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Situational Analysis of Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AEE	Africa Evangelistic Enterprise
A2F	Access to Finance
BVN	Bank Verification Numbers
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
COVID-19	Coronavirus
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFI	Development Finance Institution
DFS	Digital Financial Services
EFInA	Enhancing Financial Innovation & Access
FAWFIN	Framework for Advancing Women Financial Inclusion in Nigeria
FCMB	First City Monument Bank
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FI	Financial Inclusion
FMARD	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
FSPs	Financial Service Providers
GCE	Gender Centre of Excellence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IT	Information Technology
ITC	International Trade Centre
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MDA	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
MFBs	Microfinance Banks
MFI	Microfinance Institutions
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NAICOM	National Insurance Commission
NCC	Nigerian Communications Commission
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NIMC	National Identity Management Commission
PENCOM	National Pension Commission
PSBs	Payment Service Banks
SEC	Securities Exchange Commission
USSD	Unstructured Supplementary Services Data
WFI	Women Financial Inclusion
WMSMEs	Women-owned/led MSMEs

Situational Analysis of WFI in Nigeria at a glance

There are
53 million adult
Nigerian women, of which
33m (61%)
live in rural areas

90%
of respondents make monthly contributions to savings groups

Over
16 million rural women
rely exclusively on informal financial services

25 million
adult women are formally unbanked which represents
51% of women

Women are likely to choose more accessible access points like financial service agents.
Out of **700,000** registered agents, **15%** are women

The value of loans borrowed from formal institutions by women decreases after they reach
the age of 45

Gender gap of
10% in National Identity Number (NIN) enrolment rates (2022)

8% gender gap in 2021

Gender gap of
5%
in BVN enrolment rate (2021)

12% gender gap in 2020

Sources: *EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey; State of Women's Financial Inclusion presentation. Available here. | Strategy for leveraging agents network for women's financial inclusion in Nigeria. Available here. | CBN data, as of the end of 2021. NIMC enrolment dashboard as of November 2022. Available here.*

Executive Summary

The case for advancing women's financial inclusion

Unlike comparator countries in Africa, Nigeria's gender gap is widening. Countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda are gradually achieving gender parity in financial inclusion. The relative gender gap for Nigeria, on the other hand, stands at 8%, placing Nigeria below its peers.

The argument for closing this gender gap and improving women's financial inclusion is compelling. Particularly in Nigeria, the financial inclusion of women represents a critical issue to be solved if the country is to achieve its National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 3.0 target to increase the adoption and usage of financial services for women.

Growing evidence suggests that increasing women's access to and use of financial services can have both financial, economic, and societal benefits. Economically empowered women are major catalysts for development, as they usually re-invest their money in the home. There is also a cultural aspect, where if women have been conditioned their entire lives to believe they have no agency, they will not be able to seize opportunities and build resilience.

The current state of women's financial inclusion

To comprehensively understand the state of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria, three major dimensions of financial inclusion need to be considered. These dimensions include access to financial services, usage of financial services and the quality of financial services.

Table 1: Summary of financial inclusion dimensions

Indicator	Description
Access	This refers to the availability of formal financial products and services. It includes the physical proximity of these services and measures the ability of women to reach financial services touchpoints or access products from financial institutions.
Usage	This refers to the utilisation of financial services, its regularity, and frequency. This is the extent to which women use the products and services on offer, the rate and frequency of use, and the length of time that they continue to use the service. For example, some women might open accounts but rarely utilise the banking facilities due to logistical constraints. It includes the combination of products and services and women's behavioural and usage patterns.
Quality	This is the measure of the relevance of financial services or products to the needs of consumers. One aspect is evaluated from the consumers' perspective, judging from their experience and the extent to which available services meet their needs. The other is determining the fit of financial products.

Overview of the current status and trends in access and usage

ACCESS TO FORMAL BANKING SERVICES

- **Although BVN enrolment has grown at a 9% CAGR over the past four years, a gender gap of 5% still exists.** Low BVN enrolment rates of women in Nigeria suggest that a large part of this population is excluded from accessing formal banking services.
- **Despite the expansion of the national identity system, there is a 10% gender gap in enrolment rates.** Enrolment rates are lower for women in the Northern regions of Nigeria, such as the North East and North West, where women 's financial exclusion remains significant.
- **In addition to commercial banks, women rely on other formal institutions for the provision of financial services.** The EFInA A2F survey indicates that other formal institutions account for 6% and informal FSPs account for 15% of women's banking status. Combined, this suggests an exclusion rate of 40%. Compared to the male exclusion rate of 32%, leaving a gender gap of 8%.
- **From a location perspective, many rural women continue to rely solely on informal financial services compared to women in urban areas.** 90% of the FGD respondents indicated that they belonged to an Adashi[1] (savings and credit group) with weekly or monthly contributions ranging from ~ 200 Naira ($0.44) to 500 Naira ($1.1).

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICE POINTS

- **Women are likely to choose more accessible access points like financial service agents, particularly in rural areas where the scarcity of ATMs and bank branches is more common.** Nigeria has recorded a 22% increase in the number of agents available compared to the other access points. 54% of the FGD respondents indicated that the nearest ATMs to them are about two streets away; financial service agents, on the hand, are 'clustered at every corner of their communities'.

1 In Northern Nigeria, informal savings groups, are referred to as "adashi".

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WOMEN'S USAGE OF BANK ACCOUNTS

- **Women typically use their accounts to receive their wages or income from agricultural or other small businesses.** 76% of the FGD respondents indicated that they use their accounts to receive money, make cash deposits and save money for business and personal use. When asked what other financial services they are subscribed to, only 8% of respondents said they had pension accounts, 3% said they had health insurance, and 89% had neither but only savings accounts.
- **From the FGDs, women typically make only 1-2 withdrawals a month, with most choosing to withdraw their money as soon as they receive it.** For women who do not own bank accounts, NGOs make it a point to open accounts for them. However, in the majority of cases, these women withdraw the money right away and do not return to using the accounts.

BORROWING HABITS OF WOMEN

- **The average adult woman is unlikely to borrow money from a formal source as their first choice.** In most cases, women borrow from their networks, such as family, friends, savings groups and village associations, before going to a formal institution. This is often due to a lack of collateral, mistrust of formal institutions, and other factors. However, the women in the FGDs primarily cited the pressure of repayment as the main reason for not using formal financial services.
- **The value of loans borrowed from formal institutions by women decreases after they reach the age of 45.** Compared to men who continue to have loans of higher value as they age, women borrow less, which likely suggests that younger women are most likely to access larger, formal loans.

Demand for financial services by women

The key factors driving women's access and uptake of financial services include but are not limited to the increased mobile phone penetration and digital access, growing agent network, the emergence of female agents and alternative credit scoring options, the benefits gained using bank accounts compared to the risk of having cash at hand. However, women's access and uptake of financial services may still be hindered by low and irregular disposable income, lack of mobility to financial service access points, the culture and local perceptions of women, lack of trust, low financial education, heavy reliance on cash and the cost of usage.

Supply of financial services to women

The key factors driving FSPs to provide women with access to financial services include but are not limited to the emergence of digital technologies, agency banking and alternative credit scoring options. These FSPs, however, still face challenges such as higher costs to serve in rural areas, the unit cost of lending, especially to low-income women, the lack of gender-disaggregated data and recruitment hurdles due to the undersupply of talent in the industry.

Quality of financial services and service delivery

Seven levers were used to analyse the quality of financial services and service delivery. The levers could also potentially be used to determine the fit of financial products for women when designing products.

Affordability: The majority of women in low-income communities earn below ~700 Naira ($1.8) per day. The minimum initial deposit required to open an account in Nigeria ranges between ~ 0 – 10,000 Naira ($0 – $23), and the minimum operating balance required ranges between $0 to $5 which can be considered expensive compared to the earnings of low-income women.

Transparency: FGD respondents indicated that they trust their banks and feel protected by their banks. They generally feel that the information they receive about bank charges, etc., are clear, unambiguous and easy to understand. The more illiterate respondents, however, stated that they rely on family and friends for information to be translated.

Convenience: As mentioned in previous sections, women are disproportionately affected by the lack of mobility to financial service access points such as bank branches. Although agency banking is convenient, it might not be able to offer the complete range of required financial service offerings. Women are also less likely to have official identification documents required to open a bank account.

Fair treatment: Marginalised women reported that they had faced some form of discrimination or mistreatment while trying to access financial services. They are sometimes ignored or pushed aside by banking agents. Inadequate time is also spent explaining financial goods and services and other situations to them. Based on this, fair treatment was rated a "poor fit".

Consumer protection: In recent times, there have been allegations of unethical collection practices by some digital lenders. Having heard stories about this form of harassment by providers, women are often hesitant to accept credit from providers. Providers have been alleged to use customer information to reach out to friends and family of the consumer to intimidate them into paying. Women are often hesitant to accept credit from these providers, citing unethical practices as the main reason for this.

Financial education: FGD respondents believe that they have basic information about their bank accounts. They stated that bank officials explained the basic workings of their accounts but, however, failed to go into details. They indicated that they are open to learning more about financial services such as a pension, health insurance etc. and how mobile banking works to lessen their reliance on POS agents.

Choice: Women in rural communities are oftentimes not well informed about banking products to make choices. Women surveyed stated that they chose their banks because (i) the majority of the people in the community use the bank, (ii) someone made a recommendation, (iii) the bank approached them, and (iv) an NGO helped them pick out the bank. Choice was rated a "poor fit" as a result.

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WFI stakeholder map and case studies

The Nigeria WFI stakeholder map is a repository of stakeholders addressing women's financial inclusion challenges in Nigeria. The database includes the following datasets: Organisation name, stakeholder type, initiative/product, initiative/product description, challenges addressed, strategic imperative addressed, initiative website, and project country.

The WFI Stakeholder map represents data on WFI stakeholders collected on a Google sheet from several sources and visualised using Google Data Studio. The WFI stakeholder map can be accessed via the link here. It is a real-time database and should be regularly updated to maintain its relevance. Ultimately, it could become the industry source for WFI interventions, including initiatives, products and project tracking when opened up to the public.

Furthermore, a number of case studies that include national, regional and global level approaches aimed at accelerating WFI have been profiled here.

Conclusion and recommendations

There are several actionable measures that can be taken to boost women's demand for financial services and the supply of financial services to women by service providers as it relates to access, usage and quality of these services. These recommendations cut across but are not limited to service delivery, financial education, consumer protection, product design and differentiation etc.

Table 2: Summary of recommendations

Recommendations to improve the demand for financial services by women			
S/N	Action	Challenges addressed	Stakeholder responsible
1.	More FSPs can leverage agency banking to deliver their services to customers outside conventional bank branches.	Women are disproportionately affected by the lack of mobility to financial service access points like bank branches.	FSPs SANEF CBN
2.	Tighten the verification process for onboarding financial service agents by conducting thorough/sufficient background checks.	Heavy reliance on financial service agents weakens confidentiality and makes women more susceptible to fraud.	
3.	Combine efforts to promote economic empowerment with financial inclusion initiatives by incorporating income-generating programs for women in communities alongside financial inclusion interventions.	Lack of sufficient income to motivate the need for banking or other financial services. Research shows that women who earn less than ~ 35,000 Naira are typically not motivated to open bank accounts.[2]	Government, donors, and development partners

2 Access to financial services in Nigeria, Kaduna deep dive survey 2021. Available here.

4.	Develop community-based financial literacy training programs for women.	Low levels of exposure and education may hinder women's financial literacy, as well as their awareness of financial products.	Donors and development partners
5.	Increase financial literacy by adapting public and government school curricula.		Policymakers and regulators
6.	Gender mainstreaming, sensitisation, and empathy must be integral to the institutional culture and activities of every FSP.	The trust of many in the financial system has been eroded over time due to factors like discrimination by financial service providers.	FSPs
7.	Create an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs to access and use financial services, particularly credit.	Lack of income is a major deterrent to accessing financial services. This may be caused by the lack of credit access which affects women's ability to do business and grow their businesses, and consequently, receive a stable income.	Regulators, FSPs, donors and VCs
8.	Improve the scope of data that goes into credit bureaus to include other data sources such as airtime purchase history, call history from telcos, utility data etc.	Women are underrepresented in financial markets and traditional credit bureaus as they lack credit information/history.	Regulators, FSPs, donors and VCs
9.	Leverage local government offices to help register women's businesses.	Women make up a sizable portion of MSMEs and farmers, two groups whose informal nature may contribute to financial exclusion.	Government - Corporate Affairs Commission in collaboration with SMEDAN and the Ministry of local government and community affairs present at the state levels.
10.	Infuse consumer protection modules into financial literacy training to inform consumers of their rights and responsibilities with regard to their banking relationships.	Limited awareness of consumer protection rights may make women easy targets for the unethical lending practices of some service providers.	Regulators and development partners.
11.	Fully digitise the social grant process to encourage the uptake of digital financial services.	Heavy reliance on cash, especially by rural Northern women. An element that may be boosting this usage of cash is the over-the-counter distribution of social payments in cash.	Government - in partnership with FSPs, preferably a PSB or mobile money partner and social development partners.

Recommendations to improve the demand for financial services by women			
S/N	Action	Challenges addressed	Stakeholder responsible
12.	Reduce operational costs for entities addressing women's financial inclusion in Nigeria.	High operational costs for FSPs serving rural areas.	Policy makers, NIBSS, Banker's committee
13.	Invest in telecommunication infrastructure in remote areas.	Connectivity infrastructure issues such as network challenges may sometimes affect the quality of services offered by FSPs.	The Nigerian Communications Commission, development partners and relevant telcos
14.	Leverage research and human-centred design principles when designing for women.	Lack of product differentiation remains a prominent factor for the low adoption rate of financial service products amongst women.	FSPs
15.	Proactively disaggregate data to understand women's financial needs and behaviours in order to offer targeted products and services that meet the needs of women.		

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1 Introduction

Objectives of the study

Genesis Analytics ('Genesis') is supporting the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Gender Centre of Excellence (GCE) of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) to conduct a comprehensive situational analysis on Women's Financial Inclusion (WFI) in Nigeria since the last assessment that was conducted in 2019.

The main objective of the study is to review the status of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria and the ecosystem that supports it, which will inform actionable recommendations and interventions for the GCE, CBN, and other market actors. The study will also help the GCE to collect relevant baseline data that can guide its work and future investments in Nigeria.

More specifically, this diagnostic:

- Reviewed the status of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria (with a focus on both access and usage of financial services by diverse women demographics) since the last assessment conducted in 2019
- Mapped out existing stakeholders including relevant projects and initiatives (both public and private) to promote women's financial inclusion in Nigeria
- Identified case studies of global, regional and national level approaches that are aimed at accelerating WFI in an effort to identify both gaps in what is being done as well as opportunities that can be adopted to accelerate women's financial inclusion in Nigeria.

Methodology

The research used a mixed-methods approach, including the collection of primary and secondary data that is both qualitative and quantitative from key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and other secondary sources.

KIIs: The diagnostic relied on a series of key informant interviews (KIIs) with a range of stakeholders; these stakeholders included:

- Regulators
- Government
- Incubators and Corporates
- Donors and Investors
- Banks and Microfinance Banks (MFBs)
- Fintechs and Payment Service Banks (PSBs)

A total of 36 interviews were conducted. These interviews were semi-structured and guided by interview guides that were approved by the GCE. All the interviews were conducted virtually due to logistical and time constraints. In the interest of maintaining anonymity, the list of stakeholders consulted for this research has not been included in this document.

FGDs: In-person FGDs with women formed an important source of information for the diagnostic. These allowed women to share their experiences and insights on the current state of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria.

These FGDs provided nuance to the information collected through the KII and secondary research, particularly regarding access, usage, and quality of financial services. A total of 3 FGDs were conducted with 37 women aged between 18 -75 years. These women were selected from rural areas in the Northern part of Nigeria, where women's financial exclusion is predominantly high.

The team relied on a local partner, Onyeka Akpaida of the Rendra Foundation and Women's World Banking, to assist in reaching out to participants for the FGDs. A summary of the profiles of the women interviewed can be found in the appendix.

Secondary research: This entailed a detailed review of existing research, some of which include the Assessment of Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria 2019, the EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria Survey 2020, IMF Financial Access Survey 2022, OECD National Financial Literacy and Inclusion Surveys, Emerald Insights, Financial services experience and consumption in Nigeria 2021, Lagos Business School Digital financial services in Nigeria; state of the market report 2019 and other sources such as news articles, and opinion pieces available online to distil key insights into the status of women's financial inclusion.

Focus group discussions with a group of women in Northern Nigeria

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2 The Case for Advancing Women's Financial Inclusion

For this report, we define financial inclusion as the provision of a broad range of quality financial products, such as savings, credit, insurance, payments and pensions, which are relevant, appropriate and affordable for the entire adult population, especially the low-income segment. The standard terms that will be used in this report as it relates to financial inclusion are defined below.[3]

Figure 1: Defining financial inclusion[4]

- **Financially included** – have/use financial products and/or services – formal and/or informal
- **Formally served** – have/use formal financial products and/or services provided by a regulated financial institution (bank and/or non-bank)
- **Informally served** – have/use financial products and/or services which are not regulated
- **Banked** – have/use financial products/ services provided by a deposit money bank
- **Financially excluded** – do not have/use any financial products and/or services – formal and/or informal

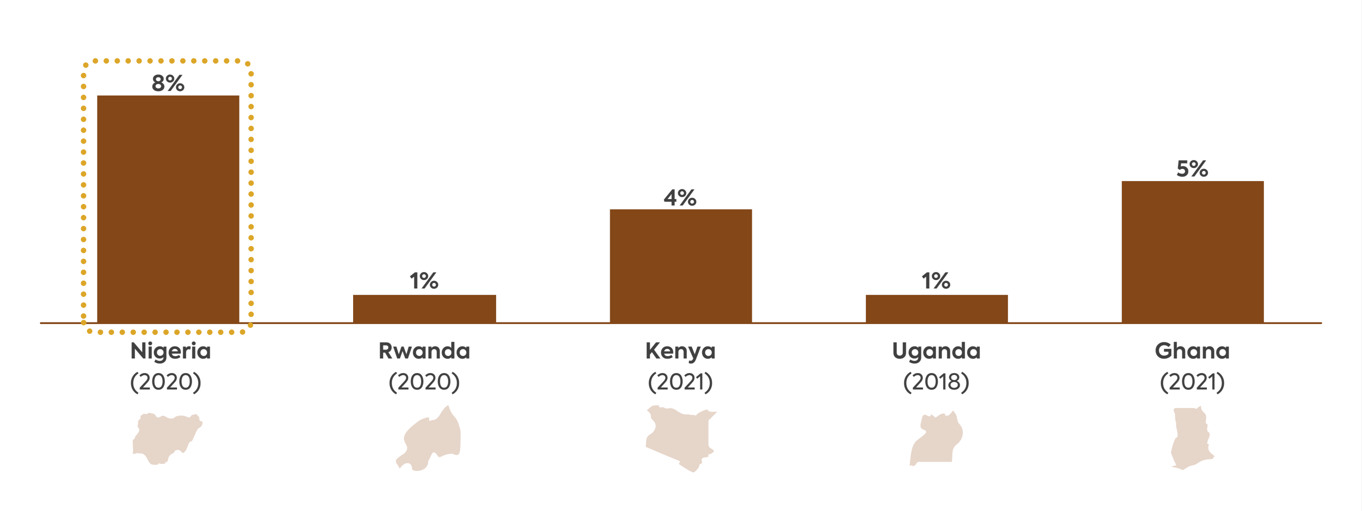
3 EFInA, 2022. Available here.

4 Ibid.

Financial inclusion is on the rise globally, accelerated by mobile phones and the internet, but gaps remain. Account ownership has reached 76% of adults worldwide and 71% of adults in developing economies.[5] Despite this progress, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa reported 12% and 13% gender gaps, respectively, twice as large as the developing economy average and three times larger than the global average.[6]

Nigeria's gender gap, in particular, is widening, unlike comparator countries in Africa. Countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda are gradually achieving gender parity in financial inclusion, as shown in the figure below. The relative gender gap for Nigeria, on the other hand, stands at 8%, placing Nigeria below its peers.[7] Since 2012, although women's exclusion has dropped, the gender gap has grown, revealing that men's inclusion has improved more rapidly than that of women.

Figure 2: Gender gap in financial inclusion of African countries (% of the gender gap)



Sources: *Finscope 2021, FSD Kenya 2021, FSD Uganda 2019, EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey, Findex 2021*

5 The Global Findex Database, 2021. Available here.

6 Ibid.

7 CBN, Assessment of Women's Financial Inclusion, 2019. Available here.

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Box 1: Socioeconomic status of Nigerian women at a glance[8]

Population

- There are 53 million adult Nigerian women 9, of which 33m (61%) live in rural areas.

Literacy

- The net enrolment rate at the primary school level is 56% for girls and 61% for boys
- 39% of women have some secondary education
- 8.3% of women are enrolled in post-secondary education
- 49% of women are in the labour force
- Nigerian women earn 42% less than men
- 53% overall literacy rate for women (34% for rural women); 71% for men

Business

- Nigerian women's entrepreneurial activity outpaces that of men by 4%
- 22% women own sole proprietorships as share of total businesses
- 82% of working women work in the informal sector
- Less than 14% of Nigerian firms have female top managers

Welfare

- 19% of Nigerian women are exposed to cultural discrimination and domestic violence
- 5% are exposed to early marriages
- 2% experience unequal family inheritance

The argument for closing the gender gap and improving women's financial inclusion is compelling. Particularly in Nigeria, the financial inclusion of women represents a critical issue to be solved if the country is to achieve its National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 3.0 target to increase the adoption and usage of financial services for women.[10] Other strong arguments dominate discussions on why women's financial inclusion is important.

Growing evidence suggests that increasing women's access to and use of financial services can have both economic and societal benefits. For example, in Kenya, women merchants who opened a basic bank account invested more in their businesses. Female-headed households in Nepal spent more on education after opening a savings account. According to the International Trade Centre (ITC) surveys, 10 million small and medium-scale enterprises owned by women account for 80% of jobs created by SMEs around the globe. ITC data further indicates that exporting firms owned by women earn more, employ more people and pay higher wages.[11]

8 CIA World Factbook 2021, CCX, EFInA 2019, Findex 2017, ILO 2019, SMEDAN 2017, UNESCO, WEF 2021, WB ILO estimates 2019, GEM 2012), NOIPOLLS, 2019.

9 18 years and above. EFInA, women's economic empowerment in Nigeria, 2022. Available here.

10 Press release, 2022. Available here.

11 Financial Insight, Women Banking and Entrepreneurship – The importance of Disaggregated data, 2020. Available here.

There is also a proven business case for advancing women's access to finance. An aggregate report of Alliance member data titled "The Economics of Banking on Women: 2018 Edition" was published in June 2018. The study shows that the Women's Market represents a major opportunity, with strong growth trends and positive performance ratios such as non-performing loans, products per customer, and loan-to-deposit ratios. However, the representation of women's customers and portfolio continues to be lower across institutions. The report also makes a strong case for the importance of developing a targeted approach to women that includes a holistic value proposition of information, education, networking, and recognition.[12]

> Women are good for business and are good in business. They make great customers as they are diligent in their savings and loan repayments. There is a level of efficiency, profitability, and stability that we see in corporate organisations with women at the helm. ”
>
> Donor organisation staff
> *(Source: Stakeholder Interview)*

Economically empowered women are major catalysts for development, as they usually re-invest their money in the home. There is mounting evidence to show that women's economic activity results in better bargaining power in the home.[13] More bargaining power benefits women and results in greater investments in the health and education of children, thus promoting the next generation's human capital and improving the potential for economic growth.

If women are empowered to take chances, aspire to greater opportunities, and manage downside risks for themselves and their families, then they can take more control over their lives. If women can access essential services that help increase their capabilities or make better use of their time, then they are better able to invest in productive, income-generating activities that can benefit the entire family and community.[14]

There is also a cultural aspect, where if women have been conditioned their entire lives to believe they have no agency, they will not be able to seize opportunities and build resilience. Only when women can see these pathways for themselves and have the material and legal support in place to walk down these paths are they able to take control over their own fates.[15] This, however, needs to be supported by a combination of efforts, including challenging and changing societal beliefs and stereotypes about the role of women in financial decision-making.

In the subsequent section, we delve deeper into the current state of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria as it relates to access to financial services, the usage of financial services and the quality of these services. We also explore the drivers and enablers of financial exclusion and the obstacles impeding it.

12 Financial Alliance for Women, 2020. Available here.
13 IFC, Strengthening Access to Finance for Women-Owned SMEs in Developing Countries. Available here.
14 CGAP, Women and Finance: Enabling Women's Economic Empowerment, 2021. Available here.
15 Ibid.

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3 The Current State of Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria

To comprehensively understand the state of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria, three major dimensions of financial inclusion need to be considered. These dimensions include access to financial services, usage of financial services and the quality of financial services. These dimensions are discussed and analysed in detail in subsequent sections.

Access: This refers to the availability of formal financial products and services. It includes the physical proximity of these services and measures the ability of women to reach financial services touchpoints or access products from financial institutions. Access is considered a binding constraint to the inclusion of women in financial services. With expanded access, the other two factors: usage and quality, become more tractable.

> If there is no access to financial services, we cannot speak of usage or quality. It is a real chicken and egg situation. ”
>
> **Research organisation staff**

Usage: This refers to the utilisation of financial services, its regularity, and frequency. This is the extent to which women use the products and services on offer, the rate and frequency of use, and the length of time that they continue to use the service. For example, some women might open accounts, but rarely utilise the banking facilities due to logistical constraints. It includes the combination of products and services and women's behavioural and usage patterns.

Quality: This is the measure of the relevance of financial services or products to the needs of consumers. One aspect is evaluated from the consumers' perspective, judging from their experience and the extent to which available services meet their needs. The other is determining the fit of financial products.

The table below shows the proxies for measuring the dimensions discussed above.

Table 3: Proxies for measuring financial inclusion

Indicator	Description	Proxy for measurement
Access	Ability to access tailored financial services	Formally banked women (% of women with an account at a formal financial institution)
		Access points[16] (number of ATMs of POS terminals available to women, i.e., per 100,000 persons)
Usage	Actual use of financial services	Product use (women with bank loans, savings etc)
		Frequency of account use (adults with high-frequency use of formal account)
Quality[17]	Appropriateness of financial services for peculiar circumstances of women	Affordability
		Transparency
		Convenience
		Fair treatment
		Consumer protection
		Financial education
		Choice

Access to and usage of financial services

This section analyses the state of access and usage of financial services for women in Nigeria. It provides an overview of the trends and development in the space, the demand-side drivers and challenges of access and usage, and the supply-side drivers and challenges of access and usage of financial services for women. These components will be examined based on responses from stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions with the target women[18] and other pertinent secondary data sources.

Overview of the current status and trends in access and usage

Women's access to formal banking services and other forms of financial services

Twenty-four million women have a BVN and, therefore, a formal bank account. Although BVN enrolment has grown at a 9% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the past four years, a gender gap of 5% still exists. Low BVN enrolment rates of women in Nigeria suggest that a large part of this population is excluded from accessing formal banking services.

16 "Access points" are defined as regulated access points where cash-in (including deposits) and cash-out transactions can be performed. This would include traditional bank branches and other offices of regulated entities (such as MFIs) that perform these functions. Depending on the type of transactions permitted, this will also include agents of regulated entities.

17 AFI, Indicators of the quality dimension of financial inclusion, 2016. Available here.

18 Adult women, aged 18 and above.

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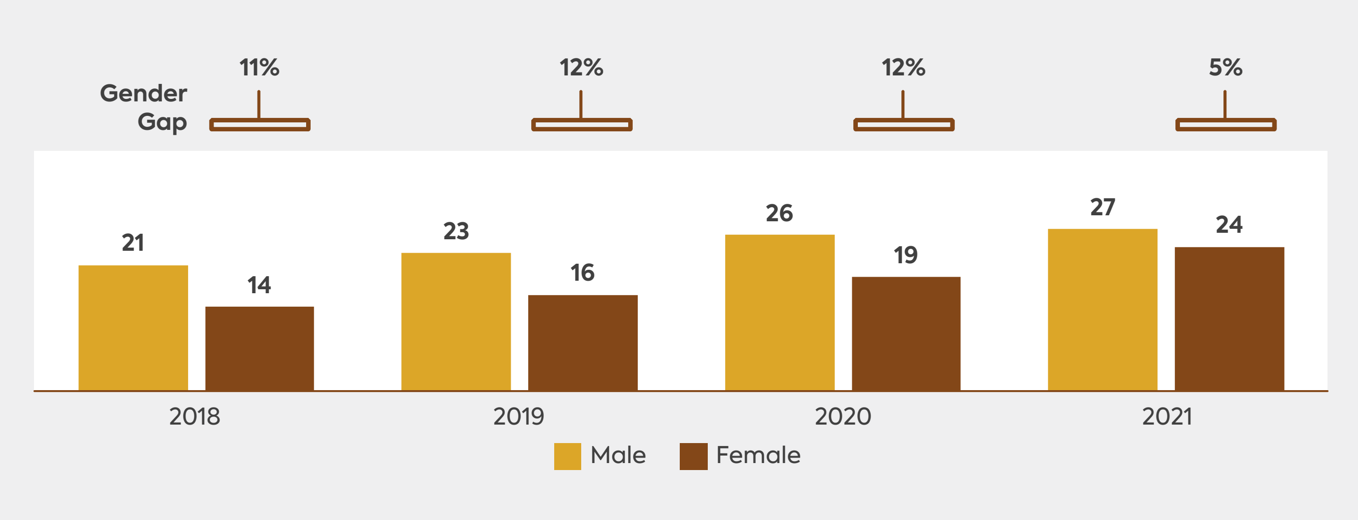
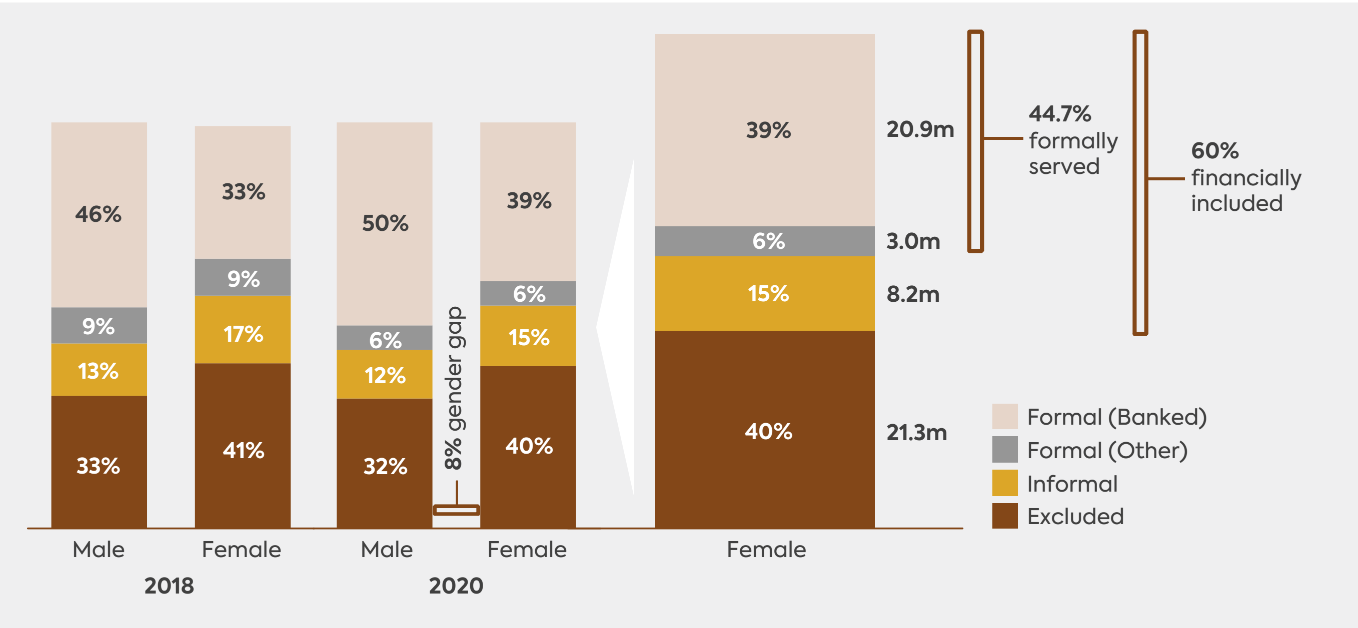
Figure 3: BVN enrolment 2018 – 2021 ('millions)[19]



Source: *CBN data, as of the end of 2021.*

According to the stakeholders interviewed, in addition to commercial banks, women rely on other formal and informal institutions for the provision of financial services. Some formal institutions include microfinance banks and informal financial service providers such as savings and credit groups. The EFInA A2F survey indicates that other formal institutions account for 6% and informal FSPs account for 15% of women's banking status. Combined, this suggests an exclusion rate of 40%. Compared to the male exclusion rate of 32%, leaving a gender gap of 8% as depicted below.

Figure 4: Women's banking status based on EFInA A2F Survey 2020

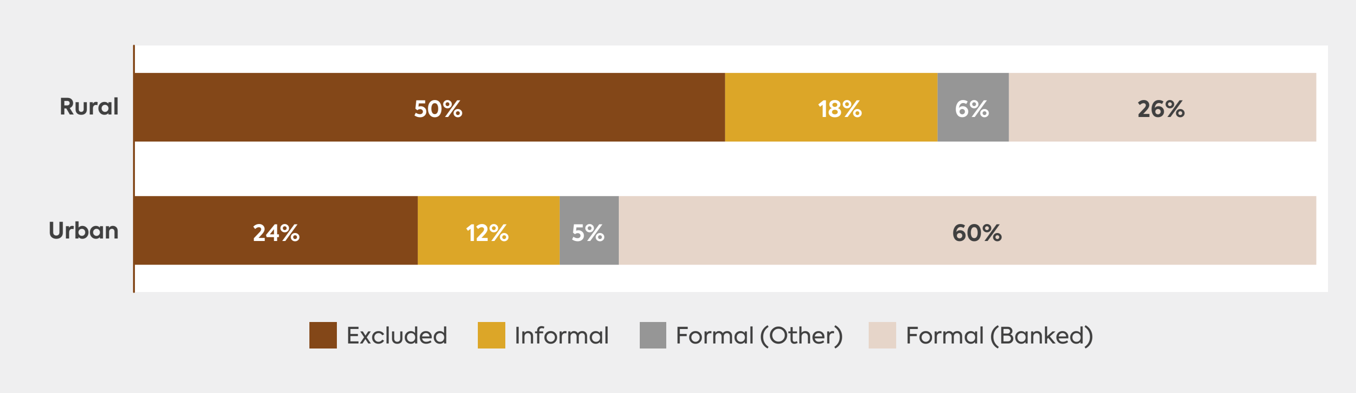


Source: *EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey; State of Women's Financial Inclusion presentation. Available here.*

From a location perspective, many rural women continue to rely solely on informal financial services compared to women in urban areas. Over 16 million rural women rely exclusively on informal financial services. This may be driven by a scarcity of access points and by the higher costs to serve for FSPs in rural areas. More detail on access points is discussed below.

19 CBN data, as of the end of 2021.

Figure 5: Women's banking status by area based on EFInA A2F Survey 2020



Source: EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey; State of Women's Financial Inclusion presentation. Available here.

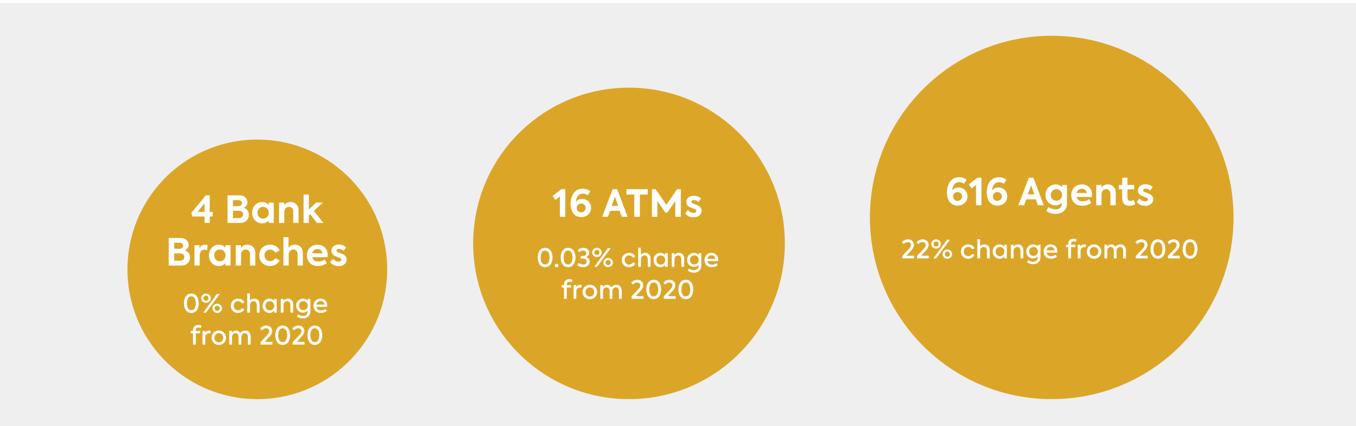
***FGD Survey insight** 90% of respondents indicated that they belonged to an Adashi[20] (savings and credit group) with weekly or monthly contributions ranging from ~ 200 Naira ($0.44) to 500 Naira ($1.1).*

Women's access to financial service points

Financial service agents appear to be the most preferred of all financial service points as they are more accessible. Compared to the global average of 53.26 per 100,000 adults, there are 16 ATMs in Nigeria for every 100,000 people and 4 bank branches per 100,000 adults compared to the global average of 60.7.[21] Therefore, women are likely to choose more accessible access points like financial service agents, particularly in rural areas where the scarcity of ATMs and bank branches is more common. As shown in the figure below, Nigeria has recorded a 22% increase in the number of agents available compared to the other access points.

***FGD Survey insight** 54% of respondents indicated that the nearest ATMs to them are about two streets away; financial service agents on the hand are 'clustered at every corner of their communities'.*

Figure 6: Financial access Points, 2021 (per 100,000 individuals)[22] [23]



Sources: IMF, Financial Access Survey (FAS), 2022. Available here. Strategy for leveraging agents network for women's financial inclusion in Nigeria. Available here.

20 In Northern Nigeria, informal savings groups, are referred to as "adashi".
21 IMF, Financial Access Survey (FAS), 2022. Available here.
22 Ibid.
23 Strategy for leveraging agents network for women's financial inclusion in Nigeria. Available here.

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Regarding accessibility in rural areas, most women rely on financial service agents as their primary point of access for financial services. With 616 agents per 100,000 persons[24], as shown above, EFInA (2020) reports that financial service agents are the most significant component of formal non-bank services now.[25]

Women have also started to embrace agency banking as a profitable occupation. Given that women are more likely to be less educated and may have fewer opportunities to obtain a formal job, female agents view this as an opportunity to make a living.[26]

Figure 7: Financial service agents[27]

Source: *Strategy for Leveraging Agent's Network for Women Financial Inclusion, 2022. Available here.*

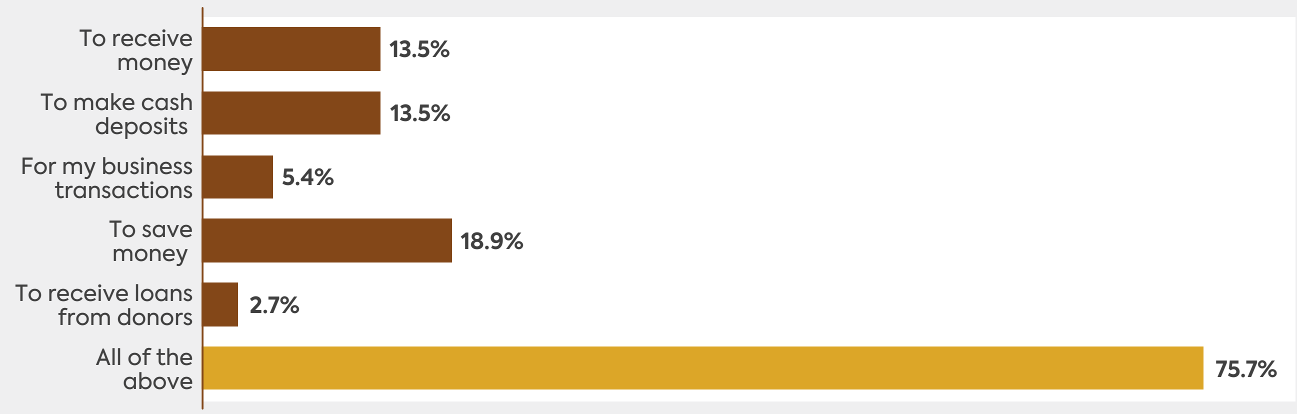
As shown in the figure above, the sector is mainly characterised by male agents. For both genders, the motivation for becoming a financial service agent is to have an income source and they typically operate for up to 3 years.

Women's usage of bank accounts

Women who use their bank accounts use them for a variety of reasons, with saving money being one of the most prominent. Women typically use their accounts to receive their wages or income from agricultural or other small businesses. They save a portion of it for their day-to-day household needs, school feeds/ education, and to cover their business expenses, including expanding their business/business asset/business premises.

FGD Survey insight *76% of the respondents indicated that they use their accounts to receive money, make cash deposits and save money for business and personal use.*

Figure 8: FGD respondents' use of bank accounts



Source: *Focus Group Discussions*

24 Strategy for Leveraging Agent's Network for Women Financial Inclusion, 2022. Available here.
25 EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey. Available here.
26 Strategy for Leveraging Agent's Network for Women Financial Inclusion, 2022. Available here.
27 Ibid.

When asked what other financial services they are subscribed to, only 8% of respondents said they had pension accounts, 3% said they had health insurance, and 89% had neither but only savings accounts.

Women also tend to use their bank accounts as mailbox accounts where money is deposited into the account and funds are withdrawn immediately thereafter. From the FGDs, women typically make only 1–2 withdrawals a month, with most choosing to withdraw their money as soon as they receive it.[28] For example, private NGOs looking to empower rural women typically disburse grants in the recipient's bank accounts.

For women who do not own bank accounts, these organisations make it a point to open accounts for them. However, in the majority of cases, these women withdraw the money right away and do not return to using the accounts.[29]

FGD Survey insight *The majority of women mentioned that they only have bank accounts because NGOs had them opened for them.*

Overall, women are less likely to have multiple bank accounts compared to their male counterparts. Findings from the focus group discussions revealed that when women own bank accounts, they typically only have one. Only 29% of women surveyed indicated that they had more than one bank account. This insight is also supported by the EFInA 2020 survey, which found that 60% of men are likely to own one or more bank accounts compared to 50% of women.[30]

Borrowing habits of women

The average adult woman is unlikely to borrow money from a formal source as their first choice. In most cases, women borrow from their networks, such as family, friends, savings groups and village associations, before going to a formal institution.[31] This is often due to a lack of collateral, mistrust of formal institutions, and other factors. However, the women in the FGDs primarily cited the pressure of repayment as the main reason for not using formal financial services.

FGD Survey insight *Women reported that they preferred to borrow from friends and family over formal sources because they felt less pressure to repay the loan within a specific timeframe.*

When it comes to borrowing from formal institutions, the value of loans for women decreases after they reach the age of 45. Compared to men who continue to have loans of higher value as they age, women borrow less, which likely suggests that younger women are most likely to access larger, formal loans.

28 Insights from focus group discussions.
29 Ibid.
30 EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey. Available here.
31 RPA, IPA; Understanding Women's access to credit and loans, 2021.

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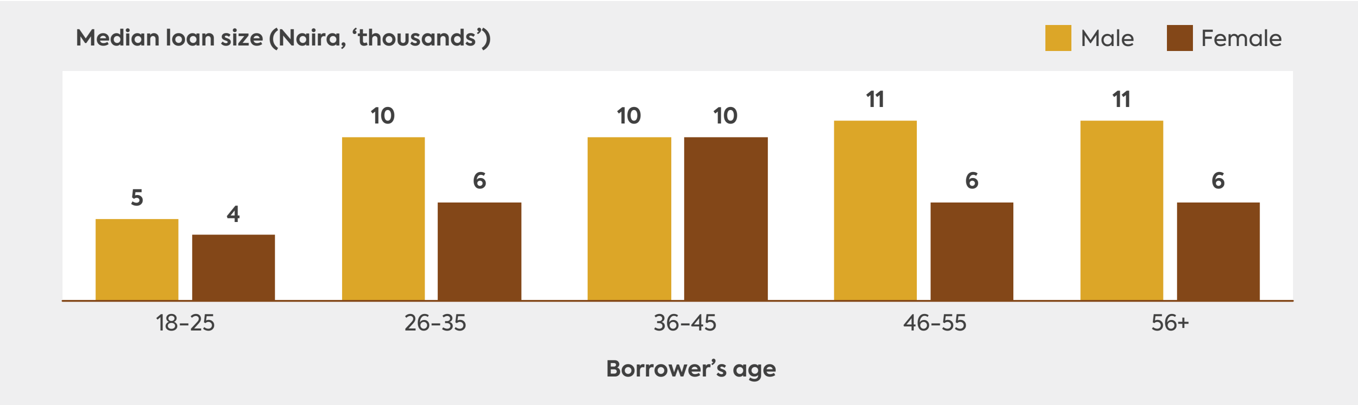
Figure 9: Borrowing habits of women[32]



Source: *RPA, IPA; Understanding Women's access to credit and loans, 2021.*

Women's use of digital financial services

Between 2018 and 2020, there was a general increase in the uptake of digital financial services by women to meet financial needs, mostly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. An 11% increase was recorded in the uptake of digitally stored value accounts in 2020 from 2018, as shown in the figure below.

The private and public sectors shifted to digital payments and digital finance during the pandemic, of which mobile money grew twice as fast as had been forecasted despite the contraction in economic activity. Paga reported that it doubled the number of merchants in its network and witnessed a 200% increase in quarterly users.[33]

Table 4: Women's use of digitally stored accounts[34]

Use of digitally stored account	2018	2020
Women who actively use a digital stored-value account	28%	31%
Women who actively use a digital stored-value account and have used at least	13%	19%
Poor women who actively use a digital stored-value account and have used at	20%	22%
Poor women who actively use a digital stored-value account and have used at least one advanced financial service (beyond basic wallet & P2P)	8%	12%

Source: *EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey; State of Women's Financial Inclusion presentation. Available here.*

Overall, there are various factors that may promote or prevent women's access to and usage of financial services. We examine some of these factors in detail in the section below.

32 Ibid.
33 GPFI, World Bank, The impact of COVID-19 on digital financial inclusion, 2021. Available here.
34 EFInA Access to Financial Services in Nigeria, 2020 Survey. Available here.

Demand for financial services by women

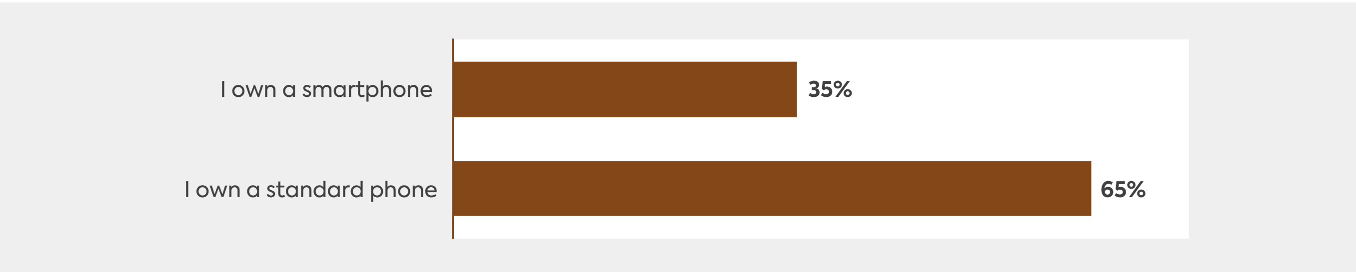
Demand-side related drivers

The key factors driving women's access and uptake of financial services include but are not limited to the increased mobile phone penetration and digital access, growing agent network, the emergence of female agents and alternative credit scoring options, the benefits gained using bank accounts compared to the risk of having cash at hand.

- **Increased mobile phone penetration is making it easier for women to engage with financial service products.** Women can access financial products like unstructured supplementary services data (USSD) with any type of mobile phone and conduct transactions even without internet access. In 2021, 88% of the nation's adult female population owned mobile phones, out of which 32% of them had smartphones.[35] This statistic is also in line with the responses received from the FGDs, as shown in Figure 10.

FGD Survey insight *All the women indicated that they owned at least one mobile phone, whether it was a smartphone or a standard phone.*[36]

Figure 10: Mobile phone ownership among women respondents



Source: *Focus Group Discussions*

- **Nigeria's growing agent network has become a crucial distribution channel for financial services to women.** Agents are providing women living in rural and underserved areas with branchless banking and mobile financial services. Agents are often relatively small outfits like micro-retailers or existing agents of other banks or telcos. They offer an alternative channel to reach women who find themselves unable to access core banking services, especially those in peri-urban and rural areas.
- **The emergence of female agents is resolving the issue of trust women face and boosting financial access.**[37] As women often face a lack of trust and a level of stigma when meeting with men outside of the home, they are far more likely to seek out financial services that are offered directly through another woman.[38]

The POS is everywhere such that if you have an emergency at the hospital, you can rush to the POS agent.

FGD respondent

Women aren't allowed to interact with the opposite gender because of their beliefs, except the people they are married to or related to. In such cases, we have found that female agents are able to engage them better.

PSB staff

35 GSMA, The Mobile Gender Gap Report, 2022. Available here.

36 These are basic phones that can be used to make voice calls, send and receive. SMS (short message service) messages and make use of USSD.

37 Insight from stakeholder interviews.

38 FSD Africa, Ensuring that women's financial access is not another casualty of COVID-19, 2021. Available here.

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- **The mandate to stop old currencies from being used as legal tender following the redesign and distribution of the new currency is driving bank account opening and usage.** The CBN began the circulation of the redesigned currency on the 15th of December 2022 and announced that the existing naira notes would stop being legal tender by January 31, 2023.[39] Following this new mandate, Nigerians, particularly women in the rural areas who typically save their money at home or in piggy banks, are having to open bank accounts to deposit and save their old naira notes because the old notes will no longer be viable.
- **The use of bank accounts has increased among women in rural areas due to the net benefits of saving at the bank compared to the risk of saving money at home.** Although cash remains king in some rural parts of Nigeria, some women still believe that having cash at hand makes budgeting difficult as they end up spending the money on shopping or other things they did not plan for. They also believe cash can easily be stolen when kept at home due to rising insecurity. These reasons combined have made it indispensable to save at the bank rather than their homes.[40]

A lot of women on the field are breaking their piggy-banks to deposit their money at the banks.

PSB staff

Sometimes, when I have cash at hand, I end up using it on unnecessary items like shoes.

FGD respondent

Demand-side related challenges

The key demand-side challenges women face when accessing and using financial services include but are not limited to low and irregular disposable income, lack of mobility to financial service access points, the culture and local perceptions of women, lack of trust, low financial education, heavy reliance on cash and the cost of usage.

- **Women are disproportionately affected by the lack of mobility to financial service access points.** The location/proximity of financial access touchpoints is a major barrier to financial access. Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that women are mostly tied to household responsibilities, making it difficult for them to have time to travel to access these financial services. Once at the bank, many women often find long lines and waiting times, and it can take several hours to get to a cashier.[41]
- **With one in every three women still financially excluded, there is increased recognition of the role that culture and traditions play.** Culture and societal perceptions can limit economic opportunities for women. These perceptions shape women's access to and control over resources and, consequently, their ability to access financial products and services. For example, women in some conservative cultures are hindered from earning and saving money outside the house, in turn making it difficult for them to use formal financial services. Even women who do earn money do not always control how their income is spent, including mobile-related purchases. Men are then able to regulate women's mobile usage and engagement with financial products.[42]

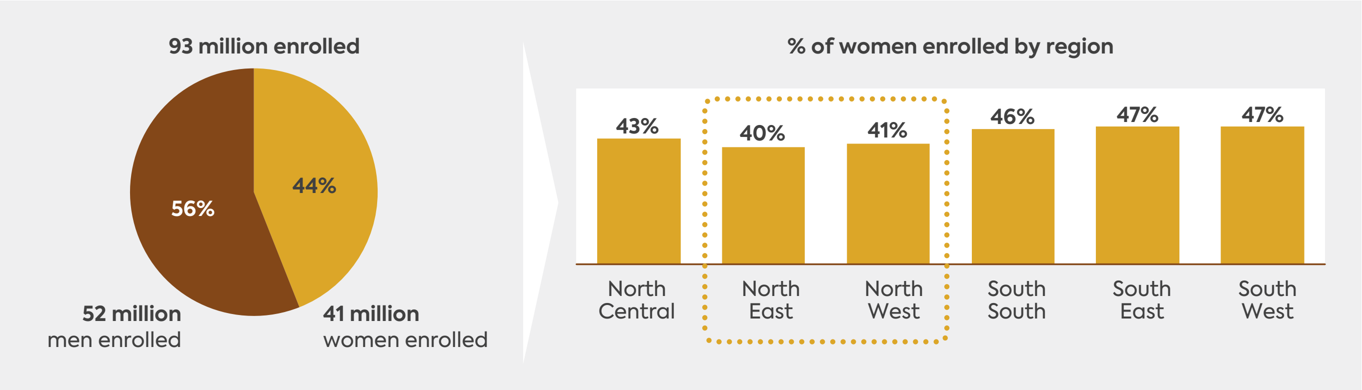
Whether by omission or not, the Nigerian banking system, is designed for you to take permission from a man to open an account. This is evident when you think about the fact that the KYC documents requested, in most cases, are utility bills which are typically in the name of the man.

Innovation Lab staff

39 CBN, Naira re-design, 2022. Available here.
40 Insights from focus group discussions.
41 Insights from focus group discussions.
42 CGAP, How Social Norms Affect Women's Financial Inclusion, 2017. Available here.

- **The requirement to provide identity documents for account opening can be a major barrier for women in rural areas.** FSPs are required by law to capture detailed biodata and situational data on a prospective customer before account opening, a process referred to as Know Your Customer (KYC). Credit requirements can be even more onerous for the client and can quickly disqualify the rural adult woman from obtaining their first loan from a bank or opening a bank account. Women are less likely to have official identification documents required to open a bank account.[43] As depicted in the figure below, the enrolment rate of women is lower in the Northern part of Nigeria, specifically the North East and North West, where women's financial exclusion remains high.

Figure 11: NIN enrolment as of November 2022[44]



Source: *NIMC enrolment dashboard as of November 2022. Available here.*

- **Although alternative credit scoring is increasing financial access, expanded use of financial and non-financial data also increases data protection and privacy risks.** While many providers seek the customer's consent to consult and use personal data, these consent clauses may provide little protection against data misuse. Instead, they may offer more legal protection to the financial services provider (by showing they have the customer's agreement to use their data) than to the consumer whose data is being analysed.

43 The world bank, Women's Financial Inclusion and the law, 2018. Available here.
44 NIMC enrolment dashboard as of November 2022. Available here.

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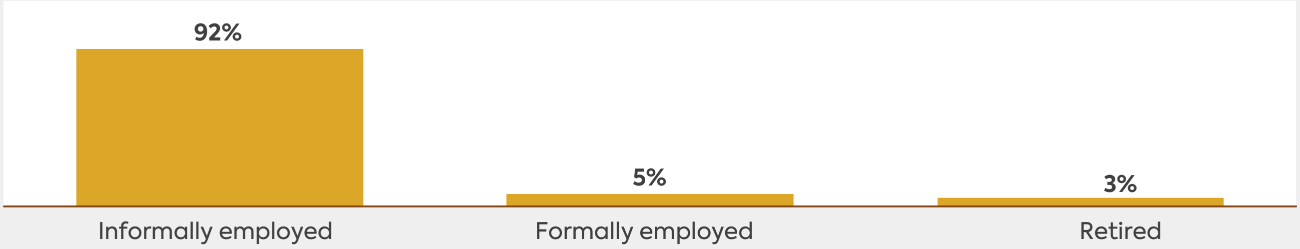
- **Low levels of exposure and education may hinder women's financial literacy.** The net enrolment rate at the primary school level is 56% for girls and 61% for boys. The gender gap for completion widens from 9% in primary school to 14% in secondary school.[45] Due to patriarchal traditions, parents in some cultures prefer to invest in boys because they see them as the future heads of households rather than girls. Due to these perceptions, girls are more frequently required to perform household duties, limiting their capacity to attend classes or gain financial education regularly.[46] As a result, women are more likely than men to lack a basic understanding of financial products and the value of having access to financial services.[47]
- **Due to low financial education, women are less aware than men of financial products.** Women have lower financial knowledge than men in a large number of countries, both developed and developing ones, including Nigeria. Young women and widows, the less well-educated and low-income women lack financial knowledge the most.[48]
- **Most women in rural areas do not feel they have enough disposable income to open or maintain bank accounts.** Although excluded women have financial needs, low income may limit the perception of these needs as women spend what little money they have on necessities like food, rent, fuel for the stove, and clothes, as well as their children's education.[49] They frequently believed that the financial services they were aware of (like bank accounts and savings groups) were out of their reach because they believed they lacked the disposable income to make the required deposits. [50]
- **Irregular income may also stifle the usage of bank accounts for women.** Irregular income can make it difficult for women in rural areas to use a bank account. This is because many banks require a certain amount of regular income or deposits in order to maintain a bank account. Without a steady stream of income, it may be difficult for women, most of whom do not have a stable source of income, to meet these requirements.
- **The trust of many in the financial system has been eroded over time due to factors like discrimination by financial service providers.** Particularly in rural areas, cultural factors may cause women not to have the same autonomy and decision-making power as men, which can make it difficult for them to access financial institutions and feel comfortable using them. Marginalised women especially may have also experienced discrimination or mistreatment when trying to access financial services, which can also lead to mistrust.
- **Women make up a sizable portion of MSMEs and farmers, two groups whose informal nature may contribute to financial exclusion.** In comparison to their formally registered counterparts, women who own or operate informal MSMEs may experience greater financial exclusion as formal financial institutions often require a certain level of documentation, such as proof of ownership, business licenses, and tax records, which may be challenging for informal businesses to provide. This can make it difficult for women entrepreneurs to secure the financing they need to grow their businesses. Informality can also limit the ability of women entrepreneurs to participate in formal value chains and markets, which can restrict their access to financial resources and opportunities.[51]

45 Assessment of Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria, 2019. Available here.
46 Ibid.
47 Insights from Focus Group Discussions.
48 OECD, Addressing women's needs for financial education, 2013. Available here.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 ILO, Engaging informal women entrepreneurs in East Africa. Available here.

> When bank officials discover that we are displaced women, they push us aside. Usually, they would take care of the wealthy people first.
>
> **FGD respondent**

FGD Survey insight *90% of the respondents are informal traders who indicated that they deposit their revenue in their personal bank accounts rather than business accounts, as shown below.*

Figure 12: Employment status of FGD participants



Source: *NIMC enrolment dashboard as of November 2022. Available here.*

- **The strict collateral requirements that must be met may limit the availability of formal credit to rural women.** Women may struggle to provide collateral given the preference of lenders for fixed assets and their limited ownership in this area, as only 10% of land owners in Nigeria are women.[52] The preferred type of collateral by financial institutions is typically fixed assets in the form of a land title or property deed. Customary laws and poor land management systems may prevent women from owning and claiming land as collateral. Where customary law prevails, asset ownership is often attributed to men rather than to women.[53]
- **Some women abandon products after sign-up due to a lack of understanding of how to use them.** Materials which promote and explain financial services are commonly written in English, which is not easily understood in a country where most rural women are illiterate. They, therefore, rely on family and friends for information.[54]
- **Account dormancy remains a key challenge as cash still remains king in some rural parts of Nigeria.** The use of cash is prevalent in rural areas with high levels of informal and migrant merchants. Cash is seen as easier to access and sometimes too little to keep in the bank account. Because of this, women use their bank accounts as mailbox accounts where money is deposited into the account and funds are withdrawn immediately thereafter. The EFInA 2020 study found that 66% of accounts opened by women were dormant. These women opened an account either due to the government's financial inclusion drive, peer pressure or both.

> I opened my bank account to receive money from the NGO and immediately I received the money, I withdrew the money. I have not used my bank account after this.
>
> **FGD respondent**

52 Council on Foreign Relations, Ensuring Women's Land Rights in Nigeria Can Mitigate Effects of Climate Change, 2019. Available here.

53 AFAWA, Baseline study on the status of women entrepreneurs and their financial access in Africa, 2022 (Genesis Analytics study)

54 Insights from focus group discussions.

- **Issues around data costs may limit the use of digital financial service products.** Although there is an increased internet and smartphone penetration rate, women still struggle with internet affordability. According to the 2020 digital quality of life index. Nigeria's internet affordability is 90% lower than the global average.[55] Access to high-speed broadband internet services at home is also less prevalent among specific sub-populations, including individuals living in remote areas in Nigeria. These factors combined can limit the usage of digital financial services.
- **Connectivity infrastructure issues such as network challenges sometimes inhibit them from using digital financial services.** While COVID-19 has prompted greater use of digital finance, not all communities or consumers could pivot towards digital financial products and services rapidly. Women in rural areas need connectivity, including ownership of a mobile phone, access to the internet and digital skills to manage mobile apps and online applications to use digital financial services.
- **Although agency banking is driving the use of financial services, the heavy reliance on agents may weaken confidentiality and make women more susceptible to fraud.** Women in less developed areas are typically dependent on agent banking because of the ease and accessibility. However, this level of dependency may compromise confidentiality and increase vulnerability to unauthorised charges or even fraud by agents. In addition to causing women financial hardship, experiencing or hearing stories of women who have experienced agent fraud can discourage other women from using these agent outlets.[56]

FGD Survey insight *Respondents mentioned how financial service agents take advantage of them, with some stating that the agents occasionally steal from them when they are given cash to deposit.*

55 Digital quality of life index, 2020. Available here.

56 CGAP, Break the Bias: Evidence Shows Digital Finance Risks Hit Women Hardest, 2022. Available here.

- **Lack of product differentiation remains a prominent factor for low adoption rate of financial service products by women.** Product differentiation goes hand in hand with developing a strong value proposition so that the product or service is useful to women. Some service providers launch a product and brand it with the "colour pink" or other marketing techniques to attract the attention of women without necessarily designing it to fit the context of the lives of these women.[57]

> The mantra has been about dressing products up in pink and calling them female products or launching them on International Women's Day. The understanding is however changing because people are realising that pink washing does not work.
>
> Research Institute staff

- **Payment of social grants in cash over-the-counter may encourage the usage of cash instead of digital financial services.** The government of Nigeria has a number of programs that provide social protection payments to its citizens, the majority of whom are women. The recipients of these social protection payments receive cash over the counter instead of directly into their electronic wallets. Recipients visit their nearest cash-out points to receive their cash payments by providing a near-field communication (NFC) card or a paper-based quick response (QR) code to access funds deposited in a single purpose, virtual and temporary account created by FSPs to process the payment.[58]

Supply of financial services for women

Supply-side related drivers

The key factors driving FSPs to provide women with access to financial services include but Ware not limited to the emergence of digital technologies, agency banking and alternative credit scoring options.

- **Digital technologies are lowering the costs of providing financial access by maximising economies of scale.** Digital technologies are increasing the speed, security and transparency of transactions and allowing for the development of sustainable financial products tailored to the needs of women with low and unstable incomes.
- **Financial institutions have expanded their geographical footprint by focusing on agent banking which has become a crucial distribution channel for financial services to women.** In areas with a low presence of financial institutions, third-party agents are able to process transactions on behalf of financial institutions. These institutions are able to extend their reach to unserved or underserved women without making huge investments in their own brick-and-mortar infrastructure. There are a number of agency banking initiatives in Nigeria, some of which include Access Bank's Closa Agents with over 59,000 agents deployed in 2020 and First Bank's Firstmonie agents with over 100,000 agents deployed in the same year.[59] [60]
- **Alternative credit scoring options are allowing financial service providers to reach thin-file and new-to-credit women customers.** An opportunity to increase women's access to finance is using data derived from apps, digital financial services

57 Insights from stakeholder interviews.

58 FSD Africa, Opportunities and Barriers to Digitising Social Protection and Humanitarian Payments in Nigeria, 2021. Available here.

59 Techcabal, What untapped opportunities are in Nigeria's agency banking space?, 2021. Available here.

60 Access Bank, 2022. Available here.

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and other digital sources. A key reason most women at the base of the pyramid can't apply for credit is because of the documentation required and the lack of credit history/information. These women and other consumers who may be underrepresented in financial markets and traditional credit bureaus, particularly benefit from new sources of data that can be leveraged for financial analysis.

Below are some credit providers leveraging alternative data to offer credit to women.

Table 5: Alternative credit providers serving women

migo	**Migo** is a lending platform that enables companies to extend credit to consumers and small businesses in their own apps. Migo builds proprietary machine learning algorithms to assess credit risk using the company's data, then automates credit facilities via cloud infrastructure. **Proposition for women:** Migo expands economic access by **enabling credit for populations ignored by traditional credit bureaus**, including new to credit customers and small businesses, **with a large focus on women**.
thrive agric	**Thrive Agric** is an agricultural technology company providing access to finance, markets, and data-driven advisory for smallholder farmers. **Proposition for women:** Provides microloans (through its Tmoni mobile app platform), among other things to farmers. **With a customer base consisting of over 20% smallholder farmers that are women, the company is also pushing its gender inclusion agenda** by synthesising workers and running gender inclusion and awareness training in rural locations to encourage and attract more women farmers in the country.
tradedepot	**Tradedepot** operates a B2B marketplace that connects small shops, kiosks and retailers with wholesalers of global consumer brands that have access to food, beverages and personal care products. **Proposition for women:** Offers inventory finance to its customer base, which consists of small businesses, particularly women-owned MSMEs (micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises) based on their transaction history with Tradedepot. Women account for 75% of the service provider's customer base.

- **The combined efforts of FSPs to promote financial literacy through awareness campaigns and initiatives in rural areas have made reaching these areas easier for other FSPs.** Over the years, several awareness campaigns and financial literacy programs have increased awareness about financial products and services, making it much easier for new FSPs looking to serve this population segment to reach them. [61]

> The collective body of work by FSPs in the underserved segments has generally made it easier for other FSPs to penetrate the space. I wouldn't say it's one particular entity that achieved that over the years, it has been the collaborative effort of different entities in the industry. ”
>
> **PSB staff**

An example is Fidelity Bank's initiative in partnership with ImpactHER where 1,052 female entrepreneurs across the 36 states of Nigeria were given diverse training on digital skills and direct business support.[62] Other initiatives and campaigns have been profiled in section 5 of this report and in the dashboard provided here.

61 Ibid.

62 Press release, 2022. Available here.

Supply-side related challenges

The challenges financial services providers (FSPs) face in providing women with access to financial services include but are not limited to the higher costs to serve in rural areas, the unit cost of lending especially lending to low-income women, the lack of gender-disaggregated data and recruitment hurdles due to the undersupply of talent.

- **There is a higher cost-to-serve for FSPs in rural areas due to the lower density of high-value/volume customers.** The primary reason most of the underserved population remains financially excluded is largely economic: they are costly to serve from the FSP's point of view. The high costs are due to geographical inaccessibility, poor infrastructure, and, generally, sparse population densities. This makes the establishment of "brick-and-mortar" branches to offer banking services costly.[63]

> Serving the underserved is an expensive venture, the infrastructure required to engage them is daunting because it requires a lot of in field engagements.
>
> **PSB staff**

- **The unit cost of lending is relatively high, which may be a deterrent to providers looking to serve low-income women especially.** To be able to provide lending services, credit providers in the market must cover several costs. These include the cost of integrating with bureaus, the cost of fraud prevention and theft, collection costs and other operating costs. These costs are either passed on to consumers or borne by the credit providers themselves. This is especially challenging for institutions providing credit to low-income women whose volume and value of transactions are low.[64]

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63 Insights from stakeholder interviews.
64 GSMA. Available here.

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- **Regulations can sometimes be seen as arbitrarily deployed by FSPs, which can lead to instability in the financial services industry.** Despite consultations by regulators, when new laws are introduced, service providers are often unprepared and required to quickly comply, leading to an unstable environment that can impede growth. An example of a recent regulation that has impacted FSPs is the Naira Currency Exchange. Despite efforts to ensure widespread availability of cash, some members of the society have sabotaged these efforts eroding the trust of consumers in FSPs. FSPs were seemingly unprepared to handle the surge in digital transactions, and cash was unavailable in some states. This led to consumer panic and the destruction of bank branches, ultimately reducing trust and confidence in the financial system.

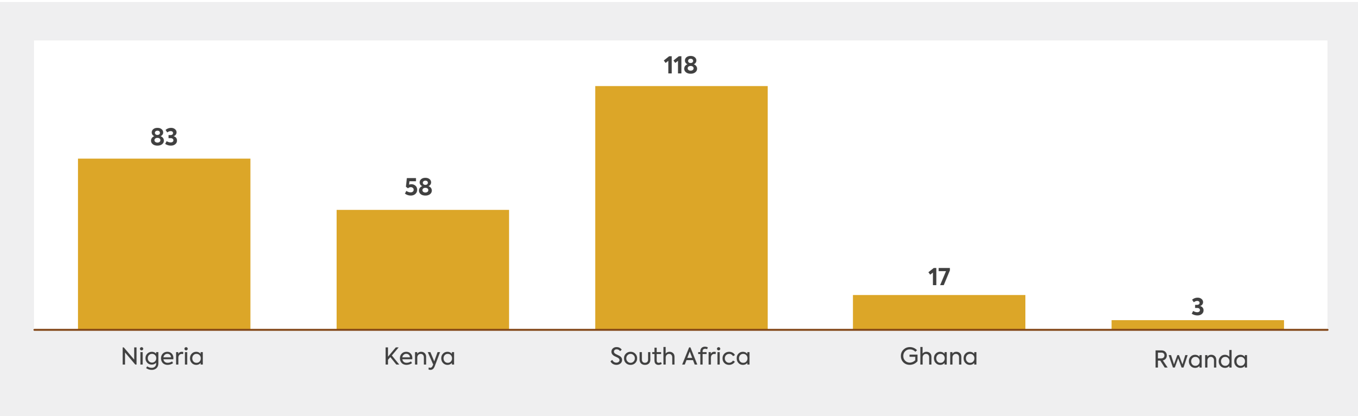
> A consumer protection regulation was recently issued to ensure that institutions do not harass their customers unnecessarily. Although this is advantageous, there is a drawback for FSPs because customers are abusing the privileges by failing to make timely payments, which is beginning to make debt recovery a problem for FSPs. ”
>
> Commercial Bank staff

- **FSPs have inadequate gender-disaggregated data, which prevents them from offering targeted products and services that meet the needs of women.** Only 28.5% of MFBs routinely include gender-disaggregated data in management reporting; 43% occasionally include gender-disaggregated data in reporting, while 28.5% do not include gender-disaggregated data in management reports at all.[65] Without supply-side financial data, providers may not be able to understand women's financial needs and behaviours, which prevents them from getting the insights they need to inform solutions that will increase women's access to and usage of financial products/services.[66]
- **Despite the fintech industry being one of the fastest growing sectors post-pandemic, there are still substantial recruitment hurdles to face.** Due to the undersupply of talent, providers are often met with staffing shortages for product development. This is further exacerbated by the growing migration of technical talents out of Nigeria. For example, South Africa has a population of 59 million people compared to Nigeria's population of 213 million people but appears to have more software developers, as shown below.

65 Data2X, Towards Women's Financial Inclusion: a Gender Data Diagnostic of Nigeria, 2022. Available here.

66 LBS, Gender Toolkit for Financial Inclusion. Available here.

Figure 13: Total number of developers per country, 2020 ('thousands')



Source: *IFC, eConomy Africa, 2020. Available here.*

Having looked at the various factors affecting the access to and usage of financial services by women, the next section focuses on the appropriateness of financial services for peculiar circumstances of women, as it relates to the quality of financial services.

Quality of financial services and service delivery

The quality dimension of financial inclusion can be affected by several factors, such as the cost of services, consumer awareness, the effectiveness of redress mechanisms, consumer protection services, the security of funds, transparency and competition in the market, and even intangible features like consumer trust.[67]

For the purpose of this report, seven levers will be used to analyse the quality of financial services and service delivery. The levers listed below could also potentially be used to determine the fit of financial products for women when designing products. These levers include (i) the affordability of financial services (ii) transparency in financial services (iii) convenience provided by financial services (iv) fair treatment by financial service providers (v) consumer protection (vi) financial education (vii) choice of financial services.

In order to understand the perspectives of women as it relates to how they view the quality of financial services available to them, ratings were provided using the key below for each of the levers listed above based on their experiences and the extent to which the available services meet their needs and fit the context of their lives.

67 AFI, Indicators of the quality dimension of financial inclusion, 2016. Available here.

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Table 6: Quality of financial services (Rating key)

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Does not fit the context of their lives	**Poorly** fits the context of their lives	**Moderately** fits the context of their lives	**Adequately** fits the context of their lives	**Completely** fits the context of their lives

Affordability of financial services

This category measures how expensive it is to keep an account, particularly for low-income earners.[68] Financial inclusion involves deploying cost-saving means to reach currently financially excluded and underserved populations with a range of formal financial services suited to their needs that are responsibly delivered at a cost affordable to customers and sustainable for providers.[69]

A closer look at the women in the communities interviewed further emphasises the gap between women's income and the cost of financial services. The majority of women in these communities earn below ~700 Naira ($1.8) per day[70] and while they have bank accounts to receive payments, grants etc., the majority of them do not use these bank accounts to save or store money, mostly citing high transactional costs and low income as reasons for low adoption.[71] Based on this, affordability was rated a "poor fit", as shown in the table below.

As a result of the multiple charges associated with banks, women turn to alternative financial solutions. The minimum initial deposit required to open an account in Nigeria ranges between ~ 0 - 10,000 Naira ($0 to $23), and the minimum operating balance required ranges between ~ 0 - 2,257 Naira ($0 to $5[72]), which can be considered expensive compared to the earnings of these women. Due to the multiple charges associated with banks, women choose alternative financial solutions like mobile money which are relatively new and are yet to be fully regulated by the CBN. The CBN is yet to publish guidelines for charges associated with mobile money transactions, thus leaving pricing for the market to dictate.

Table 7: Affordability rating[73]

Lever	Current product/service fit[74]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
How expensive is it for women to keep an account, particularly for low-income earners?		✓			

68 Ibid.

69 World Bank, Financial Inclusion Overview. Available here.

70 CBN, Assessment of Women's Financial Inclusion, 2019. Available here.

71 Insight from FGDs.

72 The Global Findex Database, 2021. Available here.

73 This analysis has been conducted solely based on the insights drawn from focus group discussions and the experiences of participants, it may not reflect the general experiences of all women.

74 This measures how financial services or products currently fit the context of the lives of the women interviewed.

Transparency in financial services

Transparency is focused on openness and communication with regard to all relevant information, but transparency alone is not enough. Access to all relevant information plays a crucial role in financial inclusion. Financial services providers (FSPs) should ensure that clients have access to all relevant information on financial products and services to enable them make informed decisions on usage, even if this information is developed or held by other FSPs.[75]

As shown in the table below, transparency was rated a 'moderate fit' as FGD respondents indicated that they trust their banks and feel protected by their banks. Respondents feel that the information they receive about bank charges, etc., are clear, unambiguous and easy to understand. The more illiterate respondents, however, stated that they rely on family and friends for information to be translated.

Table 8: Transparency rating

Lever	Current product/service fit[76]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
Do women have access to all relevant information on financial products to enable them to make informed decisions?			✓		

Convenience provided by financial services

This lever captures the customer's perspective on the ease and comfort of accessing and using financial services. A characteristic of quality financial services; describes products that are easy to access and use. Convenience most often refers to the physical proximity to a banking outlet. However, it can also refer to the requirements necessary to use a financial service (such as the number of documents required to open an account) and the time it takes to complete a financial transaction. It may also include adaptations for language or literacy level.[77]

As mentioned in previous sections, women are disproportionately affected by the lack of mobility to financial service access points such as bank branches. Those who travel to access these branches often find long lines and wait times, and it can take several hours to get to a cashier. This typically discourages women from visiting banks even when they absolutely need to, for example, when they need to update their information or obtain a debit card.

Although agency banking is convenient, it might not be able to offer the complete range of required financial service offerings. While agency banking provides some degree of ease and convenience and caters to the basic banking needs of these women, it is still not sophisticated enough to meet all of their long-term banking needs.

Women are also less likely to have official identification documents required to open a bank account. As mentioned in previous sections, the enrolment rate for national identification numbers is lower for women, particularly women in the Northern part of Nigeria. These women are also mostly illiterate and have to rely on family and friends to interpret bank materials that are predominately written in English.

75 AFI, Indicators of the quality dimension of financial inclusion, 2016. Available here.
76 This measures how financial services or products currently the context of the lives of the women interviewed.
77 Center for Financial Inclusion, 2018. Available here.

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Convenience received a "poor fit" rating based on the points listed above, as seen in the table below.

Table 9: Convenience rating

Lever	Current product/service fit[78]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
How easy and convenient is it to access financial products/services?		✓			

Fair treatment by financial service providers

This lever focuses on customers' perceptions of fair treatment at financial institutions, including issues such as incomplete information about financial services, inadequate time spent on explaining financial goods and services and other situations that clients consider problems.[79]

Some marginalised women reported that they had faced some form of discrimination or mistreatment while trying to access financial services. They reported that they are sometimes ignored or pushed aside by banking agents. Inadequate time is also sometimes spent on explaining financial goods and services and other situations to them. Based on this, fair treatment was rated a "poor fit", as shown in the table below.

Table 10: Fair treatment rating

Lever	Current product/service fit[80]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
Do women feel they are being treated fairly?		✓			

Consumer protection

This category looks at the laws and regulations designed to ensure the rights of consumers are protected and prevent businesses from gaining an unfair advantage over competitors through fraud or unfair practices.

In recent times, there have been allegations of unethical collection practices by some digital lenders. Having heard stories about this form of harassment by providers, women are often hesitant to accept credit from providers. Providers have been alleged to use customer information to reach out to friends and family of the consumer to intimidate them into paying. Women are often hesitant to accept credit from these providers, citing unethical practices as the main reason for this. Consumer protection received a "poor fit" rating as a result, as seen in the table below.

78 This measures how financial services or products currently the context of the lives of the women interviewed.
79 AFI, Indicators of the quality dimension of financial inclusion, 2016. Available here.
80 This measures how financial services or products currently the context of the lives of the women interviewed.

Table 11: Consumer protection rating

Lever	Current product/service fit[81]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
Do women feel protected by their financial service providers?		✓			

In 2019, the CBN issued Customer Protection Regulations (CPR) to ensure compliance with the Consumer Protection Framework (CPF) by banks and other financial and non-financial banking institutions. The regulations prescribe requirements to prevent unfair and exploitative practices by institutions in their dealings with consumers and unethical and predatory practices that undermine consumer confidence in the use of financial products and services, and it encourages transparency of institutions in their dealings with consumers.

Financial education

This category measures the knowledge of basic financial terms and the ability of women to plan and budget their income. Both women and men need to be sufficiently financially literate to effectively participate in economic activities and to take appropriate financial decisions for themselves and their families, but women often have less financial knowledge and lower access to formal financial products than men. Women, therefore, have specific and additional financial literacy needs.[82]

Financial literacy is crucial for financial inclusion because, as previously excluded women gain access to formal financial services, they must be able to use them in a way that will benefit them rather than harm them. Financial education may be provided by schools, financial institutions, and others through channels ranging from classrooms to mass media and direct contact with financial institution staff.[83]

FGD respondents believe that they have basic information about their bank accounts. They stated that bank officials explained the basic workings of their accounts, but, however, failed to go into details. They indicated that they are open to learning more about financial services such as a pension, health insurance etc. and how mobile banking works to lessen their reliance on financial service agents. Based on this, financial education received a “moderate fit” rating, as shown in the table below.

Table 12: Financial education rating

Lever	Current product/service fit[84]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
Have women been equipped with the basic knowledge of financial service terms?			✓		

81 This measures how financial services or products currently the context of the lives of the women interviewed.
82 OECD, Addressing women’s needs for financial education. Available here.
83 Center for Financial Inclusion, 2018. Available here.
84 This measures how financial services or products currently the context of the lives of the women interviewed.

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Choice of financial service providers/products

Financial inclusion is not only about using financial products and services, but also giving consumers the ability to choose services or products from a range of options. Financial knowledge and decision-making skills help people make informed financial decisions through an understanding of key financial facts and concepts.

When it comes to making choices about products or services, respondents indicated that they are not well informed about banking products to make choices. Women stated that they chose their banks because **(i)** the majority of the people in the community use the bank, **(ii)** someone made a recommendation, **(iii)** they were approached by the bank, **(iv)** an NGO helped them pick out the bank. Choice was rated a "poor fit" as a result, as seen in the table below.

Table 13: Choice rating

Lever	Current product/service fit[85]				
	1. Not fit	2. Poorly fit	3. Moderate fit	4. Adequate fit	5. Complete fit
Are women given the agency to choose services or products from a range of options?		✓			

The overall quality of financial inclusion can be impacted by a variety of factors, some of which can be addressed through regulations and policies. To this end, the government has taken measures to provide regulations and policies that can improve the quality of financial services, as well as the access to and usage of financial services for adult women in Nigeria. The focus box below provides an overview of the policies and regulations currently being implemented.

85 This measures how financial services or products currently the context of the lives of the women interviewed.

Box 2: Snapshot of WFI policies in Nigeria[86] [87] [88] [89]

The National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) '3.0"

This strategy is an updated version of NFIS 2.0, which was launched in 2019. It aims to increase the adoption and usage of financial services in priority demographics, ensure robust enabling financial services infrastructure, expand digital financial services and platforms and improve financial inclusion coordination, capacity, and governance.

Framework for Advancing Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria (FAWFIN)

In 2018, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) constituted a subcommittee from the National Financial Inclusion Special Intervention Working Group to develop a framework to advance women's financial inclusion in Nigeria. The framework was conceptualised by the Financial Inclusion Special Interventions Working Group and developed by the Financial Inclusion Secretariat (Central Bank of Nigeria) in collaboration with the Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access (EFInA) and Women's World Banking.

National Strategy for Leveraging Agent Networks for Women's Financial Inclusion

This is an offshoot of the framework for advancing women's financial inclusion. The strategy is a fulfilment of the strategic imperative three under the framework, which advocates for the expansion of delivery channels to reach women customers closer to home to close the financial inclusion gender gap in Nigeria. The strategy seeks to 'at least' double the number of female financial services agents between 2022 and 2024 and increase the ratio of female to male financial services agents from 15:85 to 35:65 by 2024. It also aims to promote the innovation and deployment of at least 10 gender-centric financial products or interventions that actively leverage agent networks.

Quarterly reporting of gender-disaggregated personal and business account ownership data from commercial and microfinance banks

In 2019, CBN mandated quarterly reporting of gender-disaggregated personal and business account ownership data from commercial and microfinance banks.

Apart from the regulations and policies discussed in the box above, there are several regulations, such as the National Financial Literacy Framework, that support women but are not gender mainstreamed. Aside from regulations and policies, there are several multifaceted advocacy programmes and initiatives emerging in the country aimed at improving the quality, as well as the access to and usage of financial services for adult women in Nigeria. A detailed review of these programmes and initiatives is provided in the WFI stakeholder dashboard and the sections below.

86 The National Financial Inclusion Strategy (Revised), 2018. Available here.

87 Press release, 2022. Available here.

88 Framework for Advancing Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria, 2019. Available here.

89 CGAP, Enhancing Financial Inclusion for Women in Nigeria, 2016. Available here.

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4 WFI Stakeholder Map and Case Studies

This section links to a dashboard that goes into detail about what stakeholders are doing to help women in Nigeria get access to and use financial services. The stakeholders include government agencies, commercial banks, microfinance institutions, fintechs, donors, venture capital firms, multilateral institutions, bilateral agencies, international foundations, local NGOs corporations, research organisations, and advocacy organisations. The WFI stakeholder dashboard can be accessed via this link here.

Furthermore, this section looks at case studies of national, regional and global level approaches that are aimed at accelerating WFI in an effort to identify both gaps in what is being done as well as learnings and opportunities for stakeholders in Nigeria to adopt promising approaches. The case studies were chosen for their relevance in solving each of the identified key barriers to women financial inclusion.

A detailed profile of each case study is included in section 6.3 of the appendix.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are based on the review of the status of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria since the last assessment conducted in 2019. These recommendations are presented in the table below and mapped to the key issues identified in subsequent sections. While we have proposed several actionable recommendations to address the key issues identified, their success will be dependent on disciplined execution and a constant review of the actions, challenges, and outcomes.

The recommendations listed below cut across but are not limited to service delivery, financial education, consumer protection, product design and differentiation etc.

Table 14: Recommendations[90] [91] [92] [93]

Recommendations to improve the demand for financial services by women				
S/N	Category	Action	Challenges addressed	Stakeholder responsible
1.	**Agency banking and service delivery**	**More FSPs can leverage agency banking to deliver their services to customers outside conventional bank branches.** Many FSPs are already embracing agency banking as it enables women to easily access banking services by visiting their nearest agents without having to travel long distances.	Women are disproportionately affected by the lack of mobility to financial service access points like bank branches.	FSPs SANEF CBN
2.		**Tighten the verification process for onboarding financial service agents by conducting thorough/ sufficient background checks.** FSPs must ensure that their prospective third-party provider has the ability, capacity and authorisation to perform the relevant functions, services, or activities reliably and professionally. Before onboarding, an agent or a third-party, firms must conduct sufficient checks on the entity to guarantee they are financially stable, trustworthy, and competent.	Heavy reliance on financial service agents weakens confidentiality and makes women more susceptible to fraud.	
3.	**Economic empowerment**	Combine efforts to promote economic empowerment with financial inclusion initiatives by incorporating income-generating programs for women in communities alongside financial inclusion interventions.	Lack of sufficient income to motivate the need for banking or other financial services. Research shows that women who earn less than ~ 35,000 Naira are typically not motivated to open bank accounts.[94]	Government, donors, and development partners

90 Financial Products and Services for Women's Financial Inclusion: A Policy and Regulation Design Toolkit, 2022. Available here.

91 UKaid, Promoting women's financial inclusion, a toolkit. Available here.

92 ACET,Promoting Women and Youth Financial Inclusion for Entrepreneurship and Job Creation: Comparative Study of Selected Sub-Saharan African Countries, 2019.

93 GPFI, Advancing women's digital financial inclusion, 2020. Available here.

94 Access to financial services in Nigeria, Kaduna deep dive survey 2021. Available here.

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<table>
<tr><td>4.</td><td rowspan="2">Financial education</td><td>Develop community-based financial literacy training programs for women. Train community-based facilitators to become trainers, who are then able to mobilise and train women's groups such as savings and credit groups, market associations etc.</td><td rowspan="2">Low levels of exposure and education may hinder women's financial literacy, as well as their awareness of financial products.</td><td>Donors and development partners</td></tr>
<tr><td>5.</td><td>Increase financial literacy by adapting public and government school curricula. This will include the basics of financial discipline, financial planning and, in later stages, the rudiments of entrepreneurship. This approach should blend both theory and practice.</td><td>Policymakers and regulators</td></tr>
<tr><td>6.</td><td>Trust in financial institutions</td><td>Gender mainstreaming, sensitisation, and empathy must be integral to the institutional culture and activities of every FSP. The staff of financial institutions must be trained on how to interact with female clients, considering the social and cultural norms prevalent in the area.</td><td>The trust of many in the financial system has been eroded over time due to factors like discrimination by financial service providers.</td><td>FSPs</td></tr>
<tr><td>7.</td><td>WMSMEs</td><td>Create an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs to access and use financial services, particularly credit. Some activities that can be undertaken to create an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs may include the following:
Improve awareness around the existence of the movable collateral registry, i.e. the National Collateral Registry (NCR), an initiative of the Central Bank of Nigeria to increase its uptake
Strengthen alternate banking institutions such as microfinance institutions, savings and credit cooperatives, non-interest banks, fintechs, etc., through channels such as challenge funds, grants, and direct equity investments to cater to the needs of women entrepreneurs.</td><td>Lack of income is a major deterrent to accessing financial services. This may be caused by the lack of credit access which affects women's ability to do business and grow their businesses, and consequently, receive a stable income.</td><td>Regulators, FSPs, donors and VCs</td></tr>
</table>

8.	**WMSMEs (Cont.)**	Improve the scope of data that goes into credit bureaus to include other data sources such as airtime purchase history, call history from telcos, utility data etc.	Women are underrepresented in financial markets and traditional credit bureaus as they lack credit information/history.	Regulators, FSPs, donors and VCs
9.		**Leverage local government offices to help register women's businesses.** Liaise with relevant local governments to offer business registration services to women in rural communities	Women make up a sizable portion of MSMEs and farmers, two groups whose informal nature may contribute to financial exclusion.	Government - Corporate Affairs Commission in collaboration with SMEDAN and the Ministry of local government and community affairs present at the state levels.
10.	**Consumer protection**	Infuse consumer protection modules into financial literacy training to inform consumers of their rights and responsibilities with regard to their banking relationships.	Limited awareness of consumer protection rights may make women easy targets for the unethical lending practices of some service providers.	Regulators and development partners.
11.	**Social grant and financial inclusion**	Fully digitise the social grant process to encourage the uptake of digital financial services. The social grant process is somewhat digitised; however, mechanisms need to be put in place to scale the process where payments can be disbursed directly into women's digital accounts that are easily accessible and under the women's control, allowing a range of digital financial transactions.	Heavy reliance on cash, especially by rural Northern women. An element that may be boosting this usage of cash is the over-the-counter distribution of social payments in cash.	Government - in partnership with FSPs, preferably a PSB or mobile money partner and social development partners.

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<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Recommendations to improve the demand for financial services by women</th></tr>
<tr><th>S/N</th><th>Category</th><th>Action</th><th>Challenges addressed</th><th>Stakeholder responsible</th></tr>
<tr><td>12.</td><td>Cost to serve for FSPs</td><td>Reduce operational costs for entities addressing women’s financial inclusion in Nigeria.
This can be done by:
Reducing licensing requirements and account maintenance fees specifically for the FSPs looking to serve the low-income segment of the population
Supporting FSPs that provide infrastructure-based services. Other FSPs can use the existing infrastructure to deliver their services. As a result, the number of required employees, products, and time required to build products will be reduced. Examples of such infrastructure providers include Paga, Okra, Mono</td><td>High operational costs for FSPs serving rural areas.</td><td>Policy makers, NIBSS, Banker’s committee</td></tr>
<tr><td>13.</td><td>Connectivity infrastructure</td><td>Invest in telecommunication infrastructure in remote areas. Enhancing the telecommunication infrastructure in remote areas will help improve the rural penetration of FSPs and upgrade internal systems to deliver quality services to women better.</td><td>Connectivity infrastructure issues such as network challenges may sometimes affect the quality of services offered by FSPs.</td><td>The Nigerian Communications Commission, development partners and relevant telcos</td></tr>
<tr><td>14.</td><td rowspan="2">Product design and differentiation</td><td>Leverage research and human-centred design principles when designing for women. This could include design and prototyping with a sample of women in order to compare the outcomes before the launch of the product.</td><td rowspan="2">Lack of product differentiation remains a prominent factor for the low adoption rate of financial service products amongst women.</td><td rowspan="2">FSPs</td></tr>
<tr><td>15.</td><td>Proactively disaggregate data to understand women’s financial needs and behaviours in order to offer targeted products and services that meet the needs of women.</td></tr>
</table>

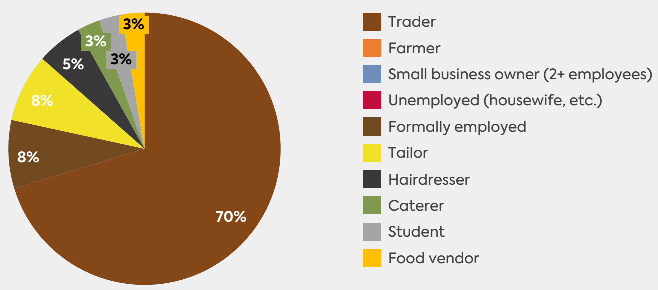
5 Appendix

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

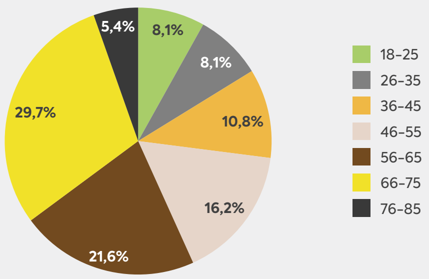
The women who participated in the Focus Group Discussions are women who recently gained access to formal financial services, largely due to the efforts of non-profit organisations.

Figure 14: Summary of the profiles of women surveyed

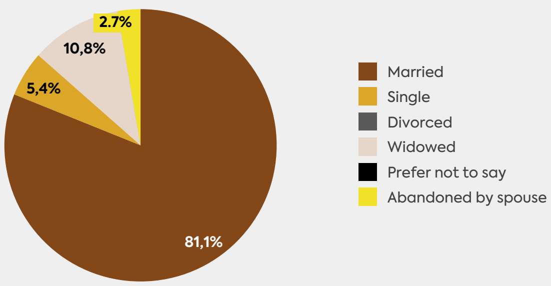
What is your occupation? (37 Responses)



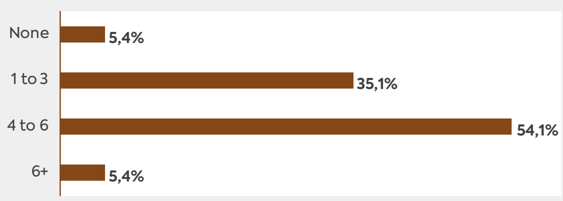
How old are you? (37 Responses)

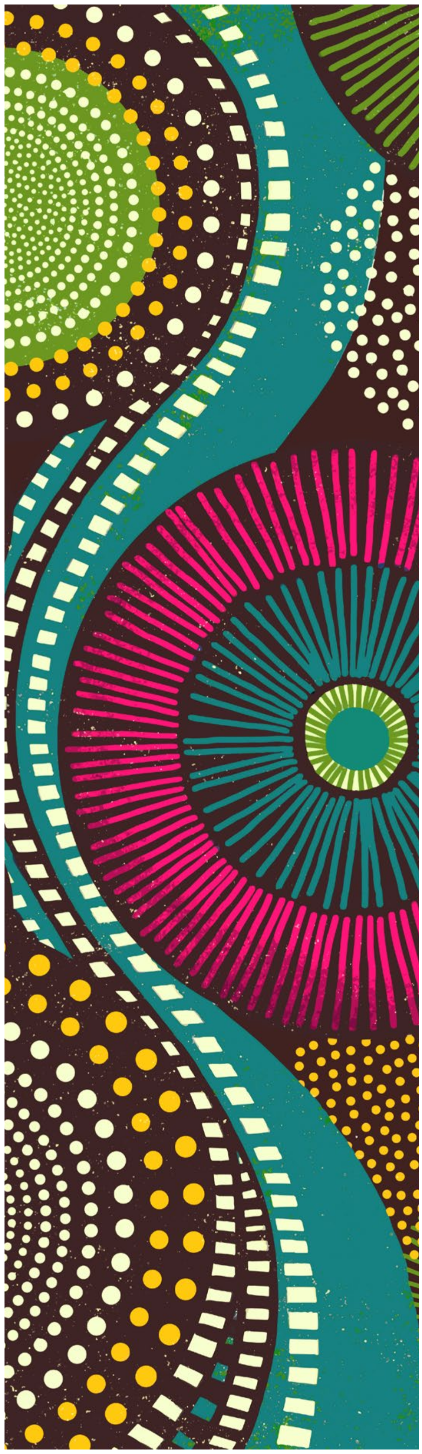


What is your marital status? (37 Responses)



How many children do you have? (37 Responses)





Case studies

National approaches

Key Barrier: Women with lower education levels are more excluded

Table 15: Case study of a national initiative – Her & Now

Name of the initiative: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Owner of the initiative: Her & Now

Country: India

Overview: The programme is piloting incubation and acceleration support programmes for women to start new businesses and to scale up their existing businesses

Number of Direct Beneficiaries: 131 women in the first cohort

Year Founded: 2018

Background/Key issue

By 2019, the women's labor force participation in India had declined to 27%, from 45% in 2005.[95] According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), barely 14 per cent of Indian businesses are run by women. Most of these are in the informal sector, which means that they are not officially registered. The Her&Now programme is piloting incubation and acceleration support programmes for women to start new businesses and to scale up their existing businesses.

Solution provided by Her & Now through their innovation and activities

The incubation and acceleration programme last 7 and 6 months respectively. Every entrepreneur is given a customised growth plan, a mentor as a designated point of contact, and stands to benefit from classroom sessions with invited experts. One objective of the programme is to enable women entrepreneurs to raise funding. This includes:

- Understanding of own funding needs
- Getting realistic numbers (e.g. many entrepreneurs did not count in a salary for themselves)
- Financial management: managing one's money, identifying necessary investments
- Finding a balance between a sense of community welfare and business prudence
- Reducing the fear of approaching financial institutions
- Reducing the negative perception of using external finance for funding their business
- Having all required licences and documents, which is a pre-condition to qualify for loans

Impact

Over the 4 years in which Her & Now has operated its incubation and acceleration program, over 130 women have participated in these programs. Of these, 91% responded with increased confidence as an entrepreneur, while 94% successfully scaled up their businesses. 57% of participants became part of business networks, going on to take loans and establish linkages to investors.[96]

Learnings

Some key factors that contribute to the success of the Her & Now program include a combination of scouting methods (e.g. social media and referrals) which increased the quality and quantity of applications received, detailed due diligence which ensured in fewer program dropouts, a mix of communication channels (such as whatsapp, phone calls and social media) which kept participants involved, and financial management and mentorship sessions which empowered participants to raise independent funding and gain agency.[97]

Key Barrier: Women with lower income levels are more excluded

Table 16: Case study of a national initiative – Advans

95 The Times of India, 2022. Available here.

96 GIZ, Women's Financial Inclusion toolkit, 2021. Available here.

97 GIZ, Women's Financial Inclusion toolkit, 2021. Available here.

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advans CÔTE D'IVOIRE	**Name of the initiative:** Mobile and Agency Banking in Agricultural Value Chains **Owner of the initiative:** Advans **Country:** Côte D'Ivoire **Overview:** Advans helps smallholder farmers in Cote D'Ivoire to smooth their cash flows between harvests and improve their financial resilience **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 14,100 active users **Year Founded:** 2016

Background/Key issue

Côte d'Ivoire, in West Africa, is the world's leading producer of cocoa and cashew nuts: 68% of its 25.7 million population is estimated to rely upon agriculture for a living. Gross National Income is US$2,290 per head. However, wealth is unevenly spread: 39.4% of the population live in poverty, and poverty levels in rural areas have been growing.[98]

Access to financial services is critical for a nation of smallholder farmers who are focused on cash crops rather than subsistence farming. Seasonal fluctuations in income, as well as ups and downs in global commodity prices, result in a need for saving and borrowing to ensure liquidity, and to meet household costs between harvests. Yet 59% of adults have no bank account.

Solution provided by Advans through their innovation and activities

Advans offers cocoa farmers financial services access through mobile and agency banking in organised value chains. In November 2018, Advans Côte d'Ivoire, one of nine country operations of international microfinance group Advans, partnered with the WSBI's Scale 2 Save programme to advance financial inclusion among actors in Ivorian agricultural value chains, with a particular focus upon cocoa farmers. As part of the collaboration, Advans extended its branchless banking offer, and added more rural agents by signing-up cooperatives who buy cocoa. The co-ops can now make payments directly to farmers' savings accounts and farmers can make transactions at the coop.

Impact

By working with agriculture cooperatives and using them as agents, Advans developed a suite of financial services that saw take-up among its target clients - smallholder farmers including women. Advans aims to add 120,000 rural clients over four years, providing them with a range of financial services including micro-insurance, loans and savings accounts. At the end of 2017, Advans had 14,100 active borrowers and was one of the largest microfinance institutions in Côte d'Ivoire with a portfolio greater than EUR 91m.

Learnings

Two key lessons learned include:

- High rates of mobile use among farmers – 86% own a mobile phone – made mobile banking a good channel to reach geographically scattered smallholders.
- Using farmer cooperatives as agents helped in recruiting farmers, facilitated financial literacy training and provided an accessible touch-point for any queries about operating accounts.

Key Barrier: Women with less trust in FSPs are more excluded

98 WSBI, Mobile and agency banking in agriculture value chains, 2022. Available here.

Table 17: Case study of a national initiative – Mercy Corps[99]

	Name of the initiative: Digitisation of SACCOs in Uganda **Owner of the initiative:** Mercy Corps **Country:** Uganda **Overview:** Mercy Corps through its Agri-Fin Mobile Program partnered with Ensibuuko (U) Ltd to improve efficiency in the operation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) and increase access to financial services and information by smallholder farmers in Uganda. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** Approximately 35 million Ugandans who use SACCOs and VSLAs **Year Founded:** 2013

Background/Key issue

The sense of social cohesion is very strong in Uganda with up to 75% of Ugandans leaning on groups as a financial coping mechanism. Such groups predominantly include SACCOs and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). Despite this, many of these groups do not have digital Management Information Systems (MIS) in place and consequently suffer from a lack of oversight, high operating costs, high risk of fraud, multi-borrowing, process inefficiencies, and missed collections.

With digitisation comes greater productivity and efficiency in managing operations. Following the digitisation process, the typical workday can be reduced by as much as two (2) to four (4) hours. The main driver for this is the fact that tasks such as verifying/making/doing reconciliations (or reconciling accounts), generating reports and processing transactions can be done with a single button click.

Solution provided by Mercy Corps through their innovation and activities

Mercy Corps and a number of partners such as Ensibuuko have partnered to develop and market Mobile Banking and Information System (MOBIS) to SACCOs. These SACCOs number upwards of 246 accounting for a significant percentage of Uganda's population actively saving. MOBIS aimed to improve the efficiency in the operation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) and increase access to financial services and information by smallholder farmers in Uganda.

Focusing on the Nakasero Market Traders SACCO; digitisation particularly changed the way their members interacted with the financial system. Members of this SACCO are predominantly traders who are very busy and unwilling to leave their points of sale to make deposits at the SACCO offices. Prior to digitisation, only two (2) Field Officers were being used because the process of manually recording and reconciling deposits collected from the field required three (3) employees to be office-based. Similarly, several potential SACCO members were excluded from conducting business with the SACCO as it was inconvenient for them to spend time out of their business stalls traveling to the SACCO premises.

Following the digitisation process, more Field Officers can go out to the field because it is easier to enter data into the system. This has been made possible because the software provider's Mobile Office application enables SACCO staff to register traders at their market stalls and offer them all SACCO services on-site.

Impact

Prior to digitisation, one SACCO (Nakasero Market Traders SACCO) had manual systems and found it hard to gain members' trust that the money they were depositing was safe. Following digitisation, this attitude completely changed with members of other small saving groups in the area that had not digitised, deciding to join the SACCO.

Learnings

Digitisation played a significant role in increasing the level of trust that members had in SACCOs. For SACCOs operating through a network of branches, there is more visibility as the General Manager can view accounts of the entire branch network in real time. This in turn, leads to increased growth of the SACCO.

99 Mercy Corps., Impact and learnings from Digitisation of SACCOs in Uganda, 2019. Available here.

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Table 18: Case study of a national initiative – NPHCDA CHIPS Programme[100]

NPHCDA National Primary Health Care Development Agency	**Name of the initiative:** The Community Health Influencers, Promoters and Services (CHIPS) Programme **Owner of the initiative:** National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) **Country:** Nigeria **Overview:** The CHIPS programme is a community-focused approach designed to bridge gaps in access and awareness of healthcare services and strengthen the community component of primary healthcare services. Female CHIPS agents are supported by male Community Engagement Focal Persons (CEFPs) who work to promote male involvement and community engagement. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 8,289 trained CHIPS agents 1,218 CEFPs as at October 2021 **Year Founded:** 2018

Background/Key issue

The overall goal of the CHIPS Programme is to contribute to reduction of maternal and child morbidity and mortality by improving access to and equitably increasing coverage of basic primary health care services. The CHIPS Programme has two pillars: the Health Pillar and the Female Empowerment Component.

Solution provided by NPHCDA through their innovation and activities

The CHIPS programme, established by the NPHCDA and endorsed by The Federal Government of Nigeria, is structured to stimulate and support households in communities to seek Primary Health Care (PHC) services through various delivery platforms, namely the health facility and outreaches. The Programme also brings these PHC services closer to households through home visits by CHIPS Agents, especially in rural underserved communities.

The CHIPS programme delivers on this mandate by leveraging on existing community-based programmes e.g. integrated Community Case Management of Childhood Illnesses (iCCM), Voluntary Community Mobiliser (VCM), and Village Health Worker (VHW) Programmes, and pulling them under the CHIPS Programme, providing a single platform with one training curriculum, one M&E framework and one category of community-based health workers.

At least 10 CHIPS agents (preferably female) are to be trained in each of Nigeria's 886 political wards. These agents are usually members of the community in which they are trained, and work at the household level to provide counseling, create demand and awareness of PHC facilities and refer people to them when needed. In addition, they provide basic promotive, preventive services and case management of uncomplicated (e.g. cough, fever, etc.) ailments in children under five years.

CHIPS agents are supported by CEFPs (preferable male) who are selected and trained to support the work of the CHIPS agent by promoting male involvement and community engagement. These focal persons facilitate and track community referrals, and help to address non-adherent to routine immunisations, antenatal care, and other maternal and child health services.

100 NPHCDA, 2021. Available here.

Impact As at October 2021, 19 of 36 Nigerian states were in the implementation phase, with all states at varying ranges of training and deployment of CHIPS personnel. 13 states had completed the training at the time, with 8 of them having deployed CHIPS personnel, while 5 states were yet to commence service provision. The National CHIPS Programme Implementation Unit is engaging with other states (17 States and FCT) to commence planning for implementation of the CHIPS Programme. Each state was assigned state support officers and assisting state support officers to provide technical guidance for the development of an implementation work plan. **Learnings** The CHIPS programme utilises both male and female participants in different roles, contributing to greater acceptance and adoption of the programme amongst communities. This community-focused approach additionally contributes to the success and scalability of the programme.

Key Barrier: Social Norms limits women's access to financial services

Table 19: Case study of a national initiative – GIZ[101]

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	**Name of the initiative:** Smart farming in Uganda: Deploying trainings through radio channels to change attitudes in smallholder farming households **Owner of the initiative:** Farmers as Entrepreneurs Strategic Alliance **Country:** Uganda **Overview:** The Strategic Alliance 'Farmers as Entrepreneurs aims to improve the livelihoods of smallholders in Uganda; in 2017 it developed and implemented a new training approach, which implicitly highlights the importance of joint family decision-making and sharing labour in agricultural enterprises. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 33,000 smallholder farmers **Year Founded:** 2017
Background/Key issue Agriculture is a key engine in local and regional economic development in East Africa and a critical source of income for most households in Uganda. Women constitute more than half of the country's population and 76% of the agricultural workforce. Across Ugandan farming households, substantial gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources prevail: it is usually the male heads of household alone that make decisions on how resources are allocated and spent. This has a detrimental effect on agricultural productivity and overall negative effects on important human development outcomes including food security, education and women's well-being within the home. **Solution provided by GIZ through their innovation and activities** "Smart Farming" has put gender equality and joint family decision-making at the heart of its approach. Using comics, the training materials tell the story of a "model household", featuring a farmer and his wife. Tailored to two value chains and routine household chores the trainees follow the lives of Judith and Henry, who are a happy couple producing bananas, and Musoke and Rose, a successful coffee-farming couple. A variety of topics on good agricultural practices and financial management are covered throughout the training, showing the couples having to decide on different issues concerning their farming enterprise. The couples are presented as a unit, making decisions jointly, as equals. In agronomy, emphasis is put on the importance of sharing the labour in the field and the household and joint decision-making when it comes to the planning of farm investment and utilisation of proceeds after harvest. In financial management, the key message is that the family should be viewed as a unit, in need of financial resources and decisions about allocation should be made in a consensual way.	

101 GIZ, Women's Financial Inclusion toolkit, 2021. Available here.

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Impact

Focus group discussions with coffee farmers revealed that fostering gender equality is perceived as one of the key strengths of "Smart Farming". The very positive reception of the "Smart Farming" training approach by implementing partners and farmers alike has inspired the adaptation of the story of Musoke and Rose, the coffee farming couple, for Ugandan local radio. Developed and implemented jointly with Farm Radio International, an NGO, private sector partners and foundations, 24 radio shows were aired to complement the training and to expand to wider audiences. Smart Farming has fundamentally strengthened the trust of the community in women as coffee farmers and increased the confidence of women as farmers and equal partners in decision making.

Learnings

Some key success factors of the project include the practical relevance of trainings which were held frequently and tailored to the crop cycle for immediate use by farmers, the adaptation of training materials to local context (language, colours, characters, pictures, and even materials i.e. water-proof documentation) which ensured that training materials are relatable, and finally, a training approach that integrated gender issues into good agricultural practice ensuring that these learnings were made practical and easy-to-understand.

Key Barrier: Supply-side misalignments limit inclusion of the unserved and underserved

Table 20: Case study of a national initiative – My Pikin and I[102]

LAPO Microfinance Bank Improving lives	**Name of the initiative:** My Pikin and I **Owner of the initiative:** LAPO Microfinance bank **Country:** Nigeria **Overview:** An innovative mass-market, low cost savings account designed to achieve women financial inclusion, sharing with their children. The account is also bundled with free family accident and critical illness microinsurance. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 200,000+ **Year Launched:** 2018

Background/Key issue

Although financial inclusion is improving, women still suffer financial exclusion, and the gap is widening because women have lower levels of income and education than men. Parents also want to ensure the health and education of their children, but often lack savings and insurance which can help them achieve this. The problem is especially acute among women.

Solution provided by My Pikin and I through their innovation and activities

In a bid to stimulate more interest in saving for the future, the bank embarked on the 'My Pikin and I' promotion that provided a simple savings platform with life-changing benefits: 1-year free insurance cover (fire, burglary and health), scholarships and interest on savings.

The product is carefully designed to cater for low-income earners with very low entry requirements to enable parents or guardians, especially women, to achieve targeted savings to secure a sustainable future for their children/wards. In addition to providing an easy and secure platform to save, the dynamics of the products ensure that its objective of inculcating a savings culture is achieved by setting savings milestones.

Consistent engagement with LAPO's roving agents also allows low-income parents to use their savings accounts to save small amounts daily, weekly or monthly.

102 Scale 2 save, Nigeria my Pikin and I, 2021. Available here.

Impact The product mobilised more than US$23 million in savings by the end of December 2021, and the bank grew its client base by registering 200,000 new customers through 'My Pikin and I'. Within three years, 14 billion Naira has been saved by small savers of N200, N500 and N1,000 daily and 170 full scholarships had been issued. **Learnings** A large and roaming agent network helps increase uptake amongst savers. LAPO Microfinance Bank's agent network of over 2,000 mobile and fixed agents was a key contributor to the success of the My Pikin and I product. Savers sign up when the product is tailored to their needs. A human centered product design, tested with potential users, is key to developing fit for purpose financial products. Other nuanced needs noted during the implementation of this product include a preference for physical cashbooks to complement digital tracking and SMS messages. Additionally, roving staff and agents are particularly effective distribution channels. LAPO Microfinance Bank is now developing kiosks that provide dedicated information about the product.

Table 21: Case study of a regional initiative – NBS Bank, Malawi[103]

NBS Bank	**Name of the initiative:** Pafupi Savings **Owner of the initiative:** NBS Bank and Women's World Banking **Country:** Malawi **Overview:** NBS Bank's (Malawi) Pafupi Savings is a digital account designed specifically for low-income rural women created in collaboration with Women's World Banking **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 75,000+ **Year Founded:** 2014
Background/Key issue Rural women in Malawi provide significant earning power within their families, but often struggle to save their money as available products are not aligned to their needs. Additionally, literacy rates for women were found to be lower than for men. Research at the time showed that those women considered bank accounts aspirational but only available to rich people. Women were also noted to be cost-conscious and keenly aware that bank fees and transportation costs put banking out of reach for them. To address these issues, Women's World Banking worked with NBS Bank in Malawi to design the Pafupi savings account, aimed at the large population of low-income women in rural areas. **Solution provided by NBS Bank through their innovation and activities** NBS Bank's new savings account, Pafupi, meaning "close" in Chichewa, overcame banking barriers by offering transactions through a network of agents such as shops in local communities where customers can make deposits and withdrawals using a mobile phone. The bank hired and trained a team of mobile agents who can open a Pafupi account in 10 minutes at a client's home or workplace or any convenient location, and could provide the client with an ATM card instantly. To make a number of Pafupi's features possible, however, NBS had to work closely with the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) to help clear the regulatory obstacles standing in the way.[104] The literacy rate is 59% among women in Malawi, compared to 73% for men. Opening a bank account anywhere requires filling out documents in person, a significant barrier for clients who lack literacy skills. To address this challenge, NBS worked with the RBM to get a waiver for certain KYC (Know Your Customer) procedures that would allow clients to open an account digitally without going through the step of reading and signing printed documents.	

103 UNCDF, The Business Case for Small-Balance Deposit Mobilisation, 2017. Available here.

104 International Finance, Why Pafupi makes for an interesting story, 2017. Available here.

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Impact Even though Pafupi was designed specifically to address women's needs, it initially attracted many more men than women. Only 30% of clients were women at first, even though focus group findings with women indicated that the product checked off all the right boxes. **Learnings** What was learned on closer inspection was that despite the gender-inclusive product design, the accounts weren't meeting women's needs in the sales and delivery phases. Developing additional sales channels to close these gaps, like enabling account opening at agent locations or via groups that have high participation of women, makes it possible to dramatically raise uptake by women.

Key Barrier: Women are less aware of financial products than men

Table 22: Case study of a national initiative – FINCA and WSBI[105]

FINCA®	**Name of the initiative:** Low cost savings products offered through roaming agents **Owner of the initiative:** FINCA **Country:** Uganda **Overview:** FINCA teamed up with the WSBI Scale2Save programme to leverage mobile phone and other emerging financial technologies to develop low-cost savings products that could be offered through smartphones, agents and simple handsets **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 52,000 financially excluded women and youth **Year Founded:** 2019
Background/Key issue Uganda is an East African country of 44.2 million with a young population, where most adults support themselves by subsistence farming or in the informal economy. With irregular cash incomes, many citizens have had little access to traditional finance. But the spread of mobile phones has bolstered mobile banking and by 2018, 62% of Ugandan adults had an account. But that still leaves more than a third of adults who need access to financial services to help them save for a better future. **Solution provided by FINCA and WSBI through their innovation and activities** In July 2019, FINCA teamed up with the WSBI Scale2Save programme to leverage mobile phone and other emerging financial technologies to develop a new business model designed to mobilise the savings of low-income people. The aim was to develop low-cost savings products that could be offered across a variety of channels, including smartphones, agents and simple handsets. Digital Field Automation, a tablet-based process that simplifies account openings and loan applications, has been adopted to cut costs and simplify processes for clients and staff. **Impact** Together, the partners developed low-cost, mobile-based savings products designed for women, young people and entrepreneurs, including those in the informal economy, with the goal of providing accounts for 52,000 of the financially excluded. Simultaneously, FINCA also designed a financial literacy programme, providing new customers with lessons in budgeting, saving, bookkeeping and investment. In a follow-on agreement, FINCA partnered with Centenary Bank, a Ugandan lender to share agency banking infrastructure.	

105 Scale 2 Save, Uganda FINCA, 2022. Available here.

Learnings

Business skills and financial literacy education are key to turning account holders into active financial service users. In addition to the development of financial products, FINCA also designed a financial literacy programme, providing new customers with lessons in budgeting, saving, bookkeeping and investment.

It takes time to develop new products or business models that meet needs not currently being met by the market. FINCA used human centered design in the development of its youth focused savings account, however, this development is noted to have taken a longer time as a result. Other initiatives, such as sharing its agent network and growing its number of agents allow FINCA to realise further success in this product.

Key Barrier: Banks are not available locally and are costly and time-consuming to reach

Table 23: Case study of a national initiative - GIZ[106]

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	**Name of the initiative:** Closing the gap: Women empowerment through Digital Financial Services **Owner of the initiative:** GIZ **Country:** Jordan **Overview:** In an effort to advance the financial and economic inclusion of women in Jordan through digital solutions, the project tried to build a mobile money agent network for women in Jordan based on the hypothesis that more women would use digital financial services if their main point of interaction was a woman. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 7,929 women **Year Founded:** 2018

Background/Key issue

In Jordan, less than one in three women have access to a bank account. In comparison, just above half of all Jordanian men are financially included. With an average of 42%, financial inclusion in this lower middle income economy is below the global average of 69% (Global Findex Database 2017). In an effort to advance the financial and economic inclusion of women in Jordan through digital solutions, the project tried to build a mobile money agent network for women in Jordan based on the hypothesis that more women would use digital financial services if their main point of interaction was a woman.

Solution provided by GIZ through their innovation and activities

The project aims to engage with female micro, small and medium entrepreneurs in Jordan. Research shows that women are more likely to interact with other women when it comes to personal money management. The project reached out to over 40 organisations working with women entrepreneurs in Jordan and hosted a series of stakeholder engagement events in order to identify eligible women. The project then built on the already existing women-networks of some of these organisations. Multiple meetings with digital financial service providers were organised to gauge their interest, define respective roles and responsibilities and to follow-up on generated agent leads. Regular meetings with the Central Bank of Jordan were held to ensure regulatory compliance and the buy-in of the regulator.

Extensive financial literacy and agency banking training materials specifically tailored for women were developed and 40 women were identified and trained as trainers. The women trainers organised so-called "kitchen-meetings", in which they convened other women of their communities at their homes to discuss digital finance and financial literacy issues.

106 GIZ, Women's Financial Inclusion toolkit, 2021. Available here.

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In partnership with community-based organisations, NGOs and other GIZ projects, in-depth training sessions were also conducted for women entrepreneurs who could potentially become agents. Questionnaires and checklists were developed to determine eligibility and levels of interest by the participants. A corresponding e-learning course was developed to allow for wider and cost-efficient reach. Training outreach as well as knowledge increase was measured using Kobo Toolbox, an electronic monitoring tool.

Impact

The project also identified and trained 40 women educators, to support the implementation of the training and to foster peer-to-peer learnings among women. The training was implemented 116 times across Jordan, reaching a total of 1,090 individuals. On average, participants showed a knowledge increase of 7.6 points (on a scale of 10). An e-learning course consisting of five training modules was developed, reaching a total of 6,839 learners. 213 potential women agents have been identified, out of which 11 were contracted by a financial services provider by 2019.

Learnings

Overall, the consistent focus on women was identified as the key success factor for this initiative. Women's economic empowerment played a role all throughout the project: For instance, the elearning course was developed by a women-led start-up.

Additionally, the network of women, women's organisations and ongoing related projects by the GIZ specifically contributed to the effective operation of the program. The use of "kitchen meetings" proved very effective in building trust and creating a safe space for personal discussions around finance; the network of organisations fast-tracked the screening and application process; and cooperation with other ongoing projects allowed for synergies.

Key Barrier: Lack of proper identification limits access to financial services

Table 24: Case study of a national initiative – Singpass and Apex[107]

GOVTECH SINGAPORE	**Name of the initiative:** Singpass and Apex **Owner of the initiative:** Govtech Singapore **Country:** Singapore **Overview:** Singpass is Singapore's national digital identity (NDI), while APEX is its API Exchange. Both solutions have helped to improve the lives of Singaporeans and residents, and to enable government agencies and businesses to offer better services. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** Over 5 million Singaporean citizens **Year Founded:** 2003

Background/Key issue

Singapore is a relatively small, high-income island city-state. In 2021, it had a population of nearly 5.5 million, which includes approximately 2 million non-national residents. Recognising the challenges and vulnerabilities of its size and lack of natural resources, the government has invested heavily in digital as a driver of growth, competitiveness, and prosperity.

As countries digitalise, and the number and importance of end-to-end online transactions grow, the mechanisms used to prove identity in the physical world are not as reliable in the digital world. Digital ID systems, which allow people to prove their officially recognised identity online and without a physical interaction, have therefore become key enablers for the inclusive digital transformation of countries.

107 The World Bank, A case study of singpass and APEX, 2020. Available here.

Solution provided by Govtech Singapore through their innovation and activities

Singpass comprises the smartphone application and a back-end managed by GovTech. The smartphone application is the user-facing component, which is accessible for free to all Singapore citizens, permanent residents, and Foreign Identification Number (FIN) holders aged 15 and older. It enables users to leverage their legal identity to carry out a wide range of online and face-to-face transactions with government agencies and businesses. Singpass was first launched in 2003 as a username and password to sign into government websites and has since significantly evolved.

An important characteristic of Singpass as a digital ID is how it functions as an extension of, and builds on, Singapore's foundational ID system. The information in the foundational ID system is used by Singpass, including for onboarding—that is, verifying identity when initially creating the digital ID; for the digital identity card (IC); and for face verification, known as Identiface.

Impact

97% of the eligible population uses the Singpass application to access more than 2,000 public and private sector services online, ranging from financial services to healthcare, education, business services, and transportation. More than 350 million transactions are completed each year, and transactions that previously took days or hours to complete, often requiring physical visits, now take minutes and can be performed from anywhere with an internet connection. A document wallet has recently been added, enabling citizens and residents to store their identity cards, driving license, and COVID-19 vaccination documentation—and more documents will soon be added. This document wallet is accessed more than 300,000 times a month and is growing in popularity.

Learnings

An underlying characteristic of the Singpass journey is its measured pace and evolutionary approach. It was focused on solving a key problem and built on that, improving user confidence in the process.

User experience is a prerequisite in the development life cycle; a focus on delivering value to specific sectors that required high levels of trust was a key driver in the uptake of singpass across all sectors.

SingPass has a strong focus on security and has implemented measures such as two-factor authentication to ensure the integrity of the system.

Table 25: Case study of a national initiative - Aadhaar[108]

AADHAAR

Name of the initiative: Aadhaar Unique Identification System

Owner of the initiative: Unique Identification Authority of India

Country: India

Overview: Aadhaar is a digital identity verification system implemented by the government of India. It is designed to provide a unique identification number to every resident of India, and to serve as a means of verifying the identity of individuals for various purposes, such as accessing government services or opening a bank account.

Number of Direct Beneficiaries: Over 1.2 billion Indians enrolled in the system

Year Founded: 2009

Background/Key issue

A lack of access to formal finance has a significant impact on the poor: being restricted to an informal economy leaves them more vulnerable to bribes and unofficial taxes on wages, services and goods - an effect that's known as the poverty premium. India has created the world's most ambitious national identification system, which uses biometric data to assign every citizen over the age of 18 a unique digital identity.

108 OECD, Aadhaar Case study, 2018. Available here.

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Using their 12-digit number card, the 1.13 billion Indians using Aadhaar can access government services, pay taxes and open bank accounts. The system has faced opposition: critics argue that the ID program puts residents' information at risk and deem it unconstitutional to demand that people hand over their data in order to access basic services.

Solution provided by Aadhaar through their innovation and activities

In 2009, the Indian government appointed 220 agencies to take part in the process of enrolling all citizens on the Aadhaar system, creating 26,588 enrolment centres and stations where people could sign up. The data was collected by a specially created government department, the Unique Identification Authority of India. Indian entrepreneur Nandan Nikelani, founder of Infosys, was appointed head of the program. Aadhaar Payments System, which is rolling out this year, allows people to make payments using just their fingerprints.

Impact

Around 99.5% of people over the age of 18 in India have an ID under the system, a total of around 1.2 billion people. There's an average of 15 million transactions made using the system every day and a total of approximately four billion since the scheme began.

Learnings

The implementation of Aadhaar raised concerns about privacy and data security. To address these concerns, the government has implemented measures such as the creation of a data protection authority and the introduction of a data protection bill.

National approaches

Key Barrier: Supply-side misalignments limit inclusion of the unserved and underserved

Table 26: Case study of a regional initiative – UN Women We Rise Together Initiative[109]

Name of the initiative: We Rise Together

Owner of the initiative: UN Women

Country: Thailand and Vietnam

Overview: We Rise Together aims to create equal market opportunities for women by advancing supplier diversity through gender-responsive procurement in Thailand and Vietnam

Number of Direct Beneficiaries: N/A

Year Founded: 2022

Background/Key issue

Globally, public procurement is estimated to generate between 11 and 13 trillion USD annually. Despite this, women-owned businesses receive only 1% of both public and private procurement spending.

Structural gender inequalities impede women from a variety of backgrounds, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and education, from gaining equitable access to networks, finance, and markets, including procurement markets. This prevents them from starting, expanding, or maximising the profits of their businesses

The $2.14 million programme will boost awareness and encourage the adoption of gender-responsive procurement (GRP) in the public and private sectors in Thailand and Vietnam; funded through the Mekong-Australia Partnership, as part of a larger commitment to support the Mekong sub-region's recovery from COVID-19.

109 UN Women, We Rise Together Fact Sheet, 2022. Available here.

Using their 12-digit number card, the 1.13 billion Indians using Aadhaar can access government services, pay taxes and open bank accounts. The system has faced opposition: critics argue that the ID program puts residents' information at risk and deem it unconstitutional to demand that people hand over their data in order to access basic services.

Solution provided by UN Women through their innovation and activities

We Rise Together aims to create an innovative ecosystem where women can lead businesses, and have equal access to, and benefit from greater market opportunities. It does this by working across four areas:

- Building stronger ecosystems by supporting more public and private organisations to develop and promote GRP positive practices.
- Working with women-owned businesses to increase their capacity to access markets through resilient and inclusive business models and networking opportunities.
- Increasing capacity of public and private buyers so that they can better advocate for, promote, and implement GRP.
- Creating platforms for women-owned businesses to connect to larger public and private buyers, driving more equitable market opportunities.

Impact

Through this initiative, the UN Women has created 'We Rise toolkits' for entrepreneurs and accelerators to support their journey to become gender-smart and provide better access to finance for women. So far, these toolkits have been distributed with accompanying implementation training delivered to over 50 entrepreneurs in the region.

Learnings

Through the We Rise Together initiative, the UN women focuses on empowering "ecosystem catalysts" in procurement, creating a ripple effect of GRP positive practices and reduced inequalities in the sector.

Key Barrier: Women with lower education levels are more excluded

Table 27: Case study of a regional initiative – Strategic Impact Advisors[110]

STRATEGIC IMPACT ADVISORS	**Name of the initiative:** Hey Sister! Show me the mobile money! **Owner of the initiative:** Strategic Impact Advisors and USAID **Country:** Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda **Overview:** Hey sister is a collection of learning materials designed to build women's digital financial literacy. The lessons cover a number of topics from opening an account, acquiring a loan, and using digital tools to advance their businesses. This content is additionally made free for all and is available online. **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** 238,000 (an estimated 177,000 were women) **Year Founded:** 2020

Background/Key issue

Hey Sister! Show me the mobile money! is an interactive voice response (IVR) campaign designed to increase women's ability to access and use digital financial services (DFS). These campaign lessons are freely available online, and additionally at no charge for subscribers of vodafone or MTN in Ghana, and subscribers of Airtel is Malawi and Uganda. Available in local languages and presented in 25 short lessons, the campaign is an engaging way to build women's capacity to evaluate and use mobile money.

110 Strategic Impact Advisors, 2021. Available here.

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Solution provided by Strategic Impact Advisors and USAID through their innovation and activities

While Hey Sister! does not promote any specific DFS products, it does encourage listeners to adopt new DFS activities as its characters do, such as using mobile money, saving digitally, and identifying and avoiding false information and scams. Available in a number of local languages from Ghana, Uganda, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda; these learning material cover a range of relevant topics for its participants including how to open an account, how to keep personal information safe, how to get a loan via your mobile phone, and how to use digital tools to advance your business.

To assess progress towards its goal, Strategic Impact Advisors (SIA) conducted baseline, midline and endline surveys for our two populations of participants: 1) people who called into the IVR line and 2) participants in facilitated groups supported by one of our on-the-ground partners. Conducted 5-7 months apart, the survey measured women's application of new approaches to use DFS, their level of confidence when using DFS, and reach beyond direct participants amongst others.

Impact

Results of the endline survey showed at least one behavioural change amongst 95% of the entire group; including increases in mobile money use, increases in the use of mobile money accounts, and more frequent use of mobile money amongst other changes. In addition, the proportion of women group participants who do not share their PIN with anyone increased dramatically from 21% to 70% as they heard more episodes, while the percentage of entrepreneurs using mobile money for their businesses also dramatically increased from 27% to 76% as they heard more episodes. Finally, while at the start of the program a greater number of participants reported feeling 'not confident' in using their phones for financial transactions, by the midline survey this had completely reversed with more women feeling very confident..

Learnings

- A measured and consistent approach to analysing the performance of the programme is instrumental in tracking progress and impact.
- Partnerships with telcos and free online availability of the learning resources were key to enabling access and use of the learning materials.
- Multiple language options including local languages also reduce the barriers to accessing and using learning materials.

Global approaches

Key Barrier: Poor Internet connectivity infrastructure limits access to digital financial services

Table 28: Case study of a global initiative - EkoCenter

EKOCENTER	**Name of the initiative:** Ekocenter **Owner of the initiative:** The Coca-Cola Company **Country:** Multiple countries **Overview:** Launched in 2013 by The Coca-Cola Company, EKOCENTