill comes with a 'gender implications' statement. Canada's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework and the EU's mandatory gender impact assessments both demonstrate this is operationally feasible even in complex governance environments.

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap



## 4. Localised and Community- Based Strategies

### A. Engage Traditional and Religious Leaders as Partners

Lasting change in Nigeria must be rooted in communities. Traditional rulers, village heads, and religious authorities wield decisive influence over local norms and can either accelerate or fatally impede gender reforms. The history of VAPP Act and CRA domestication makes this plain — in states where traditional and religious leadership has been resistant, legal adoption has been delayed by years and enforcement has been nominal even after passage. The government and civil society must work hand-in-hand with these leaders to contextualise gender equality in culturally resonant terms, demonstrating that the values at stake — protection of families, justice for the vulnerable, dignity of all persons — are not alien impositions but commitments already present within Islamic, Christian, and indigenous ethical traditions.

### B. Promote Gender- Sensitive Civic Education and School Curricula

Nigeria should integrate gender sensitivity into the national education curriculum at all levels. From primary school onward, boys and girls should be taught about respect, equal rights, and the importance of rejecting gender stereotypes. Civic education textbooks should include modules on women's contributions to Nigerian history, lessons on shared domestic responsibilities, and discussions of laws like the GEOB and VAPP Act.

Comprehensive sexuality education, covering consent, reproductive rights, and GBV prevention, should be standardised across states, as it has been shown to empower young people, especially girls, to make informed decisions. School-based gender clubs should be established to encourage open discussion of gender issues. The Federal Ministry of Education should review curricula to remove sexist content and introduce positive role models from Nigerian women's history in science, leadership, and public life.

### C. Fund and Empower Community-Led Women's Initiatives

A federal Gender Equality Community Fund should provide annual grants to civil society organisations across all states working on girls' education, women's economic empowerment, legal aid for GBV survivors, and leadership training for young women. These grants should be accessible to small, rural groups, with simplified applications in local languages and technical assistance to develop proposals.

At the state level, governors should earmark a portion of Social Intervention Funds for women's development initiatives at each Local Government Area level, encouraging bottom-up proposals from women's cooperatives and traditional women's associations. Community Women's Rights Centres, safe spaces where women can gather, receive information about their rights, and address shared issues collectively, should be established, particularly in rural areas with the highest rates of GBV and child marriage.

# Policy Recommendations: Bridging the Gap

## 5. Reforming the Gender Governance Architecture

The recommendations above are necessary but insufficient unless they are embedded within a governance architecture that compels their implementation. The compliance failures of the NGP documented earlier make it clear that Nigeria does not need better policy documents, but more poignantly, the legal, fiscal, and institutional infrastructure that transforms those documents from declarations into governance requirements. The following recommendations address the root architecture of gender governance failure.

### A. Immediately initiate development of the successor National Gender Policy (2027–2031) as a cross-ministerial process

The successor NGP must be co-developed by the FMWA, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice, National Planning Commission, and the National Assembly's relevant committees. A policy produced by the FMWA in relative isolation and subsequently presented to other ministries as a coordination framework has consistently failed to generate compliance from those ministries. Co-ownership of the design process is the prerequisite for co-ownership of the implementation obligation. The development process should begin in Q2 2026 to avoid a policy vacuum at year-end, and should culminate in a document that is simultaneously tabled with — and formally adopted by — the Federal Executive Council. The 2026 policy cycle is the last opportunity to build a framework whose implementation period fully covers the 2030 SDG deadline.

### B. Embed the NGP's Gender-Responsive Budgeting mandate in the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2007 (Amendment)

The single most consequential structural reform available to the Nigerian state is converting the NGP's GRB recommendation into a legal budget requirement. This requires a targeted amendment to the Fiscal Responsibility Act inserting: (a) a mandatory Gender Budget Statement as a condition of MDA budget submission; (b) a 'no data, no budget' rule conditioning budget approval on sex-disaggregated data and gender impact analysis; and (c) a Budget Office of the Federation review function for GRB compliance. Rwanda's 2013 Organic Budget Law amendment demonstrates that this change is achievable and that its effects on bureaucratic behaviour are immediate and measurable. This amendment should be a legislative priority of the 10th National Assembly and should be a condition of the successor NGP's formal adoption.

### C. Relocate the gender policy coordination mandate to the Office of the Secretary General of the Federation or the Vice President's Office

The FMWA's inability to compel compliance from peer ministries is a structural consequence of its hierarchical position, not a failure of individual ministers or officials. South Africa's decision to locate its gender mandate in the Presidency resolved this problem by giving the coordinating body direct executive authority over other departments. Nigeria should adopt a version of this model: either relocating the coordinating mandate to the SGF's Office or establishing a Gender Equality Council chaired at Vice Presidential level with mandatory reporting from all federal ministers on NGP implementation.

### D. Constitutionalise an independent Commission for Gender Equality

The NGP's M&E framework cannot generate genuine accountability because the FMWA (the institution responsible for monitoring compliance) is also a political ministry subject to executive direction and budget constraint. Genuine accountability requires an independent body insulated from political interference, analogous to South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality (a Chapter 9 body) or Rwanda's Gender Monitoring Office (a statutory independent agency). This Commission should have: investigative authority over all MDAs and state governments; power to publish public compliance scorecards; ability to initiate litigation against non-compliant institutions; and a constitutionally protected budget.

### E. Publish the first-ever comprehensive National Gender Policy Implementation Audit before the 2021–2026 NGP expires

Before the current NGP expires, a full independent implementation audit should be commissioned documenting: which MDAs have designated functioning Gender Focal Points; which MDAs have produced Gender Budget Statements; what proportion of the NGP's sector-specific action plan commitments have been met; and what the state-level implementation landscape looks like across all 36 states and the FCT. This audit should be publicly released and formally tabled in the National Assembly. It would generate a baseline of accountability that makes the gap between NGP commitment and delivery visible to a public audience; provide the empirical foundation for the successor policy; and establish the expectation that policy implementation is subject to independent public scrutiny.

### F. Require CEDAW and Maputo Protocol domestication as a condition of the successor NGP's adoption

The NGP's first pillar mandates the domestication of CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol into national law. Both have been mandated by successive policy frameworks since 2006 without result. The successor NGP should not merely reiterate this mandate — it should be constituted as conditional on its partial fulfilment. Specifically, the Federal Executive Council's adoption of the 2027–2031 NGP should be conditioned on the National Assembly having passed, or having introduced with committee approval, domestication legislation for at least one of the two instruments. This converts a policy recommendation into a political pre-commitment with observable deliverables.



SIMPLE FIX  
*Nigeria*

EVALUATION

# MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

*Effective implementation requires a **robust, multi-layered monitoring and evaluation architecture** that operates at both **federal and state levels**, reflecting Nigeria's federal governance structure and legal pluralism. The framework proposed here integrates **legal compliance tracking, outcome measurement, budget accountability, civic participation, and international reporting alignment.***

## **1. National & State-Level Architecture**

At the national level, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs should lead as the central coordinating body, ensuring that all stakeholders implement gender commitments under its guidance. The National Gender Policy (2021–2026) explicitly emphasises tracking, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting as core compliance criteria. This multi-sectoral architecture should cascade to states: each state's Ministry of Women Affairs or equivalent would align with national goals while tailoring indicators and targets to local contexts.

Crucially, Nigeria's federal structure means many gender laws require domestication by state legislatures. The M&E system must therefore track not only outcomes but also which states have adopted and enforced key gender equality laws, capturing variations due to legal pluralism. Consistent frameworks across federal and state levels will ensure scalability, while allowing flexibility for state-specific indicators.

## **2. Monitoring Legal Domestication and Enforcement**

A first priority is monitoring the domestication of gender-focused laws at sub-national levels and their enforcement. The M&E framework should maintain a current 'legal compliance scoreboard' tracking which states have passed and gazetted key laws, the VAPP Act, Child Rights Act, and the GEO Bill once enacted, with regular updates as states act.

Beyond adoption, the framework must monitor enforcement and judicial outcomes. Key indicators include: number of reported cases under the VAPP Act, prosecution and conviction rates for GBV, existence and usage of Sexual Offender Registers, and the availability of enforcement mechanisms such as specialised GBV prosecution units and family courts. The NHRC, in partnership with state judiciaries, should facilitate this tracking, producing periodic scorecards on each state's adherence to human rights obligations.

# Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

## 3. Tracking Gender Equality Outcomes in Key Sectors

All indicators must be sex-disaggregated and, where relevant, further disaggregated by age, region, and rural/urban location to expose intersectional differences. The following sectoral indicators should form the core of Nigeria's gender equality measurement system.

Domain	Key Indicators	Current Baseline
<b>Legal Framework</b>	States with VAPP Act; states with CRA; GEO Bill status	35/36 VAPP & 36/36 CRA yet implementation lags; GEOB not passed
<b>Political Participation</b>	Women in National Assembly; women in state assemblies; women in executive positions	4% (National Assembly, 2024)
<b>Education</b>	Female secondary completion rate; girls' primary net enrolment; gender parity index	Varies significantly by region
<b>Health</b>	Maternal mortality ratio; adolescent birth rate; contraceptive prevalence; FGM prevalence	High MMR; 74.6/1000 adolescent birth rate
<b>Violence (GBV)</b>	Child marriage prevalence; IPV prevalence (past 12 months); GBV conviction rate	33.4% child marriage nationally; 13.2% IPV
<b>Economic Inclusion</b>	Female labour force participation; wage gap; women with land ownership; financial inclusion	80.8% FLFP; significant wage gap; low land ownership
<b>Data Coverage</b>	% of gender indicators with sex-disaggregated data	~65% of gender indicators have data
<b>NGP Compliance</b>	MDAs with functioning Gender Focal Points; MDAs with Gender Budget Statements; proportion of NGP action plan commitments met	Not systematically tracked; no public audit conducted

# Monitoring & Evaluation Framework



## 4. Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Resource Tracking

The M&E framework should monitor budget allocations and expenditures for gender equality at both federal and state levels. This includes tracking the proportion of government budgets explicitly targeted to gender-focused programmes, monitoring budget execution rates for gender programmes, and conducting periodic gender audits.

### Budget Allocation Indicators

Annual allocations to FMWA and its key programmes; allocations to gender units in sectoral ministries; donor and special funds directed toward closing gender gaps.

### Budget Execution and Efficiency

Percentage of allocated funds actually released and spent on gender programmes; a Gender Budget Performance Scorecard rating each MDA and state on effective utilisation.

### Gender Audits

Systematic periodic assessments, led by the Ministry of Finance's Budget Office in collaboration with FMWA, or by independent external auditors, reviewing whether allocations match policy commitments and whether women benefited as intended.

### 'No Data, No Budget' Accountability

Monitoring compliance with the proposed rule that no budget is approved without sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis, reporting how many MDAs produced gender budget statements annually.

## 5. Civic Engagement and Participatory Monitoring

**Public participation** is critical both as a means and an end in achieving gender equality. The M&E framework should incorporate community scorecards and citizen report cards focused on gender issues, enabling community groups to rate local services on how gender-responsive they are. Civil society organisations can facilitate these exercises, aggregate findings, and feed them into state and national reports.

**State-level Gender Accountability Forums**, where government officials present progress to citizens annually and receive structured feedback, should be tracked as an indicator of inclusive governance. Technology should be leveraged: an open Gender Data Dashboard with a citizen feedback feature creates a two-way accountability loop between government and the population whose rights are at stake.

## 6. M&E Methodologies and Tools

Tool	Purpose	Lead Institution
<b>Results-Based Management (RBM)</b>	Define results, indicators, baselines, and annual targets for each policy and programme; enable quarterly performance reviews	FMWA, all MDAs
<b>Gender Equality Scorecards</b>	Annual state-by-state ratings on legal frameworks, representation, outcomes, and budget commitment	FMWA, state Women Affairs ministries
<b>Performance Dashboards</b>	Online, publicly accessible platform visualising key indicators with state-level disaggregation	NBS in partnership with FMWA
<b>NGP Compliance Tracker</b>	Annual audit of MDA compliance with NGP mandates including GRB, Gender Focal Points, and sector action plans	Independent Commission for Gender Equality (once established); interim: FMWA
<b>Gender Audits</b>	Periodic institutional assessments of how well agencies mainstream gender in internal processes, budgets, and programmes	Ministry of Finance + FMWA, external auditors
<b>Impact Evaluations</b>	In-depth evaluations scheduled for major programmes; rigorous methods including before-and-after comparisons	FMWA, academia, development partners

