



Gender-Responsive Review of the Federal Government of Nigeria 2025 Budget

And analysis of the gender policy Landscape

By

With support from:



 HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
ABUJA

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PREFACE

In Nigeria, every statistic about inequality is a story of a life interrupted. Behind every underfunded health centre are stories of mothers who never made it home from childbirth, some newborn babies who never made it home with their mothers, children unable to access basic healthcare, other avoidable complications, and deaths. Behind every out-of-school girl is a dream deferred because a classroom lacked toilets or safety, or because harmful convictions against the empowerment of girls are systemically enabled in diverse ways. Behind every “empowerment” scheme that distributes sewing machines, vehicles, money transfers, computers, and wheelbarrows lie concerns about representation among beneficiaries and the creation of a generation whose potential has been reduced to token gestures. Many women do not meet the eligibility criteria for various reasons, including being women. Behind the myriad of empowerment schemes that require beneficiaries to provide their National Identity Numbers (NIN) to be eligible, and potential beneficiaries who even have it but fear how their sensitive information will be handled, yet still provide it, are citizens willing to gamble the loss of the little they have for the hope of a better lot than they currently have? Common challenges affect women differently than men, in addition to the distinct issues women face solely by virtue of being women. This is why this report matters. This is why we must keep asking essential and sometimes challenging questions about how our country budgets and spends its money, and who benefits from it.

At the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF), we see every day how public budgets, though written in figures, shape real human experiences through different ministries, departments, and agencies. We meet the women whose voices were never considered when budgets and allocations are made. We meet the adolescent girls forced out of school because of pregnancy without a means of sustaining themselves, the pregnancy, the baby they would birth or addressing possible birth complications and other forms of harmful normative practices; the widows and other single mothers excluded from credit systems, and the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence who arrive at law enforcement offices only to find very expensive processes, limited commitment to enforcing legal provisions, and inadequate adherence to due legal processes. We meet men, women, girls, and boys whose convictions, shaped by socialization, enable harmful normative practices that permeate all aspects of society, including resource mobilization and allocation. We see clearly tokenist empowerment schemes for victims and survivors of SGBV and other vulnerable groups including the elderly, persons with disabilities, key population and the poor that do not recognize their need for support with housing, the possible cost of procuring accommodation for businesses which will make them less likely to be victims of inhumane task force systems, the possible cost of paying school fees or dependent-related bills, transportation, healthcare and legal bills.

We recognize the reality that there are millions of survivors of SGBV with peculiar and intersecting realities, like so many other Nigerians. These stories are the unspoken footnotes of Nigeria’s budget. The narratives presented in this report are not theoretical or abstract; they are grounded in the lived experiences of women and girls affected by trauma, conflict, and displacement. All names used are pseudonyms to protect identities, while the stories themselves are real cases encountered by the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation. These experiences reflect the underlying factors and circumstances that lead survivors to seek support and intervention from the Foundation and other organizations or individuals.

When we discuss Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB), we are not referring to creating a separate budget for women. We are discussing justice, ensuring that every naira or kobo spent reflects the needs and contributions of all citizens, regardless of gender. A gender-responsive budget is not a favour to women; it is the foundation of fair and effective governance. It recognises that equality cannot be achieved through slogans or projects that begin and end with photo opportunities.

This report, “Gender-Responsive Review of the 2025 Appropriation Act and Gender Policy Landscape Analysis,” is part of DNF’s broader commitment to building an ideal and inclusive governance framework in Nigeria. For 13 years, we have worked with survivors, traditional and faith leaders, policymakers, adolescents, and grassroots women’s groups across states to shift systems of power and accountability for democracy to work for all. Our work spans gender-based violence prevention and response, adolescent mental and reproductive health, women’s economic justice, and civic education. Through it all, one truth remains: budgets are moral documents. They reveal what a government values and who it chooses to protect.

We commissioned and validated this research because we refuse to accept that inequality is inevitable. Nigeria has strong policies, brilliant frameworks, and dedicated officers, but implementation gaps, vague allocations, and politically expedient “empowerment” programs continue to leave women and girls behind. This report interrogates those patterns across ten key ministries, exposing how language like “empowerment” often disguises short-term interventions that lack strategy, data, or sustainability.

The findings remind us that progress requires more than intent. Ministries need dedicated gender units with real authority and funding. Gender indicators must guide allocations. Accountability mechanisms must follow the money, not just its announcement. And civil society must remain vigilant to ensure that budgetary promises translate into meaningful change.

But beyond the data and analysis, this report is a mirror reflecting both the persistence of Nigeria’s women and the gaps that still limit them. It is a call to action for everyone: policymakers, advocates, donors, and citizens. We can no longer afford to separate empathy from economics. When budgets fail women, they fail the nation. When girls drop out of school, when mothers die giving life, when women are excluded from leadership, the entire country pays the price.

To our partners at Heinrich Böll Stiftung, whose steadfast support makes feminist governance research like this possible, and to the researchers Maryam Ibrahim and Alhassan Pereira Ibrahim, my colleagues Diepriye Diri, Opeyemi Adenikan, Caro-Ann Ogri, Dorcas Edet, and Kosi Iloanya, who worked tirelessly to bring this report to life, validators, and experts who contributed their insights, I extend profound gratitude. To every individual, boy, girl, woman, and man who may be a person with disability, a rural or urban dweller, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, affiliated with any minority group, whose realities breathe life into this data, this report is dedicated to you.

Let this document be more than a study. Let it be an invitation to think differently, to plan differently, and to act with courage. The future of Nigeria’s development lies not in the size of our budgets but in the fairness of our priorities.

It is time to ensure that every number counts and that every woman counts within those numbers.



Dorothy Njemanze
Executive Director
Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report builds on the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation's four-year effort to deepen civic understanding of Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Ideal leadership through sustained dialogues with CSOs, ministries, and community women across Nigeria. It follows the documentary titled "Leadership As E Suppose Be" on Ideal Leadership in Nigeria, which sparked nationwide dialogues with community members on what transformative and inclusive leadership truly means. From those conversations emerged a Compendium of Sector-Specific Solutions for Inclusive Leadership in Nigeria, a knowledge resource capturing local wisdom, evidence of economic loss from exclusionary governance, and a compelling call to action for all stakeholders to reimagine leadership through a feminist and inclusive lens.

This report, initiated and executed by DNF, is an effort between the lead researcher, co-researcher, experts at DNF, and a select group of key informants across government ministries, departments and agencies, moves from the principles of inclusive leadership to the practice of inclusive budgeting, ensuring that Nigeria's fiscal priorities align with the realities, rights, and resilience of its women and girls.

Specifically, I thank Alhassan (co-researcher), whose contributions are integral to this report, Dorothy Njemanze, Priye Diri, and the entire DNF staff, whose belief and feedback on the direction of this project made it possible.

I would like to thank Charmaine Pereira, one of Nigeria's foremost feminist scholars, for her advisory support. This work, particularly the recommendations it presents, benefits not only from the research findings but also from the insightful observations and contributions of experts who validated the report. Among them are Charmaine Pereira, Dinofu Vernita, Kareem Abdulrasaq, Felicia Onibon, Colette Ojemhen, Rinmicit Temlong-Aboki, Sakinat Bello, Tracy Onabis, Ere Amachree, and Donald Ofoegbu, among other contributors.

Importantly, I acknowledge the thoroughness and support of Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Abuja, without which this report would not have been possible.

Maryam Mairo Ibrahim
Lead Author

ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS	DESCRIPTION
ACJA	Administration of Criminal Justice Act
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
CDD	Centre for Democracy & Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFRN	Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
DNF	Dorothy Njemanze Foundation
ERGP	Economic Recovery And Growth Plan
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GDO	Gender Desk Officer
GDU	Gender Desk Unit
GESI	Gender Equality And Social Inclusion
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GRPB	Gender Responsive Planning And Budgeting
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies

ABBREVIATIONS

FMoA&FS	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
FMoE	Federal Ministry of Education
FMoEN	Federal Ministry of Environment
FMoH	Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
FMoH&PA	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction
FMoI&TI	Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment
FMoL&E	Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
FMoI,S&T	Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
FMoWA	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NAP-GCC	National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change
NBS	Nigerian Bureau of Statistics
NGHP	National Gender in Health Policy
NGMS	National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy
NGP	National Gender Policy
NOA	National Orientation Agency
NPCC	National Policy on Climate Change
NPGBE	National Policy on Gender in Basic Education
NPGE	National POLICY ON Gender Equality

ABBREVIATIONS

OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee
OXFAM	Oxford Committee For Female Relief
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMEDAN	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria
SWOFON	Smallholder Women Farmers Organization in Nigeria
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAPP	Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WBI	World Bank Institute
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the gender responsiveness of Nigeria's 2025 Appropriations Act, highlighting systemic gaps, emerging trends, and opportunities for advocacy. Drawing on budget analysis, policy reviews, surveys, and key informant interviews, it evaluates how gender considerations are integrated into the national budget and across ten key ministries. The analysis shows that the 2025 budget contains a significant number of allocations labelled with gender-related terms. In many cases, gender terminology is used broadly or vaguely, raising concerns about tokenism and limited long-term impact.

A recurring pattern is the heavy emphasis on empowerment initiatives, which account for a substantial share of gender-related allocations, but are rarely linked to sustainable strategies for transformation. A large portion of the projects marked as significant per the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Marker, relating to 'empowerment' in this report, are localised, hardware-based projects that do not demonstrate impact.



For example, a widow with three children received a grinding machine as part of a women's empowerment initiative. But without access to electricity or a functioning market, the machine now sits idle — a reflection of how poorly designed interventions fail to translate into real empowerment.

Many ministries either lack gender policies altogether or rely on outdated frameworks, creating inconsistencies between stated commitments and actual allocations. Gender units within ministries remain underutilised, often sidelined by other departments, and constrained by inadequate funding or weak institutional placement. A significant portion of gender-labelled projects originates from Zonal Intervention Projects (also known as Constituency Projects) of the National Assembly, which tend to be fragmented, short-term, and misaligned with broader sectoral mandates.

This emphasis on narrowly defined empowerment stands in sharp contrast with the needs identified by gender experts consulted for this report. Their responses highlight education, health, women's leadership, and the prevention of gender-based violence as pressing priorities, yet these areas remain comparatively underfunded.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the 2025 budget cannot be considered fully gender-responsive. Although allocations have increased, they fall short of addressing systemic barriers to gender equality, and continue to prioritise politically expedient, short-term interventions over investments capable of driving meaningful change.

Nigeria has a robust gender policy landscape that is hampered by fragile coherence and implementation. We found coherence between policy frameworks, budgetary allocations, and enforcement mechanisms.

There is an extensive policy architecture that is in conversation with global frameworks, from the UN's CEDAW and SDG 5 to regional instruments like the Maputo Protocol. This architecture, in principle, provides a comprehensive foundation for addressing barriers to women's empowerment and inclusion, but fails to sufficiently address the persistent concerns that they are supposed to.

In a world where language continues to reveal patriarchal patterns, the importance of properly framing project language to highlight their gender inclusivity cannot be over emphasised, more so national budgets as they are critical for achieving sustainable development, in this regard, aligning with the SDG 5 (Gender Equality), specifically target 5.c, which advocates adopting sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women at all levels.

The assumption that budgetary provisions are neutral does not take into account the specific needs of various groups and genders within a society.

The report concludes with recommendations designed to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting in Nigeria. These include building technical expertise within ministries, ensuring stronger alignment between budget allocations and gender policies, creating dedicated funding streams for gender activities, and institutionalising accountability mechanisms.

If these steps are pursued, Nigeria has an opportunity to transform its budgeting process into a tool that genuinely promotes gender equality and responds to the needs of women and girls.



SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report has a wide scope which includes a review of the 2025 Appropriation Act and the gender policy framework focusing on ten (10) key Ministries to assess gender responsiveness and inclusivity within the selected sectors. This report employs a quantitative and qualitative approach involving survey, semi-structured interviews with gender desk officers in selected MDAs, and an analysis of the 2025 Appropriation Act.



The 2025 Appropriation Act was examined using the following keywords: ‘gender’, ‘women’, ‘mother’, ‘maternal/maternity’, ‘girl’, ‘female’ and ‘widow’ to identify budget items that are gender responsive or directly consider the needs of women and girls.

This report also reviews key gender-related policies in the country and of selected Nigerian ministries. The ministries were selected based on two criteria: the size of their gender-related allocations and the focus of the Ministry in terms of addressing issues relating to women and gender. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key Informant interviews (KII), who were carefully selected gender desk officers to gather their insights and experiences on integrating gender into the budgeting and programmatic process. Their identities remain confidential and informed consent was given. Finally, the gender-responsiveness of the National budget was assessed using the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Marker.

The survey was used to generate data on the specific needs of Nigerian women and the extent to which the budget outlined were targeted and administered to gender experts who work extensively with women through interventions in civil society. Ten (10) gender experts were carefully selected, due to their affiliation to women right’s organisations representing diverse perspectives of young women, girls, women with disabilities, and women economic empowerment.

LIMITATIONS

This study looks primarily at the national budget through the 2025 Appropriation Act and does not include individual state budgets in the analysis, therefore, subnational budgets were not analysed and reference to state budgets is to the extent that project locations were captured within national budget line items .

The second limitation is that the analysis looks specifically at allocations that specifically reference groups of women, men, boys or girls. As such, it does not assess the ‘rest’ of government expenditure that are non-gender explicit, which makes up the bulk of the budget. These two limitations are due to both time and resource constraints. A close look at government expenditures that explicitly reference gender provides a good base for future research that intends to unpack more deeply GRB frameworks and gender equity in the national budget.



INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality remains a pervasive issue globally, with continued implications for social justice and economic development. In Nigeria, women continue to face substantial barriers to participation in economic, social and political spheres. We have seen these barriers manifest in lower educational attainment and adult literacy rates, higher rates of poverty and underrepresentation in positions of leadership. Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) has emerged as a powerful tool to ensure that public resources are allocated in a manner that promotes gender equality.

THE UNITED NATIONS DEFINES GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING (GRB) AS “GOVERNMENT PLANNING, PROGRAMMING AND BUDGETING THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND THE FULFILMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS. IT ENTAILS IDENTIFYING AND REFLECTING NEEDED INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS GENDER GAPS IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PLANS, AND BUDGETS”²

GRB creates a direct link between gender and budgeting, with the aim to close gender gaps and promote equality. According to the Council of Europe (2005), Gender Responsive Budgeting “is a key strategy and tool for incorporating gender perspective into policymaking and budgeting.” This strategy has been used in budgets in sub-Saharan countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa as means to promote equality.

In the 1980s the Commonwealth had begun to encourage member states to integrate gender concerns into economic policies. When Australia pioneered GRB analysis in 1984, government departments were required as part of the 12-year study, to identify how their proposed expenditure would affect women. South Africa was the first African country to adopt GRB initiatives in 1994, specifically through their Women's Budget Initiative (WBI) launched in 1994. A number of countries in Africa have followed since including Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Burn and Khan, 2017). Nigeria continues to face systemic barriers to gender equality including significant disparities in employment, education, sexual and reproductive health decision-making.

Also, women are the most vulnerable to trafficking in Nigeria with 77.3% of persons trafficked in 2022 being women. Data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) also revealed that females between the ages of 16-25 are the most vulnerable to being trafficked. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) despite the call for its abolition, is still prevalent in the country. Nigeria's public budgeting process has not traditionally been shown to acknowledge the differential impacts of fiscal policies on women, men, girls and boys. The effect of this is seen in the perpetuation of gender inequalities in key sectors across the country. Even though organisations and partners such as Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Nigeria nearly 20 years ago started work on GRB in Nigeria, through initiatives such as, Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Parliament: A Handbook for Legislators. The trend of Nigeria's rushed budgetary process as seen in recent years from Executive submission of the Appropriation Bill to the passage of the Act leaves insufficient room for thorough legislative action on GRB.



¹ Nigeria, Gender Data Portal. World Bank Accessed at: <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/nigeria>

² Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, n.d.)

³ Madhusudhanan S, View of Gender Responsive Budgeting: A Lesson Learned and Way Forward | International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting, [View of Gender Responsive Budgeting: A Lesson Learned and Way Forward | International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting](#), accessed August 10, 2025.

⁴ Implementing Gender Responsive Planning And Budgeting In Türkiye, <https://www.equalbudgeting.org/assets/files/GRB-Strategic-Paper-and-Action-Plan.pdf>, accessed August 10, 2025.

⁵ Sharp, R. Budgeting for Equity: Gender Budget Initiatives Within a Framework of Performance Oriented Budgeting. UN Women, 2003.

This research is set against the backdrop of a context in which gender inequality remains historically embedded within structures of governance. As such, the research is set out with the intention to unpack the extent to which the 2025 budget allocation and its implementation framework address key metrics for gender responsive budgeting. Research such as this is particularly important because it reveals the practice of how gender policies feed into budgetary allocations.

In Nigeria, all budgetary allocations are captured as line items and consolidated into an Appropriation Act—the law that maps out government projects and programmes, determining the yearly fiscal allocation for them. On 18th December 2024, the President of Nigeria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in a Joint Sitting of the Senate and House of Representatives, presented the sum of N47.90 trillion as the proposed 2025 Budget. This represented an increase from the 2024 budget of N27.5 trillion. On 28th of February 2025, President Tinubu signed the 2025 budget into law for an estimated N54.99 trillion.

Spread of gendered budget allocations

This map shows the spread of budgets across states. States with the highest budgets are darker, and states shaded lighter have lower budgets

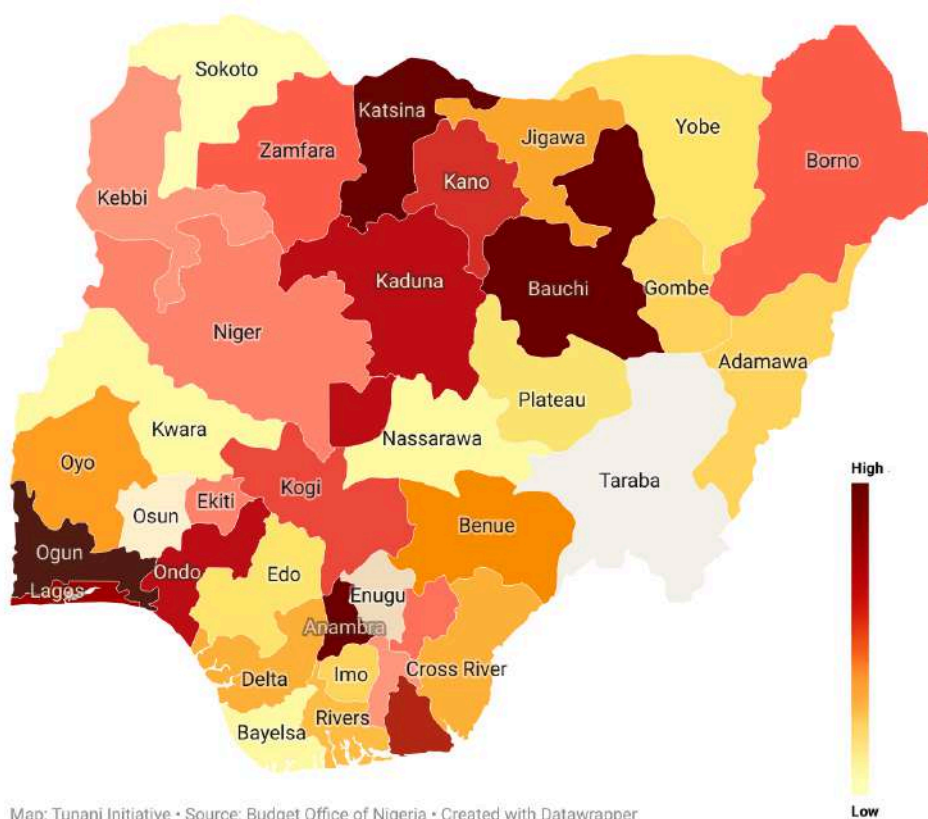


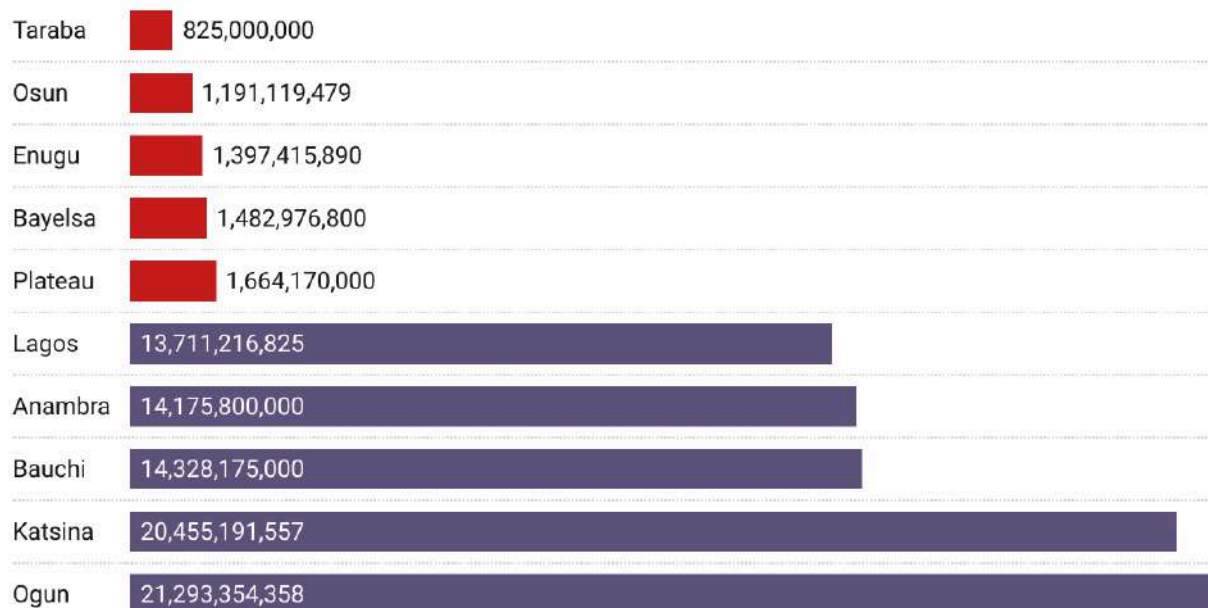
Figure.1 Weighted allocations per State

⁶ Okojie and Amadi, 2008, Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Parliament: A Handbook for Legislators, Centre for Democracy & Development, Abuja, Nigeria.

Allocation by State

States with lowest & highest budget allocations for gender-related line items

Legend: Ogun, Katsina, Bauchi, Anambra, Lagos, Plateau, Bayelsa, Enugu, Osun, Taraba



Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Figure.2 Gender-sensitive budget allocations by state

The resulting assumption of the growth in the budget allocations for 2025, is that there was a deliberate attempt to address long standing issues with regard to gender inequity through the projects presented within the budget. With this in mind, this report closely analyses if there was indeed a significant gender consideration in Nigeria's budgetary design. This report examines the 2025 national budget through a GRB lens to assess its gender responsiveness across ten (10) key ministries. It analyses the gender policies of these ministries and subsequently assess the consistency of the ministries budgets and their gender policies. Finally, it considers areas for improvement and overall gender responsiveness towards the needs of the Nigerian people especially women.

GENDER RESPONSIVENESS OF THE 2025 BUDGET

The global recognition of the importance of macroeconomic policy in shaping women's living standards has only been further established over the past few decades and the national budget stands as one the most important areas of macroeconomic policies. We know that gender inequality is inefficient and costly, these costs are realised through diminished productivity across spheres of economic growth, agricultural productivity, smaller labour markets and even reduced productivity across future generations.

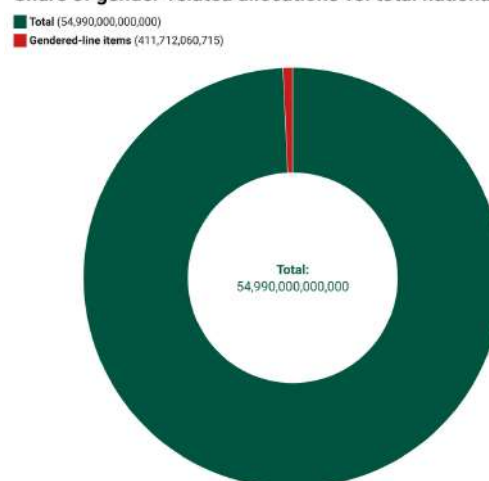
As noted by Sharp and Broomhill (1990), “women's budgets are not separate budgets for women”. Rather it is an attempt to find out the effects government budgets have on women. One of the approaches outlined by the Commonwealth Secretariat⁷ in its original conceptual framework for GRB - Gender Budgets Make Cents, included looking at Gender Specific Expenditures, where allocations that are specifically targeted to groups of women, men, boys or girls are assessed. Secondly, they looked at expenditures that promoted gender equity within the public service, and finally, general or mainstream expenditures, the third of which, while not falling under the first two categories, were highlighted as the most critical as they noted that more than 99% of government expenditure usually fell within that category.

This is the case in Nigeria also as evidenced in figure 3⁸. For the purposes of this research however, we will focus on the first category - allocations that specifically address gender.

This will give us an indication of the types of allocations that are designed specifically with the stated intent to address gender-related issues, and can thus serve as a baseline that will inform future research.

At a glance, the 2025 Appropriation Act reveals a number of initial insights. Many project line-items appear to use Gender-related terms as a byword to bloat the budget. For example, there are six line items in the budget that simply state “Gender” as the project title, amounting to ₦45.64 million. The line items that target economic empowerment for women and other groups are frequently labelled with broad terms such as: empowerment items, empowerment materials, equipment, strategic empowerment materials, encouragement initiatives, without further specifications and where they are specified they usually denote items such as *deep freezers, grinding machines, motorcycles, tricycles*.

Share of gender-related allocations vs. total national budget



Source: Budget Office of Nigeria - Created with Datawrapper

Figure.3 Share of gendered allocations in the 2025 budget

⁷Budlender, D. et al. Gender Budgets Make Cents: Understanding Gender Responsive Budgets. Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002.

⁸ Figure3: Chart showing budget items explicitly focused on gender against the rest of the budget

Allocations By Ministries

MINISTRIES	LINE ITEMS	AMOUNT
Federal Ministry of Agriculture And Food Security	439	114,935,401,255
Federal Ministry of Women Affairs	145	91,055,085,280
Federal Ministry of Health And Social Welfare	95	85,589,000,267
Federal Ministry of Labour And Employment	116	18,700,486,500
Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	98	18,169,508,184
Federal Ministry of Education	94	15,155,591,357
Federal Ministry of Interior	3	10,687,216,212
Federal Ministry of Sports Development	4	9,152,000,000
The Presidency	63	7,508,168,910
Federal Ministry of Industries, Trade And Investment	40	7,049,578,564

Table.1 Top ten allocations of gender-specific line items per ministry

Through our analysis, we found fifteen emergent themes that the budget addresses with regards to gender. These fifteen thematic groups are: Agriculture Support Programmes, Digital Literacy, Economic Empowerment, Education, Educational Infrastructure, Energy and Environmental Protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Health, Infrastructural Development, Palliatives, Social Protection, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Disability Inclusion, Gender Mainstreaming and Women Leadership. These themes, rather than indicate a particular pattern or coherence in approach to gender-sensitive budgeting, are more indicative of our own attempt to find a pattern. At first glance, we argue that there is little coherence in the clusters of gendered line items. This is the case both inter and intra-ministerially.

To score the alignment of Nigeria's budget with standardised gender equality goals, we applied the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Gender Equality Marker to gender-related line items within the budget. This internationally standardised assessment tool evaluates the extent to which budget expenditures integrate gender considerations as either principal or significant objectives within programme design and implementation.

