

The Position Paper

on

Gender-Responsive Review of the 2025 Appropriation Act and Nigeria's Gender Policy Landscape Analysis



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INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, women and girls continue to face deep and persistent inequalities across nearly every sector of life, education, health, economic participation, political representation, and freedom from violence. These inequalities are not accidental; they are sustained by systems, institutions, and decisions, including how public money is allocated and spent.



Public budgets are not neutral financial tools. They are moral and political statements that reveal whose lives are prioritised, whose labour is valued, and whose rights are protected. When budgets fail to reflect the realities of women and girls, they reinforce inequality rather than correct it.

This position paper draws from the Gender-Responsive Review of the 2025 Appropriation Act and Nigeria's Gender Policy Landscape Analysis, conducted by the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF) with support from Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, including keyword analysis of the Appropriation Act, reviews of national gender policies, and interviews with gender desk officers in selected MDAs, the analysis assesses how far Nigeria's 2025 national budget responds to the lived realities, rights, and priorities of women and girls.

Despite increased references to gender and women, this paper argues that the 2025 Appropriation Act falls significantly short of being gender-responsive.

OUR POSITION

The 2025 Appropriation Act cannot be considered gender-responsive in any transformative sense.

While gender-related language appears more frequently in the budget, this visibility has not translated into meaningful structural change. The budget remains dominated by fragmented, short-term, and politically convenient “empowerment” projects that lack coherence, sustainability, and accountability. These interventions fail to address the root causes of gender inequality and do not align with Nigeria’s extensive gender policy framework or global commitments.

As a result, gender budgeting in Nigeria remains largely symbolic, focused on optics rather than outcomes.

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KEY EVIDENCE FROM THE 2025 BUDGET

Gender in Language, Not in Impact!

Analysis of the 2025 Appropriation Act reveals widespread use of gender-related terms such as “women,” “gender,” “female,” and “empowerment.” However, a closer examination shows that language does not equal impact:

- Only 27.4% of gender-labelled budget line items directly target women or address women-specific issues.
- 68.6% merely acknowledge gender differences without aiming for systemic or structural change.
- 3.9% misuse gender language entirely, applying it to projects with no discernible gender objective.

This suggests that gender is often treated as a label rather than a lens for decision-making, resource allocation, or accountability.

Over-Reliance on Tokenistic Empowerment

Economic empowerment dominates gender-related allocations across MDAs. The word “empowerment” appears in 41.76% of the line items analyzed, often described through vague terms such as special empowerment, vocational empowerment, empowerment equipment, or encouragement materials.

In practice, this translates into the repeated distribution of items such as grinding machines, sewing equipment, deep freezers, tricycles, and other hardware. These projects are rarely connected to:

- Reliable electricity or infrastructure
- Access to markets and value chains
- Skills development or financial services
- Childcare or unpaid care responsibilities
- Long-term livelihood support

As documented in the analysis, many of these items remain unused or quickly become liabilities, reinforcing dependency rather than enabling economic justice. Empowerment without systems, services, or rights is not empowerment, it is tokenism.

Weak Alignment Between Policy and Budget

Nigeria has an extensive gender policy framework aligned with global commitments such as CEDAW, SDG 5, and the Maputo Protocol, yet, budget allocations do not consistently reflect these policies. Many MDAs operate with outdated or poorly implemented gender policies, unclear accountability frameworks, and no dedicated or traceable funding for gender-related objectives. As a result, policy intentions remain largely aspirational.

Underpowered Gender Units

Most ministries have gender desks or units, as required by the National Gender Policy. However, these units are typically underfunded, poorly positioned institutionally, and excluded from core budget planning processes. Without decision-making authority or control over resources, gender units function largely as symbolic structures rather than drivers of institutional change. This is compounded by the institutional instability of the Ministry of Women Affairs, which has experienced repeated restructuring, limiting its effectiveness and influence.

Critical Sectors Remain Underfunded from a Gender Lens

- 1. Health: Nigeria accounts for over a quarter of global maternal deaths, yet only 3.6% of the Ministry of Health's 2025 budget was gender-sensitive.**
- 2. Education: With over 18.3 million out-of-school children, most of them girls, only 2.71% of the education budget had gender considerations.**
- 3. Agriculture: Women constitute nearly 70% of Nigeria's agricultural workforce, yet agriculture received just 4.03% of the total national budget, far below the Maputo Declaration's 10% benchmark. Of this, only 5.17% of the Ministry's budget showed gender considerations, with less than 2% historically benefiting women farmers directly.**

These figures exist within a broader context of inequality. In the 2025 Global Gender Gap Index, Nigeria ranks 124 out of 148 countries, performing particularly poorly in:

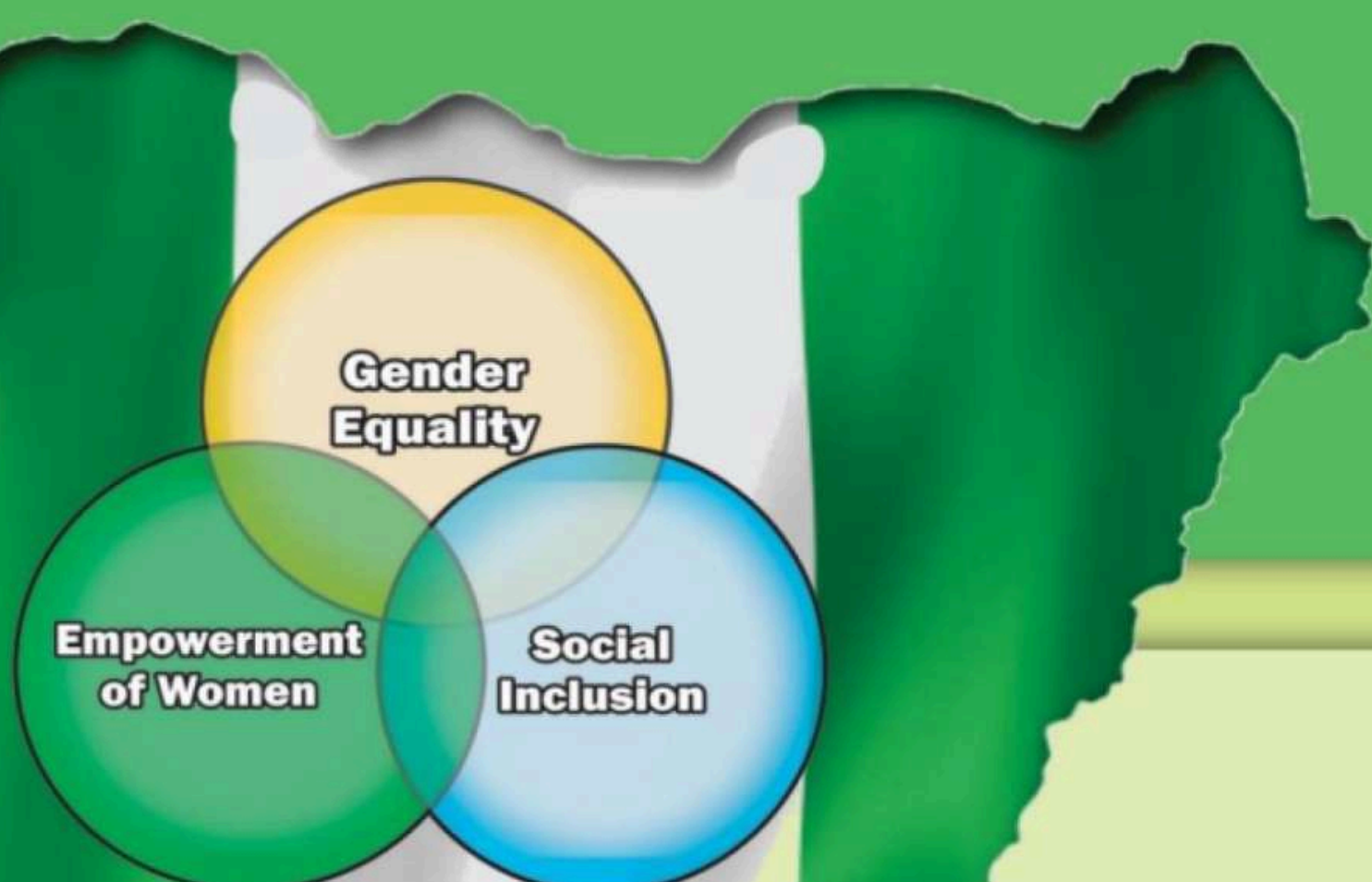
- Educational Attainment (139)**
- Political Empowerment (143)**

WHY THIS MATTERS

Gender inequality is not only unjust, it is economically costly. Persistent gaps in education, health, and economic access reduce productivity, shrink labour markets, and deepen poverty across generations. When women die from preventable childbirth complications, when girls drop out of school due to insecurity or early marriage, and when women farmers are denied land and credit, the nation bears the cost.

Budgets that prioritise politically expedient empowerment projects over systemic investment fail to deliver sustainable development. They also erode public trust and weaken accountability.

NATIONAL GENDER POLICY



OUR CALL TO ACTION!

For real transformation to occur, we call for the following:

Shift from Empowerment to Equality

Budget language and programming must move beyond vague empowerment to clear gender equality objectives tied to rights, services, and outcomes.

Institutionalise Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

- 1. Make gender analysis mandatory at every stage of budget preparation.**
- 2. Enforce the “no gender data, no budget approval” principle across MDAs.**

Strengthen Gender Units

- 1. Place gender units at decision-making levels with budgetary authority.**
- 2. Provide dedicated funding and technical capacity for GRB implementation.**

Align Budgets with Existing Gender Policies

- 1. Ensure that national and sectoral gender policies directly inform budget allocations.**
- 2. Update outdated policies and establish clear implementation indicators.**

Increase Civil Society Oversight and Participation

- 1. Enable meaningful CSO participation in budget formulation, monitoring, and evaluation.**
- 2. Revive and support collaborative GRB platforms between government and civil society.**

Prioritise Life-Saving and Rights-Based Investments

Invest in maternal health, girls’ education, social protection, and women’s leadership as national development priorities.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 national budget reflects intent, but intent without accountability does not save lives or close inequality gaps. Nigeria has the frameworks, the data, and the expertise required to implement truly gender-responsive budgeting. What is missing is political will, enforcement, and a deliberate shift from tokenism to transformation.

Budgets must work for the people they claim to serve. When women and girls are meaningfully included in fiscal priorities, Nigeria does not lose, it gains. Gender-responsive budgeting is not a favour to women; it is a prerequisite for equitable governance and sustainable national development.





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