## 7. Institutional Roles and Responsibilities

Institution	M&E Responsibility
<b>Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA)</b>	Overall coordination; consolidate reports from all sectors and states; lead national reporting to Federal Executive Council and National Assembly; host multi-sectoral monitoring council secretariat
<b>National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)</b>	Lead quantitative data collection; maintain the Gender Data Dashboard; produce annual 'Women and Men in Nigeria' report; close gender data gaps through new surveys and methodologies
<b>Line Ministries, Departments &amp; Agencies</b>	Designate Gender Focal Points; track sector-specific indicators; prepare annual gender budget statements; submit data to FMWA/NBS
<b>State Governments / Women Affairs Ministries</b>	Coordinate sub-national data gathering; produce State Gender Scorecards; report on domestication and enforcement of federal gender laws; host state-level Gender Accountability Forums
<b>National Assembly / State Assemblies</b>	Review annual gender equality reports; enforce 'no data, no budget' rule during budget hearings; hold executive agencies accountable for gender outcomes
<b>NHRC</b>	Monitor compliance with gender equality laws; track complaints and rights violations; contribute to treaty reporting (CEDAW, Maputo); conduct independent evaluations
<b>Civil Society Organisations &amp; Academia</b>	Community scorecards; shadow reporting; independent evaluations; capacity building for government M&E officers; host Gender Equality Indexes and research
<b>International Partners (UN Women, UNICEF, etc.)</b>	Technical support for data systems and dashboards; fund surveys and capacity building; harmonise indicators; support implementation of specific programmes

## 8. Reporting and Review Mechanisms

### Budget Allocation Indicators

A comprehensive national report led by FMWA, synthesising all sector data, analysing trends, highlighting achievements and setbacks, and making recommendations. To be laid before the Federal Executive Council and the National Assembly, and publicly disseminated, ideally launched on International Women's Day or during the 16 Days of Activism.

### State Gender Scorecards/Reports

Annual state-level reports covering VAPP and CRA enforcement, girls' education outcomes, gender budget allocations, and new initiatives. Presented at the National Council on Women Affairs meeting, with a standard national template for comparability.

### End-term Reviews

A end-term review of the National Gender Policy (2021–2026) should be conducted in 2024/25, with a final evaluation in 2026 to inform the next policy cycle. Published findings should feed directly into policy revision processes.

### Parliamentary Reporting

The Annual Gender Equality Report should be formally presented to the National Assembly, debated in a joint session of relevant committees, and lead to resolutions or recommendations. Embedding reports in legislative oversight helps enforce follow-up.

### International Reporting Alignment

The national M&E framework should be designed to simultaneously satisfy international reporting requirements for CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, the SDGs, and the Beijing Declaration, using a matrix that maps national indicators to international ones for efficiency and consistency.

## 9. Key Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Nigeria

### Legal and Policy Framework

- Number of states that have domesticated the CRA, VAPP Act, and future GEO Bill (Target: 36/36; Baseline: 35/36 VAPP, 36/36 CRA state gazetting)
- Existence of state-level gender equality policies or action plans aligned to the National Gender Policy
- SDG 5.1.1: Percentage of legal frameworks in place to promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality (currently 66.7%, target: 100%)
- Number of functional Sexual Assault Referral Centres and gender desks at police divisions nationwide
- Prosecution and conviction rates for GBV cases; average time to resolve a GBV case

### Education

- Net enrolment rate in primary and secondary education by sex; gender parity index
- Completion rate for secondary education (female vs. male), disaggregated by state and region
- Youth literacy rate (15–24) and adult literacy rate (15+) by sex
- Proportion of females among STEM students and graduates
- Incidence of school dropout due to marriage or pregnancy, by state

### Health

- Maternal Mortality Ratio, national and by state; target: sustained reduction toward 2030 SDG
- Adolescent Birth Rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19), currently ~74.6; target: significant reduction especially in high child-marriage states
- Contraceptive prevalence rate and unmet need for family planning, indicators of women's reproductive autonomy
- Skilled birth attendance (% of births), access to maternal healthcare services
- Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (national and by region)

*A Policy Brief on SDG 5 Implementation in Nigeria*

# CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION



**SIMPLE FIX**  
*Nigeria*



*2030, the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals, is no longer a distant horizon. The structural reforms this brief recommends — **the GEOB, constitutional quotas, Gender Equality Tribunals, mandatory GRB embedded in law, gender data observatories, a successor NGP with genuine enforcement architecture, and an independent Commission for Gender Equality** — are not quick wins. They require sustained political will, multi-year institutional development, and consistent funding. Every year of delay makes the goal more remote. **The moment of action is now.***

Achieving gender equality in Nigeria is not merely a policy goal or legal obligation, it is essential to securing national cohesion, broad-based prosperity, and resilient democratic governance. The disparities documented in this brief reflect more than gaps in legislation or administrative execution. They reflect deep-seated structural challenges woven into cultural norms, institutional arrangements, and legal systems that have remained largely unreformed since independence.

While progress has been made, the promise of gender equality continues to fall short. Inconsistent implementation of key laws, inadequate funding, weak institutional mechanisms, and wide regional variations shaped by cultural resistance all conspire to ensure that formal commitments remain distant from lived realities.

## The Path Forward

Overcoming Nigeria's gender equality obstacles demands an integrated approach that combines legal reform with cultural transformation and institutional strengthening. These three dimensions must be pursued simultaneously, legal change without cultural buy-in produces unenforced laws; cultural change without legal architecture produces unenforceable norms; institutional reform without both produces empty structures.

Experiences from Rwanda and South Africa demonstrate that meaningful gender inclusion is possible when backed by strong political will, targeted investments, and inclusive governance frameworks. Rwanda moved from near-zero female representation in the aftermath of genocide to leading the world in women's parliamentary representation, within two decades. South Africa used constitutional litigation, independent institutions, and an active women's movement to dismantle customary discriminatory practices while preserving cultural pluralism.

Both nations operated, as Nigeria does, in contexts of deep cultural and religious pluralism, strong customary legal traditions, and significant socioeconomic inequality. And Namibia, while greatly influenced by the gender progressive stance of the ruling SWAPO party possesses a similarly coloured easel for its context. In all three countries, their successes can be attributed to a sustained political choice to treat gender equality as a foundational condition of democratic legitimacy, rather than experiencing particular unique conditions that are alien to the Nigerian context.

A CALL TO ACTION

## IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES



**1. Pass the GEOB immediately**

**2. Go beyond CRA & VAPP domestication to implementation in all states**

**3. Establish Gender Equality Tribunals at federal and state levels**

**4. Launch mandatory GRB across all MDAs with 'no data, no budget' rule — embedded in the Fiscal Responsibility Act**

**5. Create the National Gender Data Observatory within NBS**

**6. Immediately initiate development of the successor National Gender Policy (2027–2031)**

**7. Constitute an independent Commission for Gender Equality with constitutional standing**

# ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
ANC	African National Congress
APC	All Progressives Congress
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality (South Africa)
CRA	Child Rights Act
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FCS	Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FLFP	Female Labour Force Participation
FMWA	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
GBA+	Gender-Based Analysis Plus
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEOB	Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill
GIA	Gender Impact Assessment
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission

## ABBREVIATIONS (cont'd)

Abbreviation	Full Form
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA(s)	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (Rwanda)
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
RBM	Results-Based Management
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SME(s)	Small and Medium Enterprise(s)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAPP	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act
WEF	World Economic Forum

## REFERENCES

- Adebayo, O. (2022, March 17). NASS rejection of women bills blights Constitution review. <https://placng.org/Legist/nass-rejection-of-women-bills-blights-constitution-review/>
- AfricaCORE. (2024). EXISTING POLICIES, LAWS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT IMPACT GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA. In African Centre for Citizens Orientation. <https://africacore.org/existing-policies-laws-programs-and-services-that-impact-girls-and-women-in-nigeria.pdf>
- Amupanda, J. S., & Thomas, E. K. (2020). SWAPO's 50/50 policy in Namibia's National Assembly (2015-2018): full of sound and fury signifying nothing? Strategic Review for Southern Africa, 41(2). <https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v41i2.304>
- CrossRiverWatch. (2024, October 24). Obong of Calabar agitates for female inclusion, calls an end to FGM. CrossRiverWatch. <https://crossriverwatch.com/2024/10/obong-of-calabar-agitates-female-inclusion-calls-an-end-to-fgm/>
- Development Research and Projects Centre. (2025). GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA 2025 APPROPRIATION BILL: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT BUDGETARY PROVISIONS. <https://drpcngr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/GENDER-RESPONSIVE-BUDGETING-AND-FEDERAL-GOVERNMENT-OF-NIGERIA-2025-APPROPRIATION-BILL-A-CRITICAL.pdf>
- ECDPM. (2017). Gender budgeting in sub-Saharan Africa. <https://ecdpm.org/work/she-drives-change-volume-6-issue-2-may-june-2017/gender-budgeting-in-sub-saharan-africa>
- ESCR-Net. (2023, August 30). Bhe v. Magistrate Khayelitsha & Ors. 2005 (1) BCLR 1 (CC), 15 Oct. 2004 - ESCR-Net. <https://www.escr-net.org/caselaw/2006/bhe-v-magistrate-khayelitsha-ors-2005-1-bclr-1-cc-15-oct-2004/>
- Federal Ministry of Women and Gender Affairs. (2021). National Gender Policy (2021 - 2026). <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/nig228614.pdf>
- Gbadamosi, O. A., & Nasir, M. A. (2023). A critical appraisal of corroboration in the crime of rape in the Nigerian legal system. Turf Law Journal, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.62726/tlj.v3i1.28>
- Her Story, Our Story. (2024, November). Map of Compliance CRA. <https://herstoryourstory.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Maps-of-compliance-A4-CRA.pdf>
- Hussaini, M. L. (2025). ENHANCING JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIAN POLICE FORCE. Journal of Social Theory and Research, 4(3). <https://publications.jostar.org.ng/sites/default/files/2025-03/%28JOSTAR%29Volume%204%20%20Number%203%20%28March%2C%202025%20Edition%29%20%2083-95.pdf>
- Ihyongo, F. I. (2025, December 19). Lift Africa Foundation pushes for stronger gender protection systems in Kano. The Nation Newspaper. <https://thenationonline.net/lift-africa-foundation-pushes-for-stronger-gender-protection-systems-in-kano/>
- Ikkenaode, A. (2022, April 2). Why the continuous rejection of gender equality bills? | TheCable. TheCable. <https://www.thecable.ng/why-the-continuous-rejection-of-gender-equality-bills/>
- Iqbal, A., Hassan, S., Mahmood, H., & Tanveer, M. (2022). Gender equality, education, economic growth and religious tensions nexus in developing countries: A spatial analysis approach. Heliyon, 8(11), e11394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e11394>

## REFERENCES

- Library of Congress. (2014, May 6). Nigeria: Supreme Court invalidates Igbo customary law denying female descendants the right to inherit. The Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2014-05-06/nigeria-supreme-court-invalidates-igbo-customary-law-denying-female-descendants-the-right-to-inherit/>
- Liu, Z., & Liang, Z. (2025). Gender equality, human development, and financial resilience: Country-level mediating pathways and international implications. *International Social Work*, 68(5), 816–834. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728251355376>
- McKinsey Global Institute. (2015, September 1). How Advancing Women’s Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>
- NAMPA. (2025, May 13). Over 4 400 GBV cases recorded in less than a year. <https://www.nampa.org/text/22630724>
- Olugbemi, P. W., & Ola, E. O. (2022). Research Journal of Humanities, Legal Studies & International Development. *Research Journal of Humanities Legal Studies & International Development*. <https://doi.org/10.48028/iiprds>
- Omolehin, T. (2025, September). Sultan endorses African Traditional Leaders Conference on Women’s Rights, GBV. *The Guardian Nigeria*. <https://guardian.ng/features/gender-politics/sultan-endorses-conference-on-womens-rights-gbv/>
- Onyejekwe, C. J. (2008). Nigeria: The dominance of rape. *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 10(1), 48–63. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol10/iss1/5>
- Open Data Watch. (2019). Bridging the gap: Mapping gender data availability in Africa. In Open Data Watch. <https://opendatawatch.com/monitoring-reporting/bridging-gender-data-gaps-in-africa/>
- Policy & Legal Advocacy Centre. (2016). SB 301: Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, 2016. <https://p.placbillstrack.org/8th/view.php?getid=2182>
- UNFPA in Nigeria. (2021, October 11). RELIGIOUS & TRADITIONAL LEADERS ADDED THEIR VOICE -CALL TO ACTION ON ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA. UNFPA-Nigeria. <https://nigeria.unfpa.org/en/events/religious-traditional-leaders-added-their-voice-call-action-ending-gender-based-violence>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). Gender Inequality Index. In UNDP. UNDP. [https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2025\\_HDR/HDR25\\_Statistical\\_Annex\\_GII\\_Table.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2025_HDR/HDR25_Statistical_Annex_GII_Table.pdf)
- World Bank. (2024). Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) | World Bank Gender Data Portal. World Bank Gender Data Portal. <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/sh-sta-mmrt>
- World Economic Forum. (2025). Global Gender Gap Report 2025. In World Economic Forum. [https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2025.pdf](https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2025.pdf)

## IMAGE RIGHTS

- Cover Page (background image) – Nigerian refugees in Gagamari camp, Diffa region, Niger © EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Source: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu\\_echo/15842415577](https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu_echo/15842415577) Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)
- Cover Page (second image) Building Peace Across Borders in East Africa — Members of women's forums in cross-border peacebuilding U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Source: <https://www.rawpixel.com/image/4051301> Public domain image via USA.gov. No attribution required; credited as a courtesy.
- Page 1 – Participants at the 16 October women's empowerment rally, Nigeria © projekthope Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/africa-renewal/5099724211/> Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)
- Page 3 - The House of Representatives © Shiraz Chakera Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/shirazc/130086013/> Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)
- Page 8 Women protest at the gate of the National Assembly, Abuja, March 2, 2022 © Sodiq Adelakun / Channels Television Source: <https://www.channelstv.com/2022/03/10/gender-bills-nigerian-women-continue-protest-at-nass-for-fifth-day/>
- Page 16 – Desk globe on table © Kyle Glenn (Nevada City, United States) Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/nXt5HtLmlgE> Licensed under the Unsplash License. Free for commercial and non-commercial use; no attribution required. Credited as a courtesy.
- Page 19 – Parliament Building with Parliament Gardens, Windhoek, Namibia (Tintenpalast) © fr:Utilisateur:Georgio Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tintenpalast-Windhoek.jpg> Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported (CC BY-SA 3.0)
- Page 21 – Xhosa women, South Africa © South African Tourism Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/south-african-tourism/20486056786/> Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)
- Page 25 – Aerial view of the Rwanda Parliament Building, Kimihurura, Kigali, May 16, 2019 © Emmanuelkwizera Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An\\_aerial\\_view\\_of\\_new\\_look\\_of\\_Rwanda\\_Parliament\\_Building\\_in\\_Kimihurura,\\_Kigali\\_on\\_May\\_16,\\_2019.\\_Emmanuel\\_Kwizera.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An_aerial_view_of_new_look_of_Rwanda_Parliament_Building_in_Kimihurura,_Kigali_on_May_16,_2019._Emmanuel_Kwizera.jpg) Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)

All actors, government institutions, civil society organisations, international partners, traditional and religious authorities, and ordinary Nigerian citizens, must take responsibility for advancing this agenda. For Nigeria, the pursuit of gender equality is both a moral obligation and a strategic necessity. Realising it will unlock untapped human potential, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and contribute to a more just, stable, and prosperous society.

The disparities are stark and the challenges are real, but so is the potential. Nigeria has the institutional capacity, the civil society energy, the academic expertise, and the international partnerships to make transformative progress. What remains is the political decision that gender equity is not optional, not secondary, and not a matter of cultural tolerance, but a foundational commitment of the Nigerian state to all its citizens.

Email

[contact@simplefixnigeria.org](mailto:contact@simplefixnigeria.org)

Website

[www.simplefixnigeria.org](http://www.simplefixnigeria.org)

# Contact us