OECD DAC Gender Equality Marker

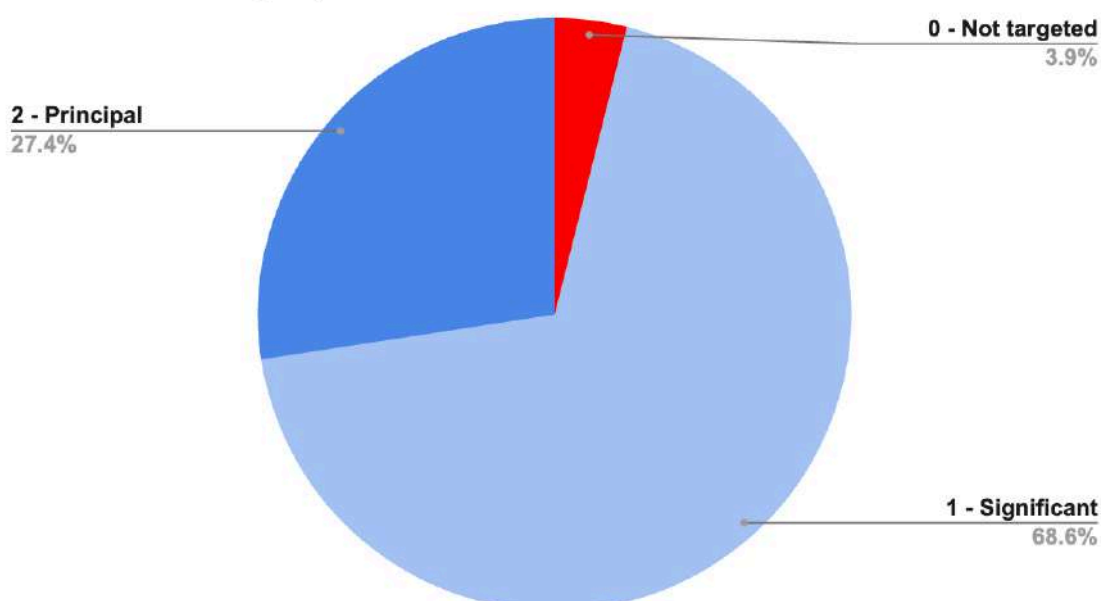


Figure.4 Gender Equality Marker

An intriguing concern emerged from the analysis, 3.9% of the considered line items did not primarily target women or gender equality as a main objective, despite incorporating gendered terminology in their titles. This points to a disconnection between how programmes are presented in the budget and their actual operational focus. 68.6% of budget line items considered gender in their presentation, through inclusive language. However, while these programmes acknowledge gender differences, they do not appear to focus on long-term systemic change that would address underlying structural inequalities.

Significantly, only 27.4% of line items directly targeted women or addressed women-specific issues, representing the kind of focused interventions most likely to drive substantive change in gender equality outcomes.



GENDER POLICY LANDSCAPE: A CLOSE-UP VIEW

Efforts to define gender equality at the global level have been shaped by international agreements, conventions, and frameworks led by the United Nations and other global organisations. Over the years, several key instruments have been established to set these standards. While not an exhaustive list, the following represent some of the most widely recognised benchmarks: the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5 – Gender Equality), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions such as No.100 on equal remuneration, No.111 on discrimination in employment, No.156 on workers with family responsibilities, No.183 on maternity protection, and No.189 on domestic workers. Other important frameworks include the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and regionally, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). The highest authority for gender equality in Nigeria is the constitutional commitment enshrined in Article 42 of the 1999 Constitution, providing for freedom from discrimination based on sex⁹.

These instruments establish a shared understanding of what gender equality should look like in practice. Drawing from the collective objectives of these instruments, gender equality in any society requires the presence of the following key variables:

1. Non-discrimination
2. Political participation and leadership: Effective participation and leadership in all levels of decision-making in political and public life
3. Equal legal capacity for women and men
4. Freedom from violence
5. Economic participation and equality
6. Educational equality
7. Health and reproductive rights
8. Maternity protection
9. Access to Healthcare
10. Equal Employment and Remuneration
11. Recognition of unpaid care work
12. Access to Technology
13. Freedom from Harmful Practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

To track progress of gender equality globally, gender indexes have been developed. Indexes such as the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 have been cited as “one of the most established indices of national gender inequality in the world.”¹⁰



⁹ CFRN

The GGGI ranks nations based on four criteria, which are: Women's Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. Even though this policy has been criticised for its inconsideration of issues that "disproportionately affect boys and men"¹¹, it remains the longest used index for tracking equality progress globally¹². The 2025 GGGI ranks Nigeria as 124 out of 148 countries¹³. Looking closely at subindexes, Nigeria ranks in order of the severity of inequality, from least to most severe: Economic Participation and Opportunity 24, Health and Survival 117, Educational Attainment 139, Political Empowerment 143¹⁴.

In 2006, Nigeria's GGGI ranking was 94 out of 115 countries, ranking 59 in Economic Participation and Opportunity, 99 in Health and Survival, 99 in Political Empowerment, 104 in Educational Attainment. The most recent ranking of 2025 shows the inequality gap for women in Nigeria has deepened, approximately 30 ranks worse if we normalise by the percentile position. The most affected sectors are political empowerment, ranking bottom 6 globally, and educational attainment.

However, significant progress has been made in economic participation, as Nigeria ranks 24th globally.

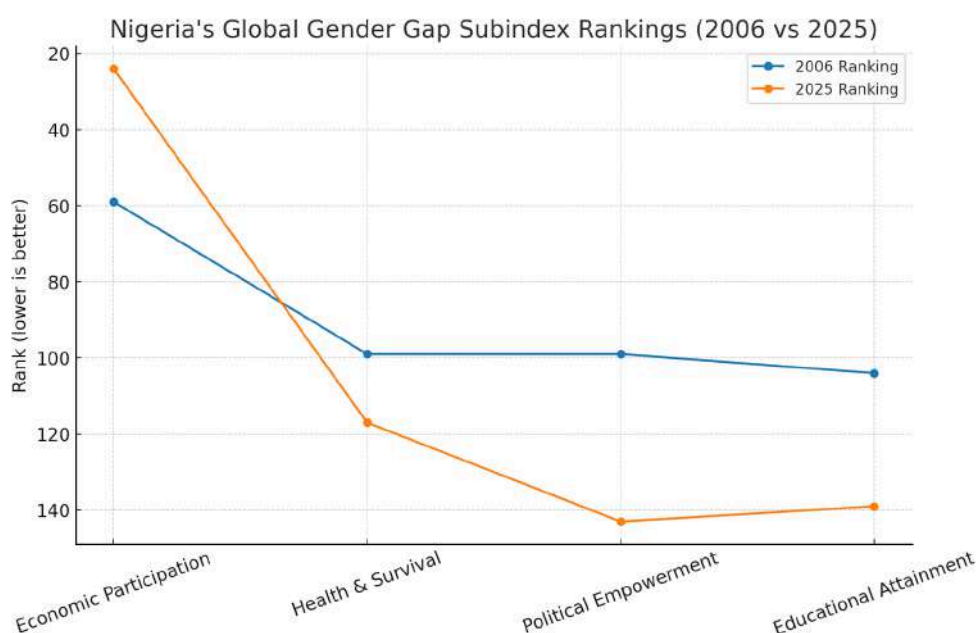
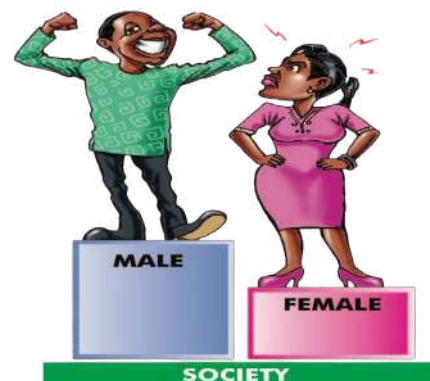


Figure.5 Data from World Economic Forum¹⁵

This decline in the fate of Nigerian women is evidenced by high maternal mortality, low political representation, educational inequality, persistence of rape culture amongst many other visible and hidden disadvantages. **Nigeria still has the highest estimated number of maternal deaths globally, even though the maternal mortality ratio has improved from 1344 in 2000 to 993 in 2023¹⁶.** The country's numbers still remain above the regional average, accounting for over one-quarter of all estimated global maternal deaths in 2020¹⁷.

¹⁰ Pal, Kusum Kali, et al. (2024) Global Gender Gap Report 2024. World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>

¹¹ Stoet G, Geary DC (2019) A simplified approach to measuring national gender inequality. PLOS ONE 14(1): e0205349. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205349>

¹² Pal, Kusum Kali, et al. (2024) Global Gender Gap Report 2024. World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>

¹³ Global Gender Gap Report 2025. World Economic Forum, Insight Report, June 2025, https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2025.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid

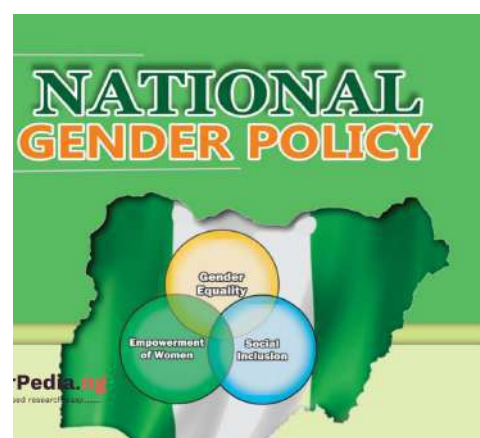
Globally, 40% of women and girls live in countries with high or very high levels of discrimination in social institutions. According to the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (2023), Nigeria is one of such countries. These inequalities are deepened by patriarchy which is the set standard within households and exists in public life, with the greatest social inequality existing in ‘discrimination in the family’ and ‘restricted civil liberties’.¹⁹

Within Nigerian civic life, women account for over half of the nation's voting population, yet a plethora of reasons such as cultural norms, violence against women, financial exclusion and existing patriarchal structures within political party structures makes it nearly impossible for women to attain equitable political representation. A crisis that has placed national parliamentary representation for women at less than 5%. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a Paris-based international organisation of national parliaments, Nigeria ranks 178 out of 183 in terms of women's representation in national parliaments globally, despite being Africa's most populous country²⁰.

Policymakers as a result of the myriad of inequalities facing Nigerian women have attempted to address them through targeted policy interventions. From 2006 till date, the Federal Government of Nigeria has rolled out ‘Gender Policies’ that are targeted towards tackling gender inequalities. Key National Gender policies designed to tackle inequalities in Nigeria are: National Gender Policy (2021-2026), National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2016), National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Persons with Disabilities with emphasis on Women and Girls (2018), National Gender Policy in Health (2019), National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change For Nigeria (2020), National Policy on Gender in Education (2021-2031), National Clean Cooking Policy (2024), National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (2025).

The National Gender Policy considers, holistically, issues Nigerian women grapple with, while the remaining policies listed cover women's issues in the following sectors: Agriculture, Education, Health, Sexual and Reproductive Life, Disability Rights and the Environment. This underscores the urgency of assessing Nigeria’s gender policy framework, its coherence and capacity to deliver measurable progress.

The policy framework in Nigeria is sector-specific as opposed to being Ministry-specific. That means multiple ministries can develop a policy. However, in terms of design, Ministries can take responsibility in leading the drafting of sectorial policies that align with their core mandates. For the purposes of this report, gender policies will be examined at ministerial level.



¹⁵ Note that this graph only compares the years 2006 and 2025.

¹⁶ Gender data, World Bank, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/nigeria> , accessed August 12, 2025

¹⁷ OECD (2023), SIGI 2023 Global Report: Gender Equality in Times of Crisis, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4607b7c7-en>.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Monthly Ranking of Women, Inter-Parliamentary Union, https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_year=2025&date_month=08, accessed July 20, 2025

The National Gender Policy (NGP) is Nigeria's key framework for advancing gender equality. Its scope is expansive, guided by three elements collectively referred to as the GEESI (Gender Equality, Empowerment of Women, and Social Inclusion) Framework. The NGP covers eight priority areas, each with subcategories that touch on agriculture and rural development, employment, health, maternal and child health, education, disability, social protection, water and sanitation, housing, climate change and environment, media, security, access to justice, women's rights, leadership, political participation, and sexual and gender-based violence.

The policy's goals are:

1. To build a just society devoid of discrimination
2. Mainstreaming equitably the needs and concerns of women, men, girls, and boys in all sectors of national development²¹.

This policy has been lauded for its comprehensive nature, it acknowledges Nigeria's multi-dimensional nature of inequality and the need to address barriers facing rural women, women with disabilities and young women. The gender policy aligns with the international gender equality framework and national commitments. It reinforces Nigeria's constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination and references key legislation including the Child Rights Act and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act.

The NGP targets nationwide domestication, implementation, and annual evaluation while advocating for stiffer penalties for sexual offenders under the VAPP Act. Though, it remains unclear how this would be achieved without legislative review. To establish a gender-responsive legal system, the NGP calls for reviewing the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) "from a gender perspective" and examining labour laws and policies for GEESI compliance. The policy also aligns with national development frameworks such as the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP).



The targets of the NGP attempt to cover nearly every aspect of national life – from governance, legislative reform to economic empowerment, livelihood, education, human development, social protection, media, security, justice and cultural reform. These targets of the NGP are found under policy statements backed by objectives and strategies. Making them comprehensive in approach. Though it is comprehensive in scope, the ambitious broadness results in repetition, weakening its focus and overall coherence. Streamlining the focus of this policy's priority targets could help sharpen direction for implementation.



SOURCE: AI GENERATED IMAGE

²¹ National Gender Policy, p32

THE NGP AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Institutional Design and Structure

Despite the strong design of the NGP, its implementation has lagged. The policy adopts a National Gender Management System (NGMS) with four pillars—enabling environment, processes, structures, and tools, recognising gender mainstreaming as the core approach. These pillars rely on multi-level state coordinators with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs at the centre, and non-state actors as active partners. Though this approach appears holistic, ministries must bear greater responsibility for gender mainstreaming in the sectors they coordinate.

Gender Units in Ministries

The NGP prescribes gender units, or at least gender focal persons, in all Ministries. Visits to (ten) select MDAs show that this requirement has largely been complied with. However, compliance has not necessarily led to functional output. In some Ministries—such as Labour, Environment and Industry—gender units have participated in the drafting sector-specific gender policies (in Ministry of Labour the process is ongoing, while the Ministry of Trade and Industry has experienced continuity issues from the past administration to this one which has stalled progress), yet their influence on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), and in some cases programme design and implementation, remains limited. In others, such as Humanitarian Affairs²², gender units suffer from severe underfunding and lack of apparent coherence within the broader work of the ministry, and in ministries such as Science, Innovation and Technology, they have little to no influence on programmatic design and no funding.

Limitations of Placement and Authority

The NGP further prescribes that gender units or focal persons should be placed under the offices of Permanent Secretaries or Director Generals. In practice, this structure has limited their effectiveness because placing gender units under Permanent Secretaries' offices without budgetary authority makes them symbolic rather than functional. The clear recommendation is that, to ensure gender units do not exist only to tick a box, their powers should be expanded so they form a critical part of Ministry budget preparations. After all, budgets fund projects and operations.

Institutional Framework and Policy Instability

The institutional framework for implementing the NGP also dampens efficiency. With overlapping targets and no specified responsible MDA, a big implementation gap exists. Strategies for implementing the gender policy cannot work without clear accountability. The role of institutional frameworks cannot be ignored because they often determine the success of any policy. The Ministry of Women Affairs itself illustrates the problem of institutional instability. The first national machinery with a specific mandate for women's affairs was established in 1989 as the National Commission for Women. In 1995 it was upgraded to a full Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, renamed in 1999 to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, and restructured again in 2004 when Youth Development was moved out. Between 2010 and 2019, it underwent several further changes in name and scope before reverting to the Ministry of Women Affairs. The Ministry has rarely enjoyed a significant stretch of stability.

²² In our visit to a number of ministries, we found that the general staff of the ministries did not always know where the gender desk office was, or even the identity of the gender desk officer. This was indicative of a broader trend within government structures of a lack of coherence across departments and units.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

It is reported that women make up nearly 70% of Nigeria's agricultural workforce²⁴, yet they are sidelined from value addition, markets, and decision-making, producing 30 percent less per hectare in comparison to male farmers²⁵. The National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods report, 2018 revealed that Nigeria had a gender productivity gap of 30.8%, the widest in comparison to Tanzania and Uganda²⁶, with data pointing to a male-dominated sector in terms of "access to land, inputs, outputs, benefits, earnings and support services."²⁷



It is against this backdrop that the National Gender Policy on Agriculture was launched in 2019. This is a comprehensive document aimed at addressing various gender-based issues and biases in agriculture. The policy's stated goal is to *"ensure equal opportunities and access to resources, services and programmes in agriculture in Nigeria."*²⁸ It has a clear focus on equity in access and opportunities for male and female farmers, and it set out to achieve this through:

- a. Building staff and stakeholder competences in gender-aware programming
- b. Gender-responsive programming, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and reporting systems
- c. Gender-responsive data collection and evidence-based planning
- d. Multi-stakeholder partnerships to respond to gender needs in the sector
- e. Gender-responsive delivery of agricultural services.

This policy is holistic and well aligned with the NGP. It covers institutional, financial, and service delivery dimensions, strongly aligning with gender mainstreaming best practices. However, it lacked clear indicators to measure progress. While our visit to the Ministry of Agriculture showed it had an established Gender Unit, it was unclear the extent of the role it played within the ministry. The policy relies on the following implementation structures: a Gender Steering Committee, whose members shall be no more than 10 drawn from the Ministry, academia, and farmers' associations, to meet at least every three months. The policy also names Gender Focal Points/Persons (GFPs) as implementers at agency level.

The policy has a broad scope, clear objectives, and focused targets. However, its implementation structure leaves broad room for improvement. Its success rests heavily on the development of guidelines for programme planning and implementation, which target 35% women's representation in programmatic design in a sector where women already make up approximately 70%. It also planned for the development of a GRB toolkit, but there is no public evidence of such a toolkit.

²⁴ Nigerian women contribute 70 per cent of agricultural workforce - AfDB | Premium Times Nigeria, accessed Aug 10, 2025.

²⁵ World Bank. 2023. Gender Gaps in Agriculture Productivity and Public Spending in Nigeria. Nigeria Gender Innovation Lab. © World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/40392> License: CC BY-NC 3.0 IGO.

²⁶ National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods – Nigeria. Country Gender Assessment Series, Abuja. 92 pp. ISBN 978-92-5-130810-3 (FAO). Website: www.fao.org/publications.

²⁷ National Gender Policy on Agriculture, 9

²⁸ National Gender Policy on Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture has benefited from national budget increments, even though it still falls short of the 10% of the national budget as prescribed by the Maputo Declaration Recommendation, accounting for just 4.03% of the 2025 budget. Despite the intentions of the National Gender Policy on Agriculture, a GRB analysis conducted by OXFAM in 2024 found that less than 2% of the Ministry's budget was gender-sensitive²⁹. Our analysis of the 2025 budget shows that only 5.17% (₦114.64 billion) of the Ministry's budget line items had gender considerations, out of which only a fraction ₦31.94 billion, were directly tied to agricultural support programmes.

For example, ActionAid's community scorecard research in selected Nigerian states documented how smallholder women farmers consistently lack access to land and formal credit, and that these gaps, alongside limited inputs and extension services, remain among the "most serious agricultural challenges" constraining women's farm productivity and participation in government support programmes.



The evident gaps in this sector have led to the displeasure of Nigerian female farmers. Recently, in June 2025, women farmers led by the Small Scale Women Farmers Organization in Nigeria (SWOFON), a coalition of over 500,000 Nigerian women farmers' associations and groups, decried marginalisation in an advocacy visit to the Ministry of Women Affairs.³⁰ The Ministry of Women Affairs, in an effort to close the gender gap in Nigeria's agricultural sector, has developed programmes such as the Women Agro Value Expansion initiative, designed to enhance women's participation in both local and international markets.³¹ We found that there is a connection between women's representation and women's empowerment. In Aidoko's analysis³² of GRB and agriculture in Rwanda, the writer held the position that there is a link between the increase in women's leadership and the progress the country has witnessed in the empowerment of female farmers, as both men and women demonstrate relatively high levels of empowerment in the agricultural sector³³, accounting for 91% of the nation's food³⁴. In January 2025, Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security began a strategic review of the National Gender Policy on Agriculture.³⁵

²⁹ OXFAM, (2024). Synthesis Report on Gender Responsive Budgeting for Small Scale Women Farmers in 2024 Budget of the Federal Government, February 2024.

³⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK5b_EnsgAs

³¹ Premium Times, Nigerian govt unveils programme to boost women's role in agribusiness, Accessed Aug 10, 2025

³² Vivian Aidoko, Gender Responsive Budgeting in Nigeria: Using the African Feminism Perspective to Analyse GRB in Nigeria, 2025, <https://edepot.wur.nl/691736>

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

The NGP's policy statement for Educational Attainment, Vocational and Life Skills is, "facilitating the delivery of an inclusive educational sector plan aligned with industry, market and life learning and the elimination of gender and disability disparities at all levels of education."³⁶ In 2006, the Ministry of Education launched the National Policy on Gender in Basic Education (NPGBE), focused on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education to ensure equal access for all children in Nigeria. However, the scope of the NPGBE did not sufficiently address education gaps. The Ministry therefore revised and expanded it into the National Policy on Gender in Education (NPGE), which goes beyond basic education (Pre-primary, Primary, Junior Secondary School) to cover Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE), Adult and Non-Formal Education, Post-Basic Education (Secondary School and Technical Colleges), and Tertiary Education—better aligning it with the NGP.

The NPGE is also aligned with global frameworks such as SDG 4 and SDG 5 (inclusive, equitable quality education; gender equality), as well as the Education 2030 Agenda on gender. Its scope and targets are clear and unambiguous, with UNICEF flagging it as the anchor for equitable access and inclusion.³⁷ The NPGE aims to ensure equitable educational access for girls and promote quality and inclusive education for all.³⁸



The status of education in Nigeria is bleak for both girls and boys. As of 2024, the country faces a severe educational crisis, with 18.3 million children out of school according to UNICEF making Nigeria the nation with the highest number of out-of-school children globally.³⁹ The gender dimension of this crisis is particularly pronounced, as more than 60% of Nigeria's 10.5 million primary school-age out-of-school children are girls⁴⁰. Between 2000 and 2022, Nigeria witnessed a 36.5% increase in out-of-school children⁴¹. This decline persists even though the NPGE prescribes free and compulsory primary school education, and the Free Universal Basic Education Act established a legal framework for free basic education in line with the 1999 Constitution, which directs in Section 18: "Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels." It further mandates compulsory and free "universal primary education."

³³ Synopsis: Women's empowerment in Rwandan agriculture: A baseline assessment in the context of Rwanda's gender and youth mainstreaming strategy and the fourth strategic plan for agricultural transformation, https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/synopsis-women's-empowerment-rwandan-agriculture-baseline-assessment-context-rwanda's_en#:~:text=The%20findings%20from%20the%20Women's,while%20many%20women%20are%20as, accessed Aug 10, 2025

³⁴ Rwirahira, John (2009). Rwandan agriculture sector situational analysis: an IPAR sector review. The Institute of Development Studies and Partner Organisations. Online resource. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12413/9593>

³⁵ The Authority, FG, stakeholders review natl gender policy on agriculture to boost food security - THE AUTHORITY NEWS, accessed Aug 10, 2025

³⁶ National Gender Policy

³⁷ Unicef Cheat Sheet (June, 2022), Opportunities for Girls in Nigeria, JUNE 2022 Education opportunities for Girls in Nigeria GIRLS AT A GLANCE IMPACT ON GIRLS POLICY LANDSCAPE FOR GIRLS BARRIERS AN. accessed August 10, 2025

Zainab (pseudonym), a 14-year-old girl encountered by the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF) during a field visit to an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in New Kuchingoro, illustrates how insecurity translates into educational exclusion. According to Zainab, her school was attacked in her community, triggering widespread fear and displacement. Since the attack, many families have fled with their children while others have withdrawn their daughters from school, with several girls forced into early marriage as a perceived survival strategy. For girls like Zainab, access to education, previously guaranteed under national law, has become a distant and uncertain hope.

Zainab's experience aligns with UNICEF's findings that attacks on schools, forced displacement, and community insecurity significantly reduce girls' school attendance and increase risks of child marriage and long-term exclusion from education. Together, the data and lived testimony demonstrate how the absence of effective protective and enforcement mechanisms undermines constitutional guarantees, leaving girls disproportionately vulnerable when crisis strikes.



Despite these legal guarantees, Budget allocations rarely address the unique barriers faced by girls in conflict zones, every unaddressed risk and omission pushes them further from their right to learn, and benefit from the provisions that are available to others. The NPGE highlights the importance of gender-responsive education planning, particularly the re-entry of out-of-school girls due to teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Yet in the 2025 budget, only one explicit line item was dedicated to sensitisation on the re-entry guidelines for out-of-school girls, which the Ministry's Gender Unit takes credit for. Notably, the 2025 budget marked a shift, as for the first time in four years, there was an allocation for a gender activity directly connected to the Ministry's Gender Unit.

However, a situational analysis of gender in education revealed the "absence of specific budget lines for gender-related programmes coupled with inconsistencies in budget allocation and releases." Consequently, the NPGE Implementation Guide incorporated Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) as a critical tool to ensure that resource allocation reflects gender equality commitments. The NPGE strategy is explicit in this regard: "provide a budget line for gender issues," and further sets a target for "a dedicated percentage of annual budgetary allocation by each level of government for mainstreaming gender into the educational sector."⁴²

Invictus Africa, in its 2023 report *Gender Responsive Education Budgeting in Nigeria: Baseline Assessment of Oyo and Gombe States*, noted that a gender-responsive education budget should contain "budget lines that promote gender parity in education—such as budget allocations for programs and actions that guarantee high enrolment rates of girls in primary and secondary schools, while funding educational amenities and services in ways that guarantee high retention of girls in schools."⁴³ Our budget analysis found that only 2.71% (₦70.27 billion) of the Ministry's total budget had some gender consideration: ₦6.78 billion for educational infrastructure, ₦55.12 billion for funding 39 Federal Government Girls Colleges across the country, and ₦3.37 billion for economic empowerment.

³⁸ NPGE

³⁹ Vanguard News, *Nigeria's out-of-school children now 18.3m - UNICEF - Vanguard News*, Accessed, Aug 10, 2025

⁴⁰ Education | UNICEF Nigeria, accessed Aug 10, 2025

⁴¹ Nwoke, Oyiga (2024) Assessing the phenomenon of out-of-school children in Nigeria: Issues, gaps and recommendations, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.70011>

⁴² NPGE, 78

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The National Gender in Health Policy (NGHP) provides the primary gender policy framework for Nigeria's health sector. This policy stems from the Sixtieth World Health Assembly in resolution WHA60.25 adopted in 2007, urging Member States to formulate national strategies for addressing gender issues in health policies, programmes, research, and planning processes and reflects efforts to align with the SDGs by integrating a gender perspective into health policy and programming.⁴⁵ It also takes into consideration National laws and policies, such as the Constitution, the 2006 NGP, the National Health Act and the National Health Policy, including the VAPP Act.⁴⁶ Its objective is to provide guidance to stakeholders on programme design and implementation of quality reproductive health programs for women and girls with disabilities.

The policy identifies key contributory factors to Nigeria's high maternal mortality rate, including the absence of universal health coverage, gender-biased attitudes of health workers, and harmful traditional practices.⁴⁷ It covers the impact of gender-based Violence, mental stress, physical stress, men and boy health, adolescent behavior, sexuality and teenage pregnancy on physical health. The NGHP outlines three implementation strategies: Gender Mainstreaming, Capacity Building and Resource Mobilisation. It states that "Gender-responsive budgeting shall constitute a key component of all health sector budgeting processes,"⁴⁸ and sets a target of institutionalising gender-responsive budgeting by 2020.⁴⁹ Yet, the policy does not provide for the quota of the sector's finance that would be dedicated to GRB in the health sector.

Blessing (pseudonym), a woman encountered through DNF's community work, who gave birth on the floor of a primary health centre because no midwife was on duty after months of unpaid salaries. She later developed severe bleeding, but the facility had no emergency transport, no blood access, and no skilled attendant available. Blessing's anonymised account illustrates how policy commitments collapse without sustained financing and workforce accountability.



Although the Ministry of Health had the greatest subject alignment in terms of budget line items, an analysis of its 2025 budget allocation reveals that gender-sensitive allocations amounted to only 3.60% (₦86.08 billion) of the total. The policy is not up to date – its implementation framework stopped in 2020. However, it is worth highlighting that the policy has a clear strategic implementation framework, complete with performance markers. The Gender Unit in the Ministry of Health is functional and its activities are coordinated, yet a huge implementation gap remains.

When healthcare budgets do not adequately reach frontline maternal services, women die from preventable causes. While there are allocations to maternal healthcare centres within the budget, and these make up the majority of the gender-sensitive items within the Ministry, they remain grossly inadequate in relation to Nigeria's maternal mortality crisis. Gender-responsive budgeting is not only an administrative exercise; it is also about reflecting the lived realities of women, such as the difference between a mother coming home with her baby or her family planning her funeral. The crisis is not a lack of frameworks; it is the chasm between policy and practice. While structures exist on paper, Blessing's story reveals what a 3.60% gender-sensitive allocation means in reality: midwives unpaid, facilities unfunded, and women bleeding out in waiting rooms. Gender-responsive health budgeting must move from symbolic allocation to life-saving implementation.

⁴³ Gender Responsive Education Budgeting in Nigeria: Baseline Assessment of Oyo and Gombe States, <https://invictusafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Gender-Responsive-Education-Budgeting-GREB-in-Nigeria-Baseline-Assessment-of-Oyo-and-Gombe-States-.pdf>

⁴⁴ National Gender in Health Policy, 15

⁴⁵ Ibid, 17

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid, p47

⁴⁸ Ibid, p43

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

The Ministry of Environment is responsible for developing two gender-related policies and action plans, namely: the *National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change for Nigeria 2020* and the *National Policy on Clean Cooking 2024*.

National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change for Nigeria (NAP-GCC) 2020 - 2025

This action plan arose as a case of mainstreaming gender in climate action plans in Nigeria. Developed in wide consultation with government MDAs, CSO, women, youth, farmers, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The goal of this action plan is to: “ensure that national climate change processes in Nigeria mainstream gender considerations” in an effort “to guarantee inclusivity of all demographics in the formulation and implementation of climate change initiatives, programs and policies.”⁵⁰ Among its objectives are, increasing the understanding of climate change impact on “women, youth and other vulnerable groups;”⁵¹ mainstreaming gender across climate policies, programmes and processes at all government levels; With priority sectors in Agriculture, Forestry & Land Use (AFOLU); Food Security & Health; Energy & Transport; Waste Management; Water & Sanitation; mobilising and directing climate finance toward gender-sensitive adaptation/mitigation measures, including, gender budget tagging; build institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming, and incorporating gender-responsive M&E and sex-disaggregated data collection systems to track outcomes.

National Policy on Clean Cooking (NPCC) 2024

This policy makes claims that indoor air pollution is likely Nigeria’s “third highest killer” after Malaria and HIV AIDS,⁵² disproportionately affecting children and women.⁵³ This policy claims that by 2030, if left without intervention, the traditional method of cooking with firewood will lead to 97,000 deaths.⁵⁴ According to the NPCC, the costs of the crisis are primarily borne by women affecting even female education. While cooking may not seem a gendered activity, it is true that the household cooking sector in Nigeria is highly gender-based.⁵⁵ As such, it is considered in this report. The policy aligns itself with Nigeria’s Energy Transition Plan of a carbon-neutral state by 2060.⁵⁶ As such the primary goal of this policy is “to achieve universal access to clean energy solutions for households and institutions by 2030.”⁵⁷ Through improving access to Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) by ‘injecting 10 million cylinders’ into Nigerian households and institutions, developing biogas and fuels and expanding their reach, the establishment of “fuel efficient cookstove industry” by the government, and also increasing the share of briquettes in overall cooking fuel.⁵⁸

The NPCC sets an example on setting clear financial targets for policy financing. It mandates that each MDA make a provision of not less than ₦50,000,000 annually for the promotion of clean cooking activities, and also the federal government to set aside 2% of the Ecological Fund and 10% of Green bond earnings.⁵⁹ The policy sets aside a clean cooking committee to be the collection point for financing the policy and implementation.⁶⁰

⁴⁹ National Action Plan On Gender And Climate Change For Nigeria 2020, p26

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ National Policy on Clean Cooking 2024, p4

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid, p5

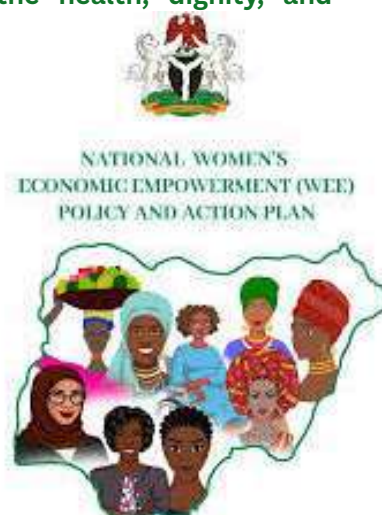
Other Gender Policies in Nigeria include:

a. National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Persons with Disabilities with emphasis on Women and Girls (2018): The Ministry of Health's policy document on gender and disability is primarily aimed at improving access to quality, rights-based reproductive health services for persons with disabilities and Improved protection of the reproductive health and rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

b. National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy and Action Plan (2023): A comprehensive policy framework that incorporates diverse approaches and perspectives from across the Federation to reconceptualise the Federal Government of Nigeria's commitment to women's economic empowerment.

c. National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (2025): This is a new National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management, aimed at improving the health, dignity, and opportunities of women and girls in the country.

The gender policy landscape in Nigeria reveals an extensive policy architecture that is in conversation with global frameworks, from the UN's CEDAW and SDG 5 to regional instruments like the Maputo Protocol. At the national level, the 1999 Constitution guarantees non-discrimination, while the National Gender Policy (NGP) and sector-specific frameworks in education, agriculture, health, environment, and climate change establish a strong formal commitment to gender equality. In theory, this architecture provides a comprehensive foundation for addressing barriers to women's empowerment and inclusion.



In practice, however, implementation has consistently lagged behind ambition. Gender units across ministries remain underfunded, weakly positioned, and often ineffective. The emphasis on “women's empowerment” within both the NGP and sectoral policies risks overshadowing the broader and more transformative goal of gender equality, narrowing interventions to short-term projects rather than structural change. Even where policies include provisions for gender-responsive budgeting, allocations remain low and poorly aligned with stated priorities. Nigeria's recent ranking of 124 out of 148 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index illustrates these contradictions: notable progress in women's economic participation coexists with persistent deficits in political representation, educational attainment, and health outcomes. The persistence of patriarchal norms, coupled with gaps in accountability mechanisms, weak data systems, and limited political will, have further constrained progress.

The gender policy landscape in Nigeria can be described as robust on paper but fragile in practice. Without stronger coherence between policy frameworks, budgetary allocations, and enforcement mechanisms, the ambitious targets set out in Nigeria's gender policies will remain unrealised.

⁵⁴ Okoh, A. S., & Okpanachi, E. (2023). Transcending energy transition complexities in building a carbon-neutral economy: The case of Nigeria. *Cleaner Energy Systems*, 6(100069), 100069. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cles.2023.100069>

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p8

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p17

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p19

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

OVERVIEW OF THE 2025 BUDGET

The 2025 Appropriation Act contains nearly 1,300 project line-items tagged with gender-related keywords such as “women,” “girl,” “gender,” and “empowerment.” While this marks an expansion in volume compared to previous years, the substance of these allocations remains narrow. The majority are framed around economic empowerment, typically through the distribution of goods, vocational training, or grants. This emphasis risks reducing empowerment to one-off material support rather than systemic change.

Across the ministries reviewed, gender-related allocations made up a small fraction of total budgets. Where they exist, allocations are frequently vague, labelled simply as “training” or “empowerment”, with little detail on beneficiaries or outcomes. A significant share of gender-related projects originate not from ministerial planning but from Zonal Intervention Projects of the legislature, which are often localised, fragmented, and misaligned with ministerial mandates. These patterns collectively suggest that while gender is increasingly present in budgetary language, it has yet to translate into a coherent or transformative strategy. The following ministry-by-ministry profiles illustrate how these dynamics play out in practice.

MINISTRY PROFILES

Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA):

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs is mandated to advise the Nigerian government on issues affecting women, children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. It leads national efforts to promote gender equality, mainstream gender into all sectors, and advance women’s social, economic, and political empowerment. The Ministry also develops and implements policies to protect the rights of women and children, eliminate discriminatory practices, and promote inclusive participation in national development.

The Ministry’s allocation rose dramatically in 2025, with ₦122.92 billion compared to ₦14.48 billion in 2024. Yet over 80 percent of gender-related allocations were directed to economic empowerment, primarily through the World Bank-funded Nigeria for Women Project. Women’s leadership and gender-based violence prevention received less than one percent of allocations. Legislative projects accounted for nearly 10 percent of allocations, mostly directed to localised empowerment schemes.

For example, while the Nigeria for Women Project received the bulk of gender-related allocations, midline evaluation evidence shows that women who participated in project-supported savings and business groups experienced limited improvements in income and economic outcomes, as persistent barriers to credit, market access, and productive capital constrained the translation of training into sustainable economic advancement.⁶¹



Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS):

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS) of Nigeria is mandated to formulate and implement policies and strategies to ensure food security, promote the production and supply of raw materials to agro-industrial sectors, expand markets for crop, livestock, agro and agro-allied products, create employment opportunities, diversify the national economy, and facilitate rural socio-economic development.

With a total budget of ₦2.22 trillion, the Ministry allocated ₦114.64 billion (5.17 percent) to gender-related projects.

More than half of these funds went to empowerment initiatives such as sewing machines and welding equipment. Agricultural support programmes made up just over one-quarter, often taking the form of small incubation centres or training. Nearly one-third of gender allocations came from legislative projects, many of which were disconnected from agricultural productivity.



Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment:

This ministry is charged with the preparation, formulation, coordination, monitoring, review, implementation and enforcement of government policies and regulations relating to employment generation, labour protection, productivity improvement, industrial peace and harmony, and occupational safety and health in workplaces.

Despite the Ministry's mandate on employment generation and sizable allocations to youth programmes, implementation gaps persist in converting training into sustainable employment. A 2024 evaluation of the N-Power youth empowerment scheme, a major federal initiative designed to improve employability and reduce unemployment, found that while beneficiaries acquired skills and participated in placements, many did not transition into lasting formal employment or secure entrepreneurial support after programme completion. Challenges included inadequate linkage to job opportunities, absence of post-training credit support, delayed stipends, and weak follow-through in placement systems.⁶³

For example, Maryam (name changed for confidentiality), a graduate of Economics from Imo State, enrolled in the N-Power programme in 2021. She completed community teaching and business skills modules and received periodic stipends during her placement year. However, by late 2023, no formal job offer, start-up capital, or market linkage was provided, and delayed stipends reduced her ability to sustain household needs. Maryam now operates a small informal tutoring service to support her family.

Her experience mirrors broader patterns identified in independent studies, where beneficiaries report skills acquisition but limited pathways to permanent employment or enterprise growth, underscoring implementation shortfalls in translating programme participation into economic security.



The Ministry allocated ₦18.70 billion to gender-related projects, equivalent to 40 percent of its total budget. However, a large portion was directed toward a single ₦1 billion cash grant scheme, raising concerns about feasibility and sustainability. As of mid-2025, no budget releases had been made, leaving implementation in doubt. The Ministry lacks a finalised gender policy, with its proposed “Nigeria Women in the Workplace Gender Policy” still under review.

⁶¹ A total of ₦100 million was allocated as capital expenditure on the renovation of an existing shelter, and a further ₦35 million on a temporary shelter / sexual assault referral centre

⁶² de Hoop, T., Molotsky, A., Paek, C., Castro-Zarzur, R., Panagoulas, P., Bock, C., Siwach, G., Adegbite, O. & Mutea, E. (2025) Midline findings of the impact evaluation of the Nigeria for Women Project. American Institutes for Research. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388452654_Midline_Findings_of_the_Impact_Evaluation_of_the_Nigeria_for_Women_Project

Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare:

The Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is mandated to develop and implement policies and programmes that strengthen Nigeria's health system, ensure access to quality and affordable healthcare, and deliver social welfare services that improve population health outcomes and support national development.

Of a ₦2.37 trillion budget, only ₦86.08 billion (3.6 percent) was tagged to gender-related items, mostly linked to maternal health and medical infrastructure. While this ministry showed greater alignment between allocations and sectoral needs, projects still included empowerment schemes that were not health-related. Only one disability-inclusive item was identified. Budget releases for the Ministry are more reliable compared to others, but allocations remain limited relative to need.

Persistent access barriers are reflected in DNF's survivor support and case documentation work. For example, Amaka (pseudonym), a survivor of sexual violence supported through DNF's referral pathway, was asked to pay ₦15,000 before a public hospital would issue the required medical report for police investigation. Unable to afford the fee, she borrowed the money from a neighbour. The examination was brief, and the report issued without counselling, follow-up care, or referral, highlighting how informal fees, weak enforcement of survivor-friendly protocols, and gaps in social welfare delivery continue to undermine access to justice and care, despite existing health policies.



Federal Ministry of Education

The Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is mandated to develop and implement policies and programmes that strengthen Nigeria's health system, ensure access to quality and affordable healthcare, and deliver social welfare services that improve population health outcomes and support national development.

Of a ₦2.37 trillion budget, only ₦86.08 billion (3.6 percent) was tagged to gender-related items, mostly linked to maternal health and medical infrastructure. While this ministry showed greater alignment between allocations and sectoral needs, projects still included empowerment schemes that were not health-related. Only one disability-inclusive item was identified. Budget releases for the Ministry are more reliable compared to others, but allocations remain limited relative to need.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, TRADE AND INVESTMENT:

The Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment is mandated to stimulate Nigeria's economic growth through industrialization, trade expansion, and investment promotion. It formulates and implements policies that enhance the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), strengthen the manufacturing sector, and improve the ease of doing business. The ministry also works to attract both domestic and foreign investments, promote export diversification beyond oil, and foster partnerships that create jobs, increase productivity, and position Nigeria as a competitive player in the global market.

In the 2025 budget, the Ministry allocated only ₦7.05 billion (6.4 percent) to gender-related projects, mostly through SMEDAN, with almost all funding directed toward broad empowerment activities. The Ministry lacks a stand-alone gender policy, and efforts to develop one have stalled. Most gender-tagged projects were legislative in origin, highlighting weak institutional ownership of gender priorities.

Persistent barriers in access to credit compound these policy gaps. Formal financial services in Nigeria remain largely inaccessible to women entrepreneurs, in part because women are less likely to own traditional forms of collateral such as land or property, which banks typically require when evaluating loan applications. Even when women do own assets, title deeds are often held in the names of male relatives, further limiting women's ability to secure loans on their own. This "collateral challenge" significantly restricts women's ability to obtain formal business financing and grow their enterprises.⁶⁴

Hauwa (pseudonym), a shea-butter producer supported through DNF's economic inclusion work, experienced this barrier firsthand. When she sought a loan to expand her processing business, the lending institution insisted on proof of collateral registered in her name. Unable to provide this, she was denied access to formal credit and lost a supply contract she had been poised to fulfil.



Hauwa's case reflects a wider pattern where gender-blind loan requirements and collateral norms exclude women-led businesses from formal credit markets, forcing them to rely on informal financing or operate below growth potential, a constraint documented across Nigeria's MSME sector.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION:

This ministry is tasked with promoting science, technology and innovation in Nigeria, driving the nation's technological and scientific growth by enabling collaboration, research and development, technology acquisition and adaptation, knowledge infrastructure, indigenous innovation, and the use of science and technology for socio-economic development.

Out of a **₦1.148 trillion budget**, **₦18.17 billion (1.6 percent)** was linked to gender. Like other ministries, the majority of these projects focused on empowerment, though digital literacy also appeared as a secondary theme. The Ministry does not have a gender policy, and its gender unit lacks budgetary authority, leaving activities dependent on other departments.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT:

Its mandate is to address and coordinate environmental issues in Nigeria, to protect and improve air, land, water, forest and wildlife resources, to combat deforestation, desertification, erosion, pollution and climate change, and to develop and enforce policies and standards for sustainable management of the environment and natural resources.

The Ministry allocated **₦3.58 billion** to gender-related projects, a small fraction of its **₦164.8 billion** budget. Clean cooking interventions were identified but were localised and small in scope. The Ministry has a 2020 gender and climate change policy, but allocations fell short of addressing the policy's priorities. No disability-inclusive line item was recorded.

These gaps are reflected in lived realities documented by civil society and development partners. According to the World Bank and the Clean Cooking Alliance, over 70 percent of Nigerian households still rely on firewood or charcoal, with women and girls bearing the primary burden of fuel collection, often spending multiple hours daily on unpaid, physically demanding labour. This reliance is linked to adverse health outcomes, lost economic time, and increased exposure to environmental risks.

⁶⁴ Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) (2024) Women entrepreneurs: Creating jobs, building futures: 2024 annual report. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Grace spends three hours daily gathering wood. The Clean-Cooking Policy promises alternatives, but local women's cooperatives received no support. *Environmental policy must see women not as victims, but as partners in climate resilience.*



Her experience reflects a broader implementation gap: climate and environmental policies acknowledge women's roles and vulnerabilities, yet budgetary allocations and programme delivery have not positioned women as active partners in climate resilience or energy transition.

Without gender-responsive financing and decentralised implementation, environmental policy risks reinforcing women's time poverty rather than alleviating it.

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND NATIONAL ORIENTATION

The ministry is mandated to manage the image and reputation of the people and government of Nigeria through a dynamic public information system, to facilitate access by citizens and the global community to credible and timely information about government programmes and activities, and to promote national orientation, culture and democratic governance.

From its total allocation of ₦108.27 billion, the Ministry dedicated resources to 18 gender-related projects, primarily through the National Orientation Agency. A notable line item was ₦5 billion for sensitisation against drug abuse, FGM, and domestic violence in the North West. This marks one of the few explicit mentions of FGM in the entire budget. Legislative sponsored allocations under this ministry followed the same empowerment-heavy trend.

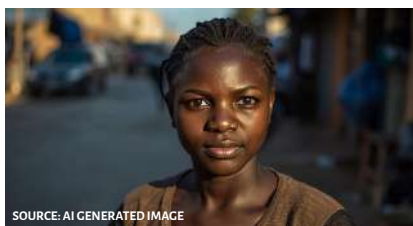
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Its mandate is to develop humanitarian policies and provide effective coordination of national and international humanitarian interventions, ensure strategic disaster mitigation, preparedness and response, and manage the formulation and implementation of focused social inclusion and protection programmes to reduce poverty and vulnerability.

The Ministry received ₦600.77 billion, with ₦4.17 billion allocated to gender-related projects. Most of these came from legislative initiatives focused on empowerment. The Ministry has no gender policy, and weak institutional coordination has undermined its gender unit. One project on menstrual health for girls with disabilities stood out as the only disability-inclusive intervention.

These gaps reflect broader patterns in Nigeria's humanitarian and social protection landscape. According to UN OCHA and UNHCR, Nigeria hosts over 3.4 million internally displaced persons, many of them women affected by conflict, poverty, and livelihood loss. Despite the scale of displacement, humanitarian assistance and empowerment programmes often rely on generic vulnerability categories that fail to account for intersecting risks such as gender, disability, and displacement, resulting in systematic exclusion from livelihood and social protection schemes.

Grace (pseudonym), a conflict-affected woman encountered through DNF's work, survives by selling sachet water in an urban displacement setting. She reported never being listed for livelihood support or empowerment programmes coordinated through humanitarian channels.



Her experience reflects a documented pattern in which displaced women, particularly those living outside formal camps or with additional vulnerabilities, are overlooked by assistance frameworks that lack gender- and disability-responsive targeting.

MINISTRY BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Budget implementation frameworks across the ministries reveal structural weaknesses that limit the effectiveness of gender responsive budgeting. While most ministries have planning departments responsible for tracking implementation, gender units are often sidelined and lack the authority or resources to realise their mandate.

In many cases, allocations are merged into broader programmes or lost in the release process, creating a disconnect between budgeted intentions and actual delivery. Ministries such as Health, which benefit from relatively consistent budget releases, show better alignment between allocations and outcomes, whereas others, including Labour, Education, and Humanitarian Affairs, reported delayed or absent releases that stall programme execution.

The absence of clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms specifically tied to gender allocations further undermines accountability and weakens ministries' capacity to translate budget commitments into tangible improvements for women and girls.



THE BUDGET AND THE PEOPLE

The National Budget itself exists to cater to the needs of the Nigerian people. Therefore, to further understand the gaps in the budget and its potential impact, we asked 10 Gender Experts through administered surveys to select top priority areas for national budgeting that reflects the most pressing needs of Nigerian women/girls, their responses prioritised Education and Ending Gender Based Violence, followed by Health and Women Leadership.

Survey Responses on Women's Priority Needs

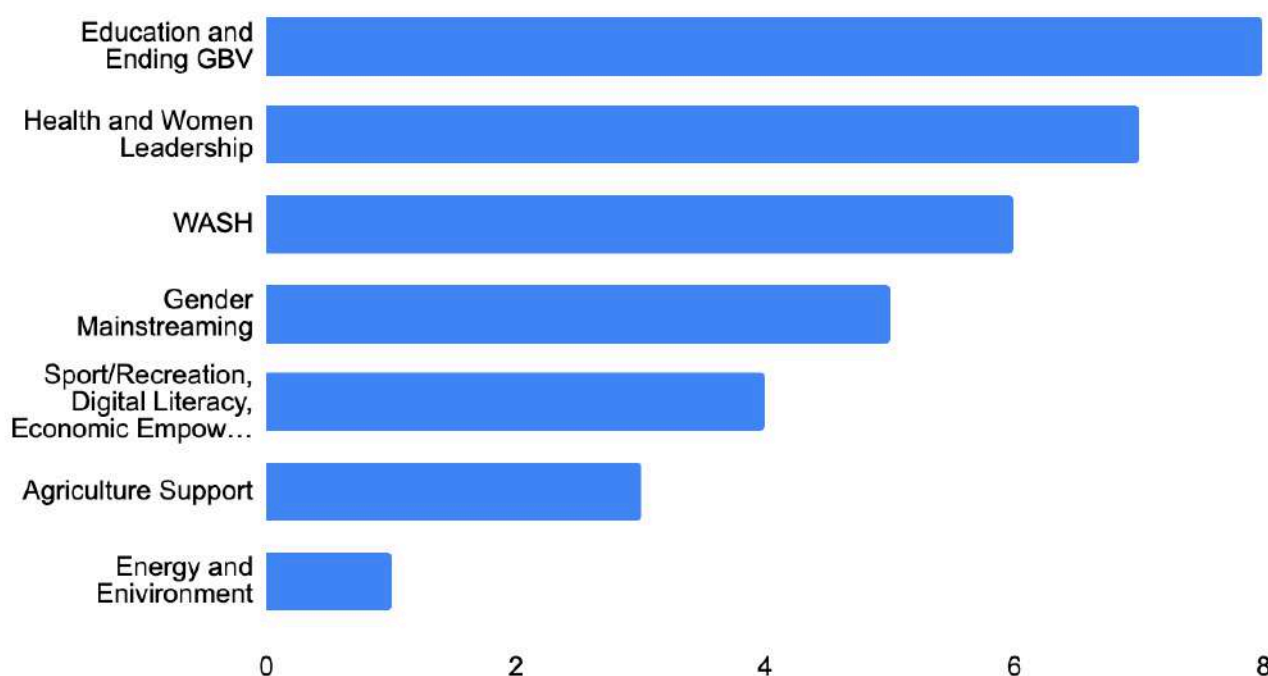


Figure.6 Survey Results on Women's Priority Needs

The results from the survey conducted revealed the low participation of the average Nigerian in the budgeting process for which their needs are to be met. An apt representation of the poor prioritisation of the foremost needs of the people is exemplified in government's focus infrastructural development to the near neglect of education and health especially in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where Primary Health Care facilities were shut down from the period of March 2025 until July, 2025, and Government Primary Schools across the FCT were shut down for the same period due to the non-implementation of the new minimum wage and non-payment of salary arrears of health workers and teachers respectively.

The analysis of the budget of the Ministry of Education through a gendered lens, reveals economic empowerment was given priority, just after the most prioritised educational infrastructure, this proves a glaring disconnect of needs and budget priority. 40% of survey respondents strongly disagreed and 20% disagreed that the government's budget allocation and programme implementation effectively reflect its stated gender policy priorities. The writers agree with the respondents.

THE WOMEN AND THE YOUTH

We found that in the National budget and gender-related policy provisions, women and youth are clustered into a group. 54.55% of the line items reviewed for this research were designed for ‘women and youth’ or other additional demographics. When women and youth are lumped together in programme design, such grouping often dilutes the gender-specific focus essential for addressing structural inequalities faced by women and creates a false sense of equivalency, thereby undermining the goal of gender-responsive programming and budgeting, rather than addressing the specific structural inequalities women face.

EMERGENT TRENDS



A review of the 2025 Appropriation Act reveals both progress and persistent shortcomings in Nigeria’s approach to GRB. Although gender-related allocations have increased significantly compared to previous years, much of this expansion is concentrated in projects labeled as “empowerment.” These allocations frequently take the form of equipment distribution, vocational training, or cash grants, often with little evidence of long-term planning or institutional frameworks to sustain impact.

Across the ten ministries examined, allocations tagged with gender-related keywords varied in scale and scope. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs received the largest proportional increase, with a budget that grew by more than sevenfold from the previous year. Yet, over 80 percent of its gender-related allocations were directed to economic empowerment projects, many of them linked to the World Bank’s Nigeria for Women Project. In contrast, investments in women’s leadership, political participation, and gender-based violence prevention remained minimal.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security also devoted substantial resources to gender-related projects. However, a large share of these funds came through legislative constituency projects, and many initiatives bore little connection to agriculture or food security. Examples include the provision of sewing machines and welding equipment, which do little to address systemic agricultural challenges faced by women farmers. Similar patterns were evident in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, where we noted a single allocation—₦1 billion for cash grants to vulnerable women, raising questions of both feasibility and impact.

Health and education represent critical areas for gender-responsive budgeting, yet allocations in these sectors remain inconsistent. The Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare devoted less than four percent of its budget to gender-related projects, though many of these were directly tied to maternal and child health. Meanwhile, the Federal Ministry of Education maintained funding for Federal Government Girls’ Colleges, but allocations for addressing gender barriers in access and retention—such as early marriage and re-entry of girls after pregnancy, were extremely limited. Both ministries face additional implementation challenges due to delayed or incomplete budget releases.

Smaller ministries such as Environment, Science and Technology, and Humanitarian Affairs displayed even weaker commitments. In these cases, gender-related allocations were modest, often disconnected from core mandates, and heavily reliant on fragmented legislative projects. Several of these ministries also lack updated gender policies, leaving their gender units under-resourced and institutionally side-lined.

Taken together, these findings point to several cross-cutting trends. First, economic empowerment overwhelmingly dominates gender-related allocations, with the term appearing in more than 40 percent of identified line items. While empowerment is a legitimate goal, the current approach often reduces it to one-off distributions of goods rather than a transformative process that challenges structural inequalities. Second, there is a misalignment between budgetary allocations and existing gender policies. Ministries with formal gender strategies—such as education, agriculture, and health—rarely see these frameworks reflected in their budget priorities. Others, such as labour, industry, and humanitarian affairs, continue to operate without dedicated gender policies.

Third, the role of the legislature is unusually prominent. A significant share of gender-related projects originate from Zonal Intervention Projects, which are often short-term, fragmented, and poorly aligned with ministerial mandates. This legislative dominance undermines coherence and creates duplication across sectors. Fourth, gender units within ministries are underutilised. Many are housed under offices without direct budgetary authority, limiting their ability to design or implement projects. As a result, gender-related allocations are frequently conceived outside these units, leaving them disconnected from implementation and monitoring.

Finally, there is a disconnect between government allocations and the priorities identified by gender experts and civil society actors. Surveys conducted for this report highlight education, health, women's leadership, and gender-based violence as the most urgent areas of need. Yet these sectors remain comparatively underfunded, with the bulk of allocations concentrated in empowerment projects of questionable sustainability. Curiously, the Ministry of Justice, which has so far not featured in this analysis, did not have any capital projects that directly or indirectly addressed gender inequality. Overall, the 2025 budget reflects a growing recognition of gender issues but falls short of embedding gender-responsiveness into its design. The reliance on vague empowerment schemes, the side-lining of gender units, and the limited attention to systemic barriers suggest that Nigeria's budgeting process remains more symbolic than transformative. Without stronger alignment between policies, budgets, and actual implementation, the promise of gender-responsive budgeting will remain unrealised.



SOURCE: AI GENERATED IMAGE

CONCLUSION

The question of whether the 2025 National Budget is gender-responsive reveals a budget that cannot objectively be considered gender-responsive. In a budget that is over 2,000 pages packed with distinct line items, our keyword analysis revealed that fewer than 1,300 line-items were directly gender inclusive. Economic empowerment stands out overwhelmingly as a primary focus of the budget in terms of allocation involving women in all sectors. In the 2025 Appropriation Act the synonyms that describe economic empowerment include; special empowerment, empowerment, strategic empowerment, vocational empowerment, empowerment materials, empowerment equipment, and even encouragement materials.

The word empowerment was mentioned in 41.76% of the line items analysed in this report. Although used in many contexts, with regards to gender empowerment, empowerment can generally be used to mean the challenging of power structures that have left certain population groups marginalised. The Human Development Report (1995) stresses that empowerment is participatory, where development comes by people, not for them. Empowerment comes about by women challenging the power structures that oppress them. This puts the role of the state almost as a facilitator, where ideally it is positioned to enable conditions for women empowerment. As such, empowerment cannot simply be defined in terms of specific activities because empowerment should describe a process whereby women can freely assess, develop and voice their specific needs and interests, without them being pre-defined, or imposed from above, by the state, development agencies or other social actors. Economic empowerment is not simply about providing certain items. However, as in all reviewed ministries, significant sums are allocated to 'procurement of empowerment items'. It calls into question what processes were involved in the development of the budget.

Misalignment of projects was clear across many of the budgeted projects and programs. Many line items were grossly misaligned with the core mandates of the ministries under which they appeared. As a result, the analysis in this report focused on both the areas of focus of line items and the ministries line items were budgeted under, to provide a more accurate reflection of sectoral investments and to assess institutional budgeting.

The underutilisation of the Gender Units in ministries observed, calls into question the effectiveness of these units and their mandates. The Gender Desk Officers (GDO) were not empowered to be influential drivers of ministerial work. And in terms of implementation, even though different gender units might have specific programmatic impact measurement tools, we found that there is limited scope in terms of tracking implementation of projects to term. Ultimately this highlights the national will or lack thereof to truly engender change in the state of gender equality in Nigeria. Looking more broadly, over the years, progress has most often been fought for by non-state actors, NGOs and civil society. This also highlights the continued importance of these actors in pushing for change.

The absence of gender-awareness within the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) 2025 - 2027 preceding the 2025 Budget is evidence that Nigeria is yet to take into account the issue of GRB, notwithstanding GRB has the potential to create more equal opportunities for women. However, it cannot, on its own, dismantle the normative structures that entrench gender inequality. A major problem that Nigeria continues to face, as evidenced in the gap between policy and outcomes, is implementation. It is worth noting that from our analysis, the Ministry of Justice had fewer than 5 clear gender-related line items, which raises concerns about the state of dedicated funding for access to justice. Thus, government shortcomings in GRB consideration, implementation, policy implementation, weak monitoring systems, and non-alignment of budgeting remain significant obstacles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Capacity Building and Expertise

There is a broad lack of knowledge and expertise in the area of gender-responsive budgeting within the ministries. Social education within MDA should be prioritised. In some ministries, we found that there is not a clear understanding of the concept of gender. This should extend to assistance in concept development and expertise in gender mainstreaming within ministries. There is a high need for capacity building on gender-responsive programming and budgeting. As a prelude to the preparation of the 2026 Budget, training should be organised especially for Directors of Budget in all ministries and also Gender Units or GDO as internal advocates for GRB.

2. Co-ordination, Planning and Structure

Nigeria needs coordinated action on gender-responsiveness and gender quality within the Ministries. We found that many gender desk officers were not aware of the extent of gender-related projects in their Ministries. This is because some line items originate outside their unit and thus from allocation to implementation, it is difficult to track progress. In a ministry such as Innovation, Science and Technology for example, the gender unit is situated under the Office of the Permanent Secretary, an office which doesn't generate its own budget, thereby restricting the scope of the gender unit. Also, restricting the gender desks or units to specific line items that have to do only with gender mainstreaming or policy development, as we found in this research restricts the impact they could have.

3. Funding & Project Alignment

The Nigerian government must show clear funding commitments to gender equality, starting from a gender-aware MTEF. It is through budgetary commitments that the country's commitment to gender equality can be measured. Therefore, GRB should be integrated into MTEF, ensuring that all 3-year projections include measurable gender equality targets. Increased funding for gender equality activities across ministries is a consistent need that was identified in this research. We recommend that every MDA should be required via the annual budget circular to submit Gender Budget Statement justifying how its proposals address gender gaps identified in their sectoral policies. Encouraging the use of performance budgeting to tie budgetary provision with policy directions of Ministries. Additionally, the budget line of ministries should focus on their expected mandates, clearly misaligned projects that for example fund agricultural best practices, should not exist in the budget for the Ministry of Health. KIIs revealed that gender units that are able to develop their individual line items, sometimes their proposed projects get subsumed or merged together with other projects outside their control, or all together fall out of the final budget. We recommend separate budget quotas for gender activities for ministries, determined by sector specific quotas tailored towards gender responsiveness. Finally, policies should be drafted with clear and unambiguous funding sources.



SOURCE: AI GENERATED IMAGE

4. Implementation

A shift in attitudes and behaviour is necessary because if one of the consistent gaps in realising the outcomes of policy remains implementation, it signals a deeper disconnect that remains embedded in governance structures. At the stage of programme planning, gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessments should be undertaken. Programme reporting within MDA must take into account the reporting of gender-disaggregated data through gender-disaggregated expenditure analysis. Finally, at the post-budgeting stage, each ministry should produce a gender-responsive budget statement outlining public spending for women and girls, with clear indicators, which may or may not be compiled into a single national document. An example of a gender budget statement is France's Yellow Budget Paper on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

We also recommend that Budget Implementation Reports include gender-disaggregated data to enable tracking of GRB and implementation, and that they include a dedicated analysis of budget spending targeting women.

5. Participatory Budgeting

It is appropriate that there be clearer pathways for women not only to express their views but also to actively participate in the budgeting process, so that their needs are captured in their own voice. Otherwise, we risk continuing projects that appear good on the surface but have no sustained impact on women. Women's budget priorities can be systematically collected through forums or by collating proposals from women's groups and representatives. We recommend establishing dedicated platforms to support women's participatory budgeting. Additionally, greater thought should be put into budgeting for other marginalised groups, such as persons with disability and women who may be part of vulnerable and/or discriminated population groups.

6. Increase Civil Society Oversight in Budget Processes

To ensure Appropriation Acts align with the realities and pressing needs of the populace, CSOs should be meaningfully engaged throughout the budget cycle, including before the budget review, authorisation, and monitoring phases. Budget inclusivity cannot be achieved if budget processes are rushed, as seen in the 2025 Appropriation Act. We recommend following a due process approach throughout the budgeting cycle.

7. The Reviving of Nigeria's Budget Advocacy Group for GRB and Establishment of Collaborative GRB Projects of Government and CSOs.

GRB Groups have achieved success and influence worldwide; for example, the UK Women's Budget Group has shaped tax policies and budget allocations to benefit women. Nigeria's budget cycles in recent years have been rushed; the 2025 Budget cycle, from proposal to Act, took about 2 months. The peculiarities of our country require that, for maximum effectiveness, budget advocacy groups target both the Executive and Legislative governments for GRB inclusion.

The Nigeria Gender Budget Network, launched in 2004 and facilitated by UNIFEM and CDD, should be revived, and its scope of advocacy broadened to include stages of government beyond the legislature. Whatever the GRB Advocacy Group emerges, it should include both parliamentarians and key budget officials in MDA as active members to ensure synergy and coordination with CSOs.

⁶⁵ Pereira, C. (2008). Appropriating 'gender' and 'empowerment': The resignification of feminist ideas in Nigeria's neoliberal reform programme. *IDS Bulletin*, 39(6), 42–50.

8. Discontinue the appropriation of the terms ‘empowerment’ and ‘gender’ within budgetary and policy frameworks

Appropriation here is used to denote “using terms developed in one context, to mean something different in another context”. Within the 2025 Appropriations Act, we observed the repeated watering down of the terms ‘empowerment’ and even ‘gender’. Empowerment, which is a feminist idea that refers to women organising collectively to change power relations in society, should not be reduced to token programmes. Additionally, Budget lines should provide a precise articulation of gender programmes and avoid the blanket use of ‘gender’ and other gender-related terminologies.



Figure 7: Advocacy pathways for GRB



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APPENDIX I

Figure.6 Survey Results on Women's Priority Needs

Organisation (MDA)	Respondents
Federal Ministry of Health And Social Welfare	1 (M)
Federal Ministry of Labour And Employment	1 (F)
Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	1 (F)
Federal Ministry of Education	1 (F)
Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment	1 (F)
National Orientation Agency	1 (F)
Federal Ministry of Environment	1 (F)
Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction	1 (F)
Total	8

APPENDIX II

Ministry Gender-Related Allocation

Amount per group - Ministry of Women Affairs

Economic Empowerment	74,386,126,830
Agriculture Support Programme	5,333,433,000
Palliative	2,625,000,000
Infrastructural Development	2,380,000,000
Social Protection	1,570,000,000
Energy and Environmental Protection	1,120,000,000
Women Leadership	724,107,016
GBV	616,147,753
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	493,528,319
Education	474,000,000
Health	409,204,787
Digital Literacy	308,000,000
WASH	100,000,000
Sport/Recreation	130,000,000
Educational Infrastructure	80,000,000
Gender Mainstreaming	50,000,000

Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Amount per group - Ministry of Labour & Employment

Economic Empowerment	14,984,486,500
Agriculture Support Programme	1,976,000,000
Digital Literacy	1,050,000,000
Education	200,000,000
Palliative	150,000,000
Women Leadership	150,000,000
Educational Infrastructure	100,000,000
Social Protection	69,000,000
Gender Mainstreaming	11,000,000
Energy and Environmental Protection	10,000,000

Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Amount per group - Ministry of Agriculture

Economic Empowerment	60,696,618,641
Agriculture Support Programme	31,940,737,203
Educational Infrastructure	8,217,790,520
Health	3,540,000,000
Palliative	3,052,324,960
Infrastructural Development	2,500,000,000
Education	2,500,000,000
Gender Mainstreaming	877,882,551
Energy and Environmental Protection	450,000,000
Social Protection	300,000,000
Women Leadership	250,000,000
GBV	180,000,000
Digital Literacy	100,000,000
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	30,047,380

Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Amount per group - Ministry of Health

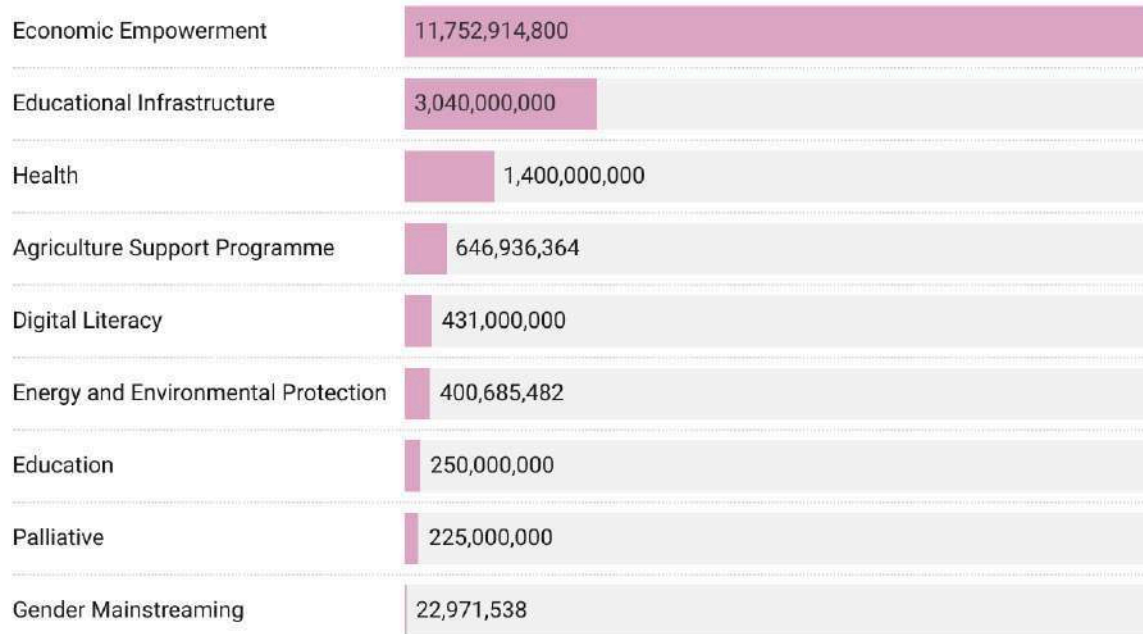
Health	83,801,742,840
Educational Infrastructure	941,520,000
Economic Empowerment	875,000,000
Agriculture Support Programme	252,622,738
Infrastructural Development	90,000,000
Social Protection	75,000,000
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	53,114,689

Amount per group - Ministry of Education

Economic Empowerment	11,752,914,800
Educational Infrastructure	3,040,000,000
Health	1,400,000,000
Agriculture Support Programme	646,936,364
Digital Literacy	431,000,000
Energy and Environmental Protection	400,685,482
Education	250,000,000
Palliative	225,000,000
Gender Mainstreaming	22,971,538

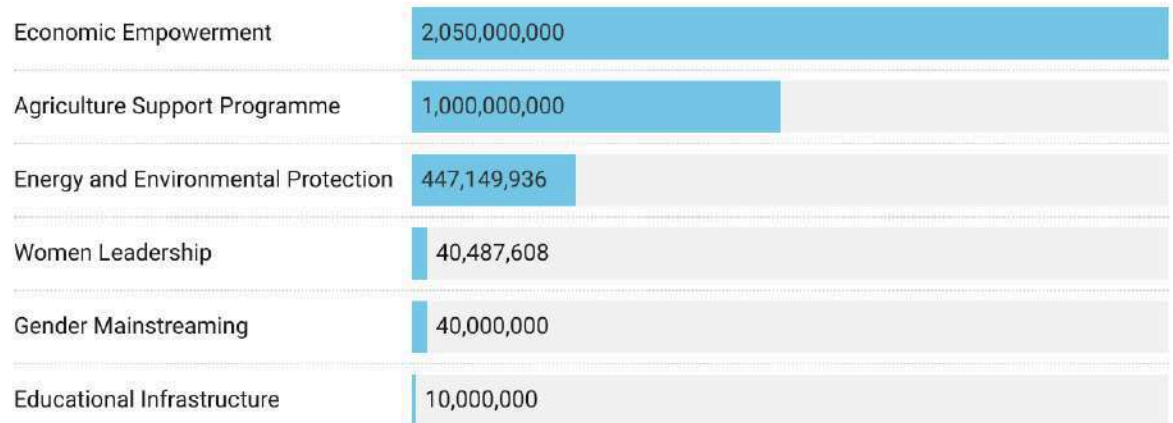
Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Amount per group - Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation



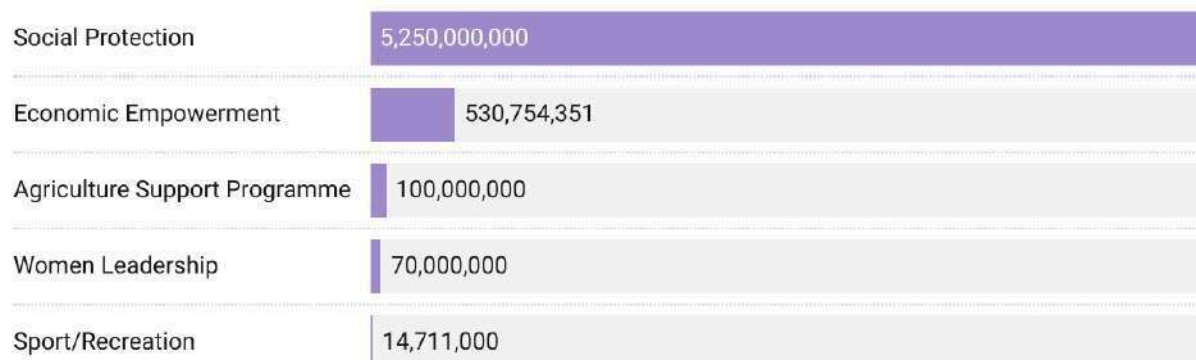
Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Amount per group - Ministry of Environment



Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

Amount per group - Ministry of Information & National Orientation



Source: Budget Office of Nigeria • Created with Datawrapper

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION AND AUTHORS

DOROTHY NJEMANZE FOUNDATION

The Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF) is a survivor-run feminist organisation advancing gender justice through survivor-centred response, feminist policy advocacy, research, and community-led systems change. We work to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) while advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), inclusive social protection, and accountability-driven governance. Our work is grounded in survivor leadership, intersectionality, and the belief that justice must be accessible, transformative, and rooted in lived realities.

Through the DNF Survivor Support Centre and DNF Shelter, we provide free, confidential, and non-discriminatory 24/7 support to survivors online and offline. Our services include crisis response, counselling, medical care and referrals, law enforcement engagement, legal support, including mediation and alternative dispute resolution, transitional shelter, psychosocial care, and economic empowerment—to support survivors throughout their healing, recovery, and justice journeys.

Beyond direct services, DNF drives systems and narrative change through feminist research, media and cultural advocacy, and policy engagement at national and sub-national levels. Our programmes prioritise adolescent mental health, menstrual and sexual health education, youth leadership, second-chance education for girls and young women, and the wellbeing and safety of first responders, recognising that lasting gender justice requires both healing individuals and transforming systems.

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In 2023, she was recognised as an expert reviewer for Oxford University Press's International Journal of Law and Information Technology. In 2022, Mairo convened Let's Vote 9ja, a civic engagement initiative that inspired her to found the Tunani Initiative in 2025 to promote informed and empowered civic participation across Africa. She enjoys reading and engaging with diverse perspectives..

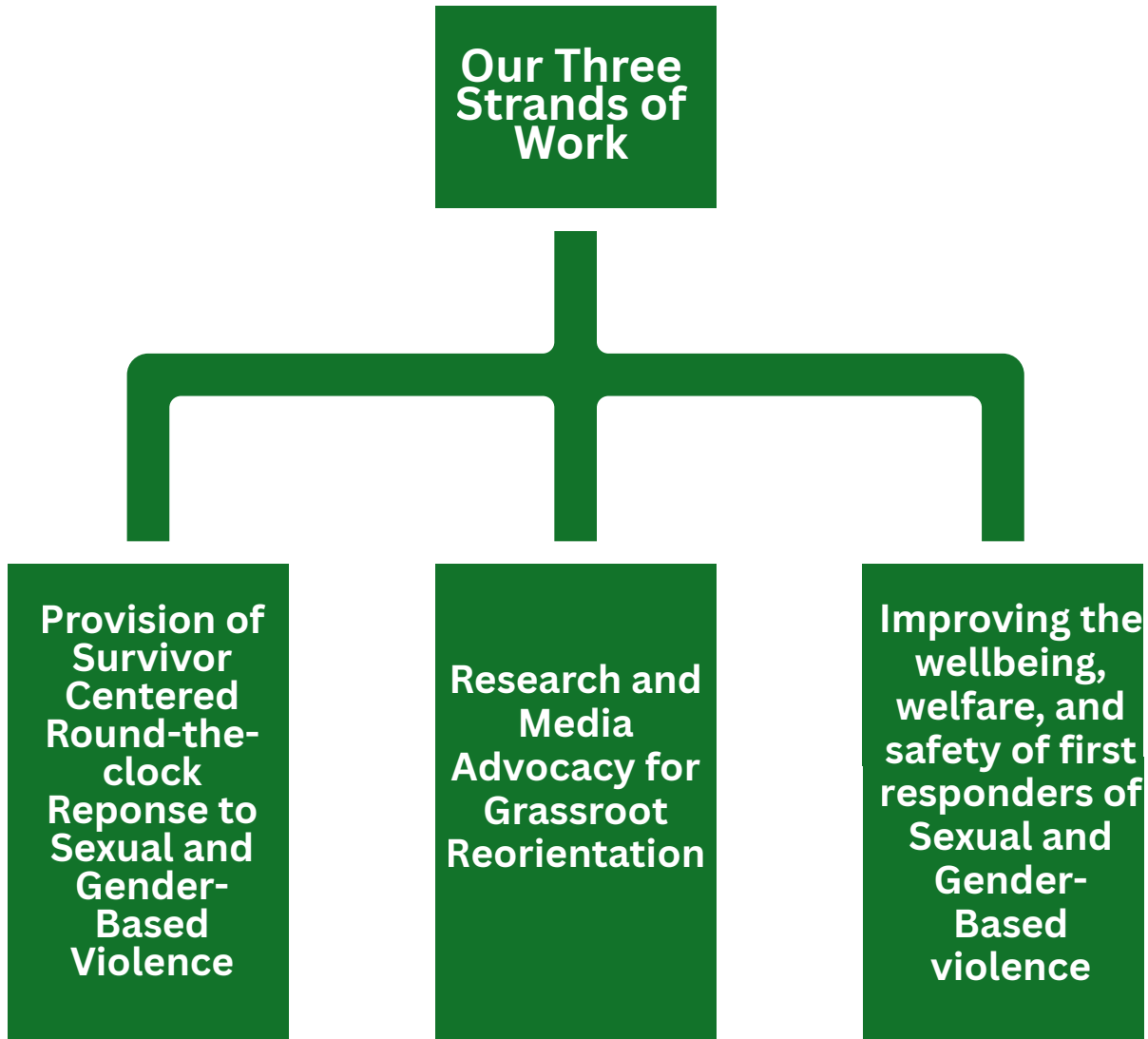
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- OGP (Open Government Partnership) National Secretariat
- SCIDaR
- Tunani Initiative



DNF AT A GLANCE



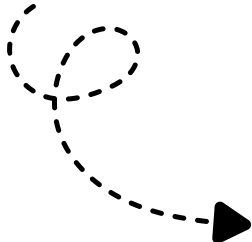
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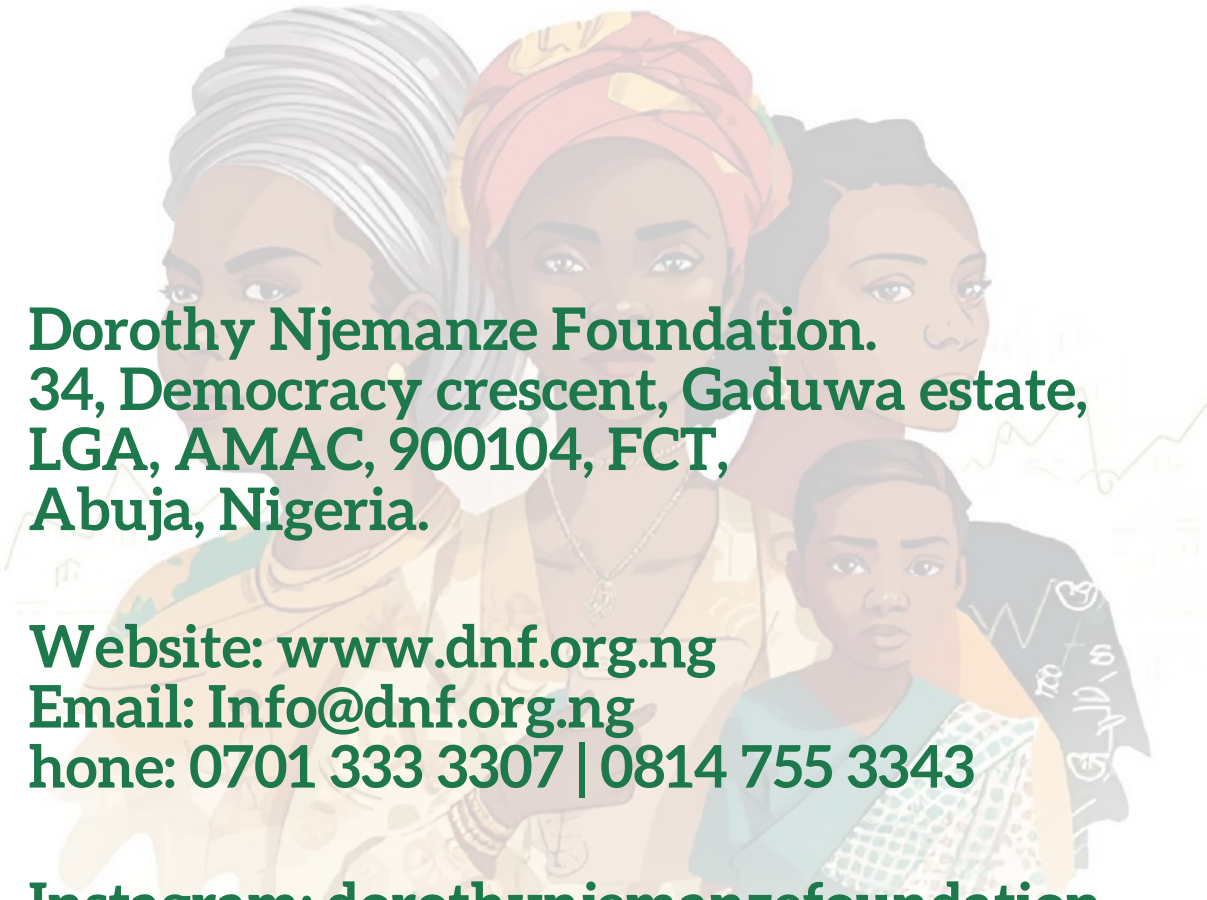
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