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Considerations to Achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Enhance Gender Equality and Mainstreaming in Africa

Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad[1]

Abstract

Gender equality is part of sustainable development goal (SDG) 5. Although it is part of development goals, concept development is still an issue to debate. Women are not considered for development process whether at personal level or professional level. Personally, women are deprived of education opportunities and not considered develop labour market related skills for employment. This segregation also affects women to gain entrance to professional jobs. The study uses a qualitative research approach to gather information that is assessed using document analysis. Review of literature available in the form of journal articles, books, chapters, internet sources, official records of institutions related to gender equality are considered. Finding explore a need to create a gender-based environment whereby women are provided with capacity building interventions to enhance technological and financial skills that may lead to digital and financial empowerment. A few countries are selected as best practices to showcase their gender equality interventions that African countries may consider improving the situation at a regional level. The study therefore offers policy recommendations as a contribution to the fields of public management and governance, development studies, and gender studies.

Keywords: *Africa, Gender, Gender Equality, Qualitative, Sustainable Development Goal 5.*

Introduction

Achievement of SDG 5 is not easy in any country-specific context. The process of realizing this development goal requires resources, support and political will. Additionally, there are factors that exist in the form of culture, tradition, patriarchy, etc. that limit the enhancement of gender equality and mainstreaming. This is witnessed in the context of African region, whereby the SDG 5 is not realized holistically. Such gender-based inequality is visible in the form of their participation in political

processes, representation in political roles, and also in the areas of gender pay that is uneven, gender-based violence, to state a few (refer to Inter Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2025; United Nations [UN], 2025a; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2024). There is an understanding amongst countries, worldwide, that gender equality is a global goal and it is the responsibility of governments to incorporate this aspect in their professional sectors. Governments have therefore established legislative frameworks, however, there is still a lack of institutional compliance, capacity and financial resources to effectively implement SDG 5 (refer to UN Women, 2025; World Bank [WB], 2024). In the context of Africa, gender is widely captivated with structural norms; gender-biased suppressed voices; consideration in resource allocation, such as land, assets; to state a few that affect gender differently publicly and privately

[1]Professor, School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy College of Business and Economics University of Johannesburg South Africa Telephone: 011 559 5115/ 072 463 8685 Email: svyas-doorgapersad@uj.ac.za Orcid Number: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8146-344X

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(refer to Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 2025; Hanna & Bantebya, 2023; United Nations, 2025a).

Henceforth the success of SDG 5 in the context of Africa is visible but with less success and requires more interventions to record progress at an acceptable level. Africa should consider balancing legislative and legal enforcement alongside community engagements to get support against harmful gender practices and norms. This discussion leads to the next section which looks at the current major challenges for Africa to achieve SDG5 targets by 2030.

The article explores the status of gender equality/inequality (focus) in African context (locus). Studying adopts qualitative approach to gather information. To answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study, non-numerical textual, visual, or audio data was collected and analyzed, making it qualitative. The humanities and social sciences often employ qualitative research. It is done to comprehend experiences, concepts, or points of view, to develop new research ideas, or to obtain a thorough understanding of a topic (Bhandari, 2020:1; Maile, 2022:8; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2025:59). The data is secondary and was gathered through a review of the literature using publicly available documents. A literature review describes, summarizes, and evaluates these works in relation to the current research question. Books, academic papers, and other scholarly sources of information must be examined and analyzed to understand more about a specific topic, field of study, or theory (Maile, 2022: 13; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2024a: 79; 2024b: 224). The information was assessed using document analysis. According to Auriacombe (2007:25 cited in Nhlapo, 2020:39; and Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023:2061), document analysis is a widely utilized technique in a variety of social sciences and the arts. It basically entails approaching the comprehension and interpretation of documents methodically.

Challenges related to gender equality in Africa

There are various reasons that gender inequality exists in African society, some of them are patriarchal norms, cultural values, women seen as housewives contained to performing household activities only. Additionally, gender-based violence, gender roles, gender-based discrimination, etc. play a significant role in suppressing women empowerment. Professionally there are reasons such as gender-based digital divide, inadequate governance processes, non-compliance of legislative frameworks, all add to create a gender-biased environment at workplace. There are various reasons that gender equality and mainstreaming is still an issue of deliberation in African context. This section discusses a few significant causes of gender inequality.

Gender Roles

A key implementation challenge related to achieving SDG 5 is the deep internalisation of gender roles by both men and women. In Southern Africa, men still believe women should obey their husbands, highlighting the gap between legal ‘equality’ and lived ‘equity’ (United Nations Development Plan

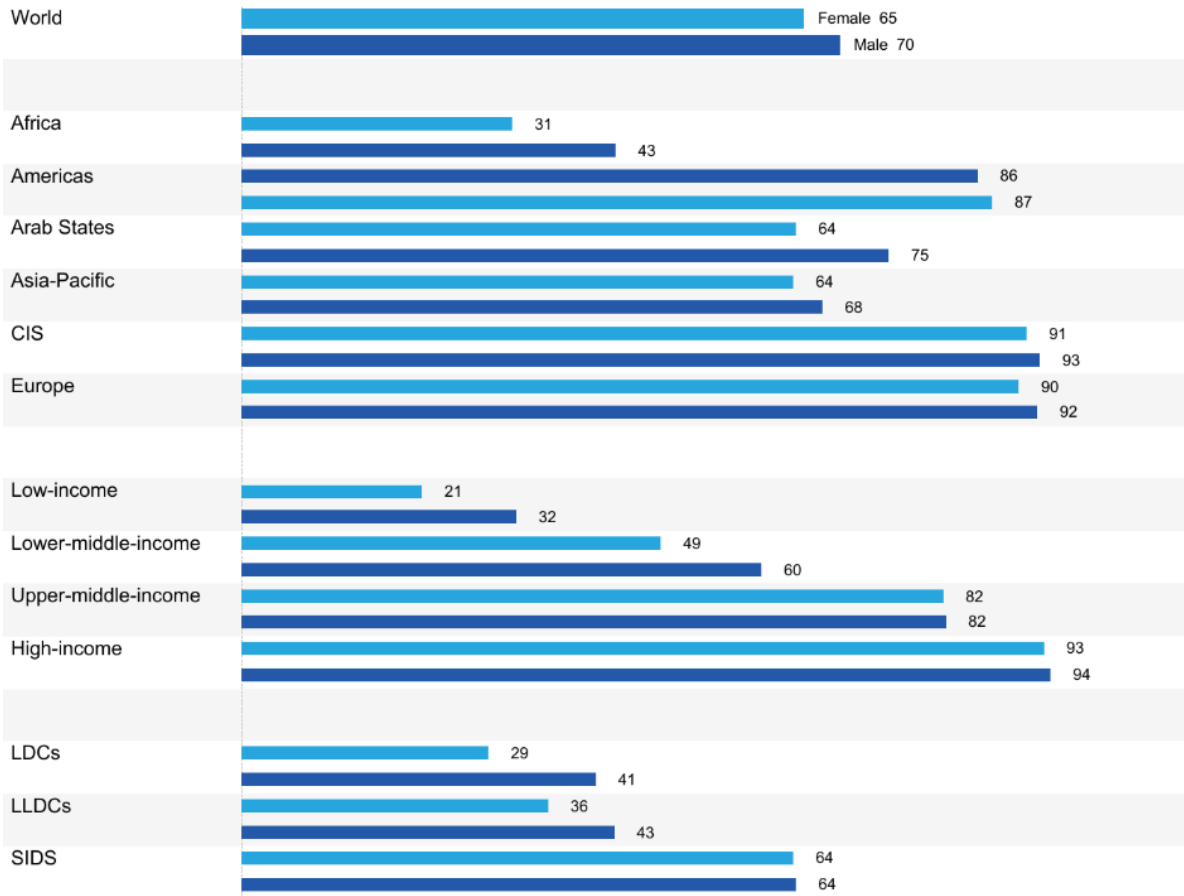
[UNDP], 2025). Women in Africa devote 4.1 times more hours to unpaid care and domestic work than men, a ratio far higher than the global average of 2.5 times (African Futures, 2026). This

phenomenon described as a 'time poverty' is on the other hand a normalised cultural expectation. Yet it physically prevents women from pursuing the education or leadership roles envisioned by SDG 5.

The Gender Digital Divide

The access to technology and digital competency is a demand to engage in effective communication, developing networks and getting better job opportunities. However, Graph 1 shows the statistics of gender-based digital divide that requires consideration for improvement.

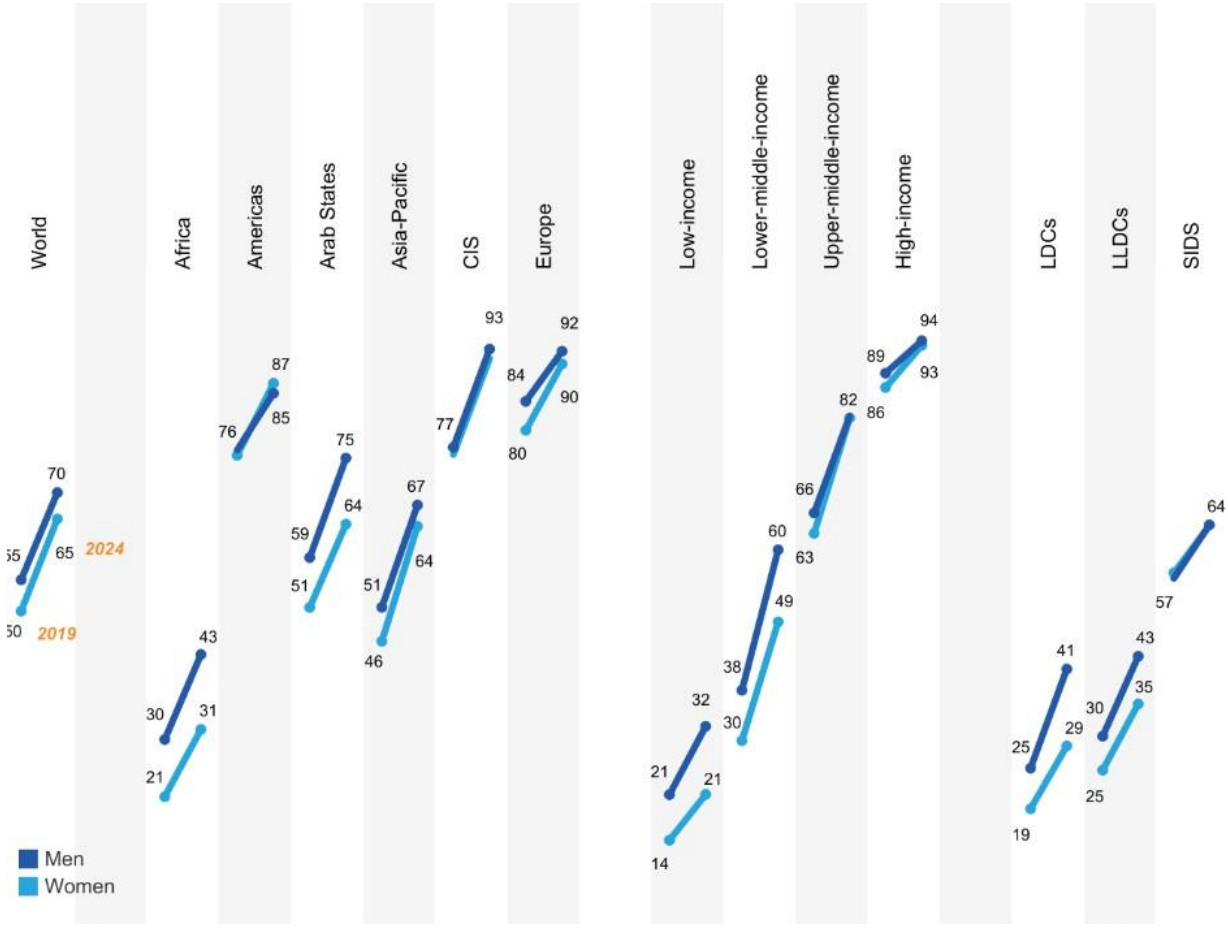
Graph 1: Percentage of female and male population using the internet, 2024



Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2026.

Graph 1 shows that "globally, 70 per cent of men are using the Internet, compared with 65 per cent of women. This means there are 189 million more men than women using the Internet in 2024" (ITU, 2026). Graph 2 further shows the gender-based digital divide in different regions.

Graph 2: Percentage of individuals using the Internet by gender, 2019 and 2024



Source: ITU, 2026.

Graph 2 shows that "among the ITU regions, gender parity has been achieved in the Americas, Europe and the CIS region. In the Asia-Pacific region, progress is fast, as the score improved from 0.89 in 2019 to 0.95 in 2024. In the Arab States, on the other hand, the gender parity score has not improved, remaining at 0.86 during the same period. Finally, there is progress in Africa, but the region is still far behind the other regions" (ITU, 2026).

In Africa, access to digital technologies for women and girls plays an important role towards their financial and economic empowerment. Lack of access to digital gadgets like smartphones

excludes women and girls from active participation in complex digital marketplaces. In low-income countries, 90% of adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24 do not have access to the internet, compared to 78% of their male peers (UNICEF, 2026).

Women need digital competency to be part of the changing labour market. However, there is a digital literacy gap whereby, "digitalisation of African economies also presents challenges as much as opportunities for African women" (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2026). The issue of digital inclusion for girls and women is another key consideration which the SDG framework considers for the realisation of full gender transformation in Africa. According to Global System for Mobile Communications Association **(**GSMA), Sub-Saharan Africa's mobile internet gender gap fell from

36% in 2022 to 29% in 2024. This indicates progress, but at the same time tell a story of women lagging behind men in terms of internet use (GSMA, 2025). Despite the gap narrowing for two consecutive years in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the gender digital divide remains wide (GSMA, 2025). The gender digital divide matters for SDG5 since digital exclusion increasingly shapes access to financial services, online learning, market information, e-government, telehealth, and civic participation. In Africa, digital gender divide is a newer variable which should be seriously considered in all gender evaluations as a structural barrier to equality. This calls for governments to invest in digital infrastructure, device ownership, digital literacy and safe online platforms and regulations that protects women from cyberbullying against women and girls (GSMA, 2025).

The Security Bottleneck

Security challenges remain some of the major obstacles to achieving SDG5 targets in Africa. In countries like DRC, Somalia, Mozambique, women continue to experience Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Physical Insecurity. Women are sometimes used as human shields and raped as war strategies to pressure opponents during negotiations. In this process, women's rights are undermined, affecting their progress in education, health, and economic participation.

The Governance Bottleneck

Another implementation challenge for SDG 5 in Africa is Political Underrepresentation and the 'Sticky Floor' in Governance. The high statistics on women participation in leadership and governance processes appear to actually mask deeper challenges. While Africa boasts some of the world's highest percentages of women in parliament, these figures often present a 'false' since of progress as women and girls continue to experience exclusion from real executive power and informal decision-making circles.

Sound policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality

The progress in legal and legislative framework in countries like Ethiopia, Senegal Cabo Verde will be only as good as their implementation. A recent UN report indicated that only 52% of gender data capacity exist in Africa which means the continent should leverage gender data production, analysis and use as a central rather than peripheral issue to achieve SDG 5 (UN Women, 2025). The issue of quality data is key to SDG5 achievement as weak data systems

make it harder to track progress, monitor inequalities, target interventions and hold institutions to governance principles. The key point for SDG5.c is more than focusing on the availability of legal and policy provisions but more importantly about their implementation. The current situation where policy ambition is ahead of policy implementation does not help much to achieve SDG5. Until backed by budgets and strong institutional capacity to implement, legal and policy frameworks will not bring much change to the much needed strong will to act against structural and societal norms that undermine efforts to even up current gender inequalities in Africa.

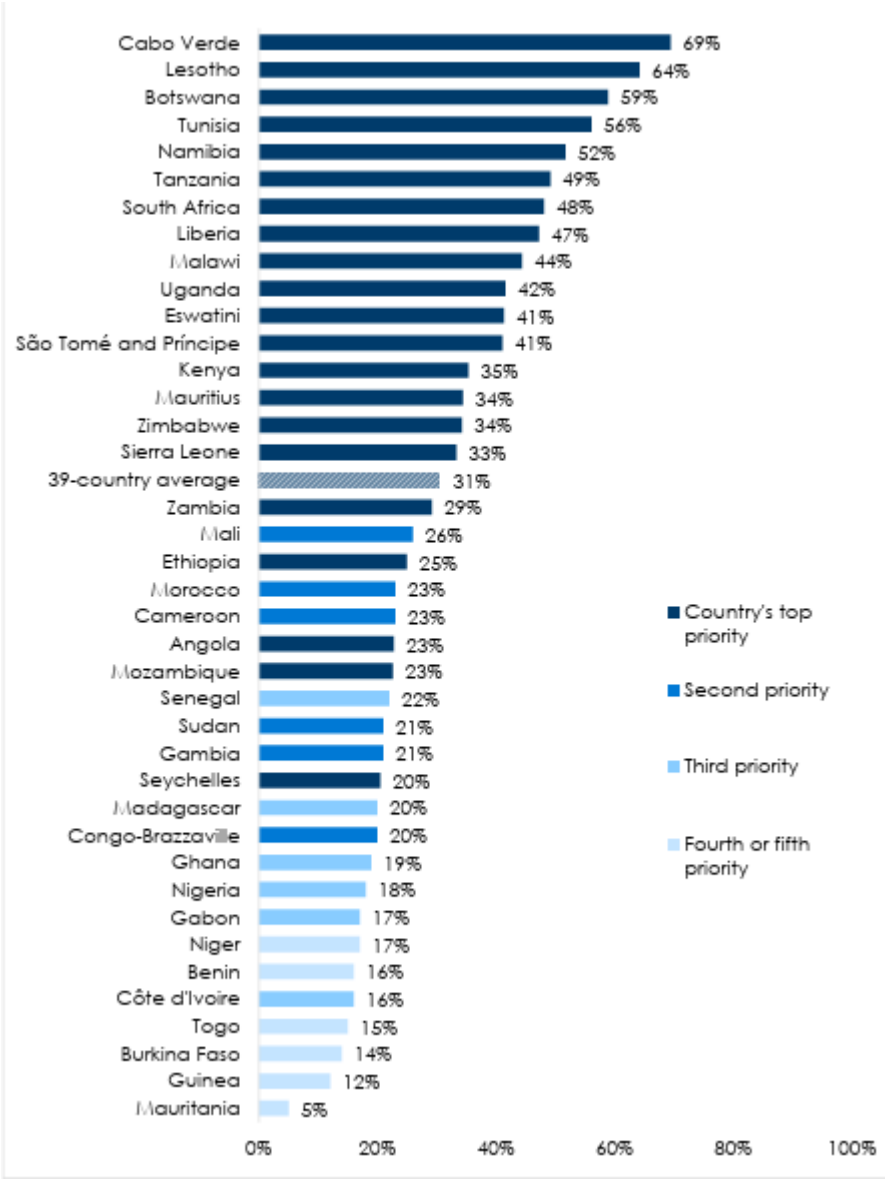
Discussions and findings

Based on the review of literature and findings, the following are the primary challenges to Africa's ability to eradicate gender equality challenges. One of the most significant ones is related to gender-based violence (GBV) that shows the following:

Normalisation of Violence

Afrobarometer's national partners conduct face-to-face interviews in the language of the respondent's choice with samples of 1,200-2,400 adults that yield country-level results with margins of error of +/-2 to +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level. 54,436 interviewed were recorded from 39 countries (Afrobarometer, 2023). Responses show that violence is considered normal under cultural norms as it was performed by partners in relationships. Such attitude carried by women was a restrictive factor to approach law enforcing bodies for justice, and hence the justice was offered outside the boundaries of officially established legal processes and system (Afrobarometer, 2025), see Graph 3.

Graph 3: GBV as the most important women's-right issue | 39 countries | 2021/2023



Source: Afrobarometer, 2023:5.

Graph 3 shows that "countries vary widely in how many citizens consider GBV the most critical women's-rights issue to address. GBV ranks as the top priority in 21 of the 39 surveyed countries, ranging up to 69% in Cabo Verde and 64% in Lesotho. It's the second-highest priority in six countries,

third highest in six others, and ranks fourth or fifth in six countries. In Mauritania, where unequal access to education is the most widely cited concern, only 5% prioritise GBV" (Afrobarometer, 2023:4).

Weak enforcement of Judicial decisions

In countries like Nigeria and South Africa have gazetted laws like the sexual offences Act to protect women but implementation challenges affect progress towards achieving SDG5. Most African countries do not have judicial structures that go down to community levels hence it is difficult to hold community perpetrators to account. This is more difficult in communities which believe in their harmful practices hence protect its people from legal exposure. As a result, it is difficult to successfully follow through cases against FGM or child marriages in such communities. Evidence suggests that even in countries like south Africa where strong laws like the Sexual Offences Acts exist, police training and forensic bottlenecks affect full implementation of the laws. The lack of legal follow-through due to weak or non-existent legal and social support systems and institutions creates a situation of 'secondary victimisation'. This is when women suffer silently as they see no prospects of succeeding when they seek redress hence are discouraged from seeking justice (UN Women, 2026). In Nigeria, despite the passage of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) in many states, enforcement is hampered by a lack of specialised courts and a culture that favours 'out-of-court settlements' mediated by traditional leaders (UN Women, 2026). According to the WHO (2026), approximately 33% of women in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, a figure significantly higher than the global average of 27%.

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV)

In Africa, sexual violence has been weaponised to pressurise opposing groups. It is frequently used as a deliberate tactic of war, and state protection for women in displaced person camps is often non-existent (United Nations, 2025). In such situations, implementation of SDG5 initiatives is undermined and due to instability in most parts of East, central and West Africa, gender empowerment programmes have suffered huge setbacks. As noted earlier, security instability impact heavily on women compared to men. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), sexual violence remains a common weapon used by armed groups. This is worsened by lack of effective witness protection mecjhanisms to safeguard victimisation of witnesses against armed commanders (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Research evidence suggests that in unstable regions of Africa, women are 3.5 times more likely to experience sexual violence than those in stable regions (UN Security Council, 2025).

Inadequate Support Services

Related to the previous discussion point on 'secondary victimisation' above, the critical shortage of state-funded shelters, psychological support, and legal aid clinics, leave survivors with the impossible choice of returning to an abusive household or facing homelessness. This is another 'secondary victimisation' which 'normalises' abuse as women weigh options between two difficult choices. Women have the choice to stick with an abusive partner at home or move out into unsupported state institutions such as victim shelters.

In some cases, the process of seeking justice can often be as traumatising as the crime itself. In South Africa, which has one of the world's highest rape rates, the 'conviction rate' for reported sexual offenses remains below 10% (Stats SA, 2026). This is largely attributed to backlogs in DNA processing and a lack of gender-sensitive training for first responders. A 2025

Afrobarometer survey across 39 African countries revealed that only 38% of citizens believe their government is doing 'fairly well' or 'very well' at preventing and responding to GBV. Additionally, various sources have identified the implementation challenges to achieving equal representation in African leadership:

The 'Glass Cliff' and 'Soft' Portfolios

This description accurately characterises the unintended negative reinforcement of women discrimination when affirmative action creates secondary problems for women and the whole governance system. The UN Women correctly noted a secondary gender challenge whereby even when women reach cabinet levels, they remain relegated or assigned to 'social' ministries such as Gender, Youth, Health. The 'hard' power portfolios such as Finance, Defence, Energy remain male-dominated (UN Women, 2026a).

Political Financing & Corruption

Due to the increasing role and influence of private money in electoral processes women are find it difficult to self-finance, initiate and sustain campaigns against men. Running political campaigns in many African countries requires significant financial resources. As a result, women, who generally have less access to credit and private wealth to run effective political campaigns (International IDEA, 2025). This 'monetisation' of African politics pushes women out of the political competition leaving them options as proportional representatives where legislative provisions demand it. For example, in Ghana, fees to file intention to participate at the primary elections level within major political parties have historically forced women to pull out. While some parties practice affirmative action, the overall cost of campaigning such as logistics, media, and security remains a real major challenge for women participation.

Harassment and Cyberbullying

IPU (2026 a, b) noted that female politicians face high levels of online bullying and physical threats, which deter young women from entering into politics (IPU, 2026 a, b).

Token versus Substantive and material Representation

Legislative quotas sometimes lead to 'token' appointments where women are expected to vote along party lines rather than advocating for a gender-progressive agenda (African Union, 2025). This suggest that women 'participation' is more cosmetic than transformative. The women's quota paradox in many African nations use 'Reserved Seats' or 'Legislative Quotas,' but these do not always translate into local government influence. Rwanda remains the global leader with 61.3% of its parliamentary seats held by women. However, in Nigeria, the lack of a mandatory quota system has resulted in a 'representation crisis,' where women hold less than 5% of seats in the National Assembly following the 2023 and subsequent 2025 local elections (IPU, 2026 a, b). As of 2026, the regional average for women in national parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa is 27.2%, which is slightly above the global average but far from the 50% target set by the African Union's Agenda 2063 (UN Women, 2026).

While national numbers look good, local government where service delivery happens is often a male-only space. In Kenya, despite the 'two-thirds gender rule' in the Constitution, the 2022

and 2025 election cycles showed that women struggle to win 'Gubernatorial' seats (executive power) compared to 'Woman Representative' seats (legislative/reserved), reflecting a preference for men in executive roles (African Union, 2025). Globally and within Africa, only 26% of local government councillors are women, highlighting that the "grassroots" of power remains largely inaccessible (UN Women, 2026).

Best practices

This section explores a few cases as best practices for African countries to consider adopting or adapting to improve situation in their context.

India — Digital Inclusion (SDG 5.b)

The gender interventions in India are framed along what is called the JAM Trinity which is the Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar ID and Mobile connectivity. These three key variables aim to provide women's economic empowerment. The country has a **Financial Inclusion (Jan Dhan).** As of early 2026, over 55.2 crore (552 million) bank accounts have been opened under the *Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY). Crucially, **55.5%** of these accounts are held by women (World Bank, 2024; Kumar, 2025). There is also a **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT).** India has digitalised welfare payments eliminating 'gatekeepers' who have been costing government and communities. In this proves, the government saved over **₹3.48 lakh crore** (approx. $42 billion) in leakages, with millions of women receiving maternity benefits and cooking gas subsidies directly into their own accounts (Press Information Bureau [PIB], 2026). The country has introduced **Identity Cards.** The access to national Identity cards unlocked previously excluded women to have access to financial opportunities (PIB, 2026). In 2025, over 1.43 billion identity cards were issued in India opening opportunities for women to engage in productive activities (PIB, 2026). It has been identified that there is an **Ownership Gap.** Despite widespread mobile connectivity, only 35% of Indian women own a smartphone compared to over 70% of men. Women in India rely on 'shared' family devices, which are often controlled by male relatives. This arrangement limits their privacy and frequency of use (3ie, 2026).

Bangladesh — Girls' Education and Child Marriage (SDG 5.3)

Bangladesh has an interesting approach which focuses on the economic 'opportunity cost' of marriage by incentivising families to keep daughters in school. The interventions to achieve this strategy include **Stipend Expansion**. The country's provision of educational stipends to approximately 15 million girls helped girls to stay in school. The support is provided through various government and non-governmental schemes, such as the *Female Secondary School Stipend Program* (FSSSP) (Girls Not Brides, 2025). Secondly, the Bangladesh government provides targeted support for income generating projects. Recent data from Save the Children (2026) indicates that income-generating for livestock rearing helped keep 85% of girls out of early marriage and continue their education. Lastly, digital monitoring. The **Child Marriage Restraint Rules 2018** launched an IT system to verify the ages of the bride and groom using digital birth certificates, resulting in the termination of licenses for over 40 marriage **r**egistrars found facilitating child marriages (Girls Not Brides, 2025). Some of the constraining factors in Bangladesh include **Labour Market Mismatch.** The mismatch between high school enrolment and completion and low 'labour market absorption' remains a major concern to achieve SDG5

targets for the country. When many girls complete school but lack access to formal jobs, it raises questions on the effectiveness of the interventions. It creates a situation of 'delayed marriage' rather than 'lifetime empowerment' (UNICEF, 2025). A second challenge is what is called the Post-2018 Plateau. Despite decades of progress, child marriage rates in Bangladesh remain the highest in South Asia. As of 2026, 51% of young women are married before 18. This means the country faces huge huddles to meet the 2030 SDG target (UNICEF, 2025). Lastly, The School Drop-out Gap remains a big challenge towards achieving SDG 5 in Bangladesh. Projections for 2026 estimate that 350,000 girls are at risk of dropping out of school due to economic pressures, directly increasing their vulnerability to early marriage (UNICEF, 2025).

Mexico — Institutional Response to GBV (SDG 5.2)

Mexico's strategy focuses on 'institutionalising' the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). This includes the use of specialised laws and tracking systems such as the legislative Reform Olimpia's Law. This was passed in 2021 and is fully operational across 29 federal entities. This law criminalises digital violence and sexual privacy violations. This has led to a significant increase in the reporting of cyber-harassment (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [CEPAL], 2026). Another key intervention is the specialized monitoring. The Ingrid Act (2023) now penalises public servants who leak sensitive images of victims. Combined with the **Femicide Monitoring Systems**, Mexico has improved the 'traceability' of gender-motivated crimes (CEPAL, 2026). Finally, Mexico has adopted specialised protocols for investigating femicide. This institutional reach has been adopted in over 20 countries in the broader region (CEPAL, 2026). This approach provides institutional certainty which encourages GBV victims to report cases. **High Prevalence**. Mexico continues to contribute towards regional GBV high cases. In 2025 regional data confirms that 1 in 3 women in the Latin American region continues to experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime (Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 2025). **Resource Strain**. Due to increase in GBV now characterised as a 'shadow pandemic', the demand for shelters and legal aid has outpaced current capacities, leaving many survivors without the physical protection needed after they report a crime (UN Women, 2025).

Kenya's Mobile Money and Financial Inclusion Strategy (SDG 5.b)

Kenya is a global pioneer in demonstrating how financial innovations could improve women's access to financial services in rural areas. The M-Pesa platform is a success story which enabled communities to bypass traditional banking barriers for women. The platform reduced high transaction costs associated with traditional banks pushing savings to poor communities. In this process, M-Pesa increased financial inclusion and reduced poverty among women. Over 84% of M-Pesa in Kenya are women beneficiaries (GSMA, 2025). The intervention has direct impact on Poverty Alleviation. Due to the financial expansion through M-Pesa, access to mobile money translates to approximately 194,000 households being lifted out of extreme poverty with significantly higher impact on female-headed households (World Bank, 2025). Other positive impacts include the creation of entrepreneurs with over 185,000 involved in agricultural related businesses (GSMA, 2025). One major persisting challenge is the limited access to digital gadgets for women in Kenya. Digital divide in Kenya is as high as 15%. This gender gap persists in smartphone ownership, limiting women's ability to use advanced digital apps beyond basic SMS banking (GSMA, 2025).

Nigeria — GBV Legislation (SDG 5.2)

Nigeria's struggle with SDG 5.2 illustrates the difficulty of implementing federal laws in a decentralised governance system. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015) was a landmark law criminalising FGM, abandonment, and domestic violence. By 2024, the majority of Nigeria's 36 states had finally moved to 'domesticate' the act (UN Women, 2025). Nigeria's Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) across the country provide medical and legal support to over 25,000 survivors since their inception (British Council, 2024). Africa could draw lessons on the institutionalisation of gender statutory provisions to achieve SDG5. However, gaps still exist on how to fully enforce some of the statutory provisions such as the VAPP Act. While 34 states have adopted the VAPP Act, the 'Implementation Gap' is severe. In many northern states, the law is rarely invoked due to conflicts with Sharia or customary legal interpretations (UN Women, 2025). Similarly, the funding gap is another challenge for Nigeria's goals towards achieving SDG5. Limited statutory

budgetary support to the Ministry of Women Affairs and related state institutions is one reason for Nigeria's failure to provide needed support for programmes such as witness protection (UNDP, 2025).

Zimbabwe — Customary Law and Land Rights (SDG 5.a)

Zimbabwe provides a useful case on how to use legal provisions to deal with cultural norms for economic emancipation of women. The country's 2013 Constitution provides progressive pieces of legislation which addressed women's lack of economic independence tied to land tittles and use as a long-term strategy to empower women economically. As a result, the Constitutional provisions allow for Joint Titling. Like in Ethiopia, the government initiatives in 2024-2025 have aimed to ensure that land permits are issued in the names of both spouses. Currently, approximately 20% of A1 small-scale land holders are women (FAO, 2025). This is a significant learning point for most African countries especially South Africa. The country has successful women farmers and entrepreneurs involved in various agricultural value chain businesses. However, persistent challenges due to the **customary patriarch** remain. Zimbabwe continues to face the 'User' versus 'Owner' Conflict. Apart from the Constitutional and statutory provisions, many women in Zimbabwe are still practically considered as 'users' rather than 'owners' of the land under customary law. This antagonism between statutory and customary laws blurs the lines between ownership and use particularly upon the death of a husband. Research shows that 30% of widows still face 'land grabbing' by male in-laws despite legal protections (World Bank, 2025).

The overarching lesson for African countries is that 'legal progressivism' is not a substitute for implementation capacity**.** This is summarised in three keyways. **Closing the Justice Gap (Mexico/Nigeria):** Mexico's use of femicide monitoring systems suggests that Africa needs a **centralised, real-time GBV electronic management system or dashboard** that connects SAPS with key social service institutions such as the Department of Justice, and the Offices of the Premier. This would move M&E from 'reporting on the past' to 'intervening in the present.' **Digital Agency (India/Kenya): Africa has much to learn on SDG5 from** Kenya's M-Pesa and India's digital IDs which show that financial autonomy is the best defence against domestic abuse. By digitising women's economic assets, South Africa can reduce the 'economic trap' that

keeps survivors in abusive households. By looking at Sweden and Rwanda, we can identify specific 'policy levers' that address the bottlenecks in the African gender machinery, see Table 1.

Table 1: Bottlenecks in the African gender machinery

Global Case Study	Core Lesson	Application for African countries
Sweden (Care Economy)	Infrastructure is the prerequisite for equality.	**Policy Shift:** Move from unpaid "volunteer" community care to a professionalized, state-subsidized ECD and elderly care sector.
Norway (Quotas)	Legislated quotas drive rapid boardroom shifts.	**Policy Shift:** Adopt mandatory gender quotas for JSE-listed companies to break the 7% CEO stagnation.
India (Digital ID)	Technology bypasses traditional "gatekeepers."	**Policy Shift:** Use the "India Stack" model to digitize GBV reporting and social grant access, reducing dependence on local male-dominated structures.
Bangladesh (Incentives)	Economic trade-offs can delay harmful practices.	**Policy Shift:** Expand the "Child Support Grant" or secondary stipends specifically tied to keeping girls in school in high-risk rural districts.
Mexico (GBV Courts)	Specialization reduces impunity.	**Policy Shift:** Fully institutionalized specialized Sexual Offenses Courts that are independent of the standard backlog of the Magistrate courts.
Rwanda (Governance)	Political parity is the "top-down" fuel.	**Policy Shift:** Leverage South Africa's high parliamentary representation (46%) to mandate Gender-Responsive Budgeting across all 3 spheres of government.

Source: Compiled by Grand* (2026) from secondary sources considered in the study.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study offers the following policy recommendations for consideration.

It is important to **close the digital gender gap.** A recommendation is for African governments prioritising to close the gender digital gap. Gender digital gap is increasingly becoming the new structural challenge for achieving SDG5 in Africa. African governments should therefore improve the affordability of digital devices, digital literacy and rural connectivity (GSMA, 2025).

It is also important to **strengthen gender data systems and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) frameworks.** Investments in gender data systems is an important policy consideration to ensure effective planning and implementation of gender programmes in Africa. Such policy strengthening will address the current data gap at 48%. It will be difficult for Africa to make significant gains in addressing SDG5 targets without good data management systems in place. Good data reduces poor targeting and resource wastages through weak policy planning and ineffective operational beneficiary targeting (UN Women, 2025)

In terms of empowerment, it is significant to **increase financial budgets for gender equality.** African governments should be deliberate about SDG5 interventions through provision of statutory budget provisions for key programmes and processes. This calls for gender-responsive budgeting and dedicated funding for SDG 5 programmes. This strategic provision will address current implementation constraints that characterise SDG5 programmes in most African countries (UN Women, 2025).

These are some of the recommendations that are considered imperative for achieving gender equality. There are many other aspects that require consideration such as gender-based human resource processes to advance women participation at professional front; gender-sensitive policies and programmes to advance women empowerment; gender-based roles at workplace; gender-based capacity-building interventions, to state a few. This is an ongoing study contributing to the disciplines of public management and governance, development studies, and gender studies.

The study is based on secondary information that is available in public domain. The lack of empirical data may be considered as a limitation to the study. However, the nature of study is comprehensive, hence it is time-consuming and financially expensive to travel to various African countries for conducting interviews. Even using technology to have online interviews, the nature of study is timewise expensive. The future publications will consider selecting a few African countries and information will be gathered using the information that is available on official websites of African governments and organisations related to gender equality. Desktop analysis will be considered to assess the information and create a database of information in the field of gender studies.

Epilogue

Although officially it was always considered that empowerment is linked to women holding professional positions. But there is another aspect of empowerment that cannot be understated and underrated. That is “self-empowerment” Not easy, but women may need to take responsibility towards identifying their potential, equipping themselves with required marked-related competencies, and learn to fight for their rights. Yes, there are barriers preventing such attitudes, such as patriarchal environment, social-cultural norms, to state a few. That is where government needs measures to ensure that women in every geographical area, and at every level of society, requires civic education, understanding rights so they can fight for rights, and appropriate platforms to raise their voices. There are female role-models that have broken the societal-structural barriers and have overcome limiting beliefs. They are an inspiration to all other women validating that ‘anything hard to achieve, does not mean impossible to achieve. It simply demands claiming inner strength that already exists in a dormant form, unrecognised,

unused, unclaimed. Reclaim that power'. On a personal note: Any task performed without co-dependency is empowerment. Self-acceptance is empowerment. Claiming 'I Am' is empowerment.

Notes

* Dr Zacharia Grand is a PDRF who compiled the information stated under Table 1. This note is to acknowledge his assistance.

[1]Views posted by Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad on various social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin) on 16 February 2026.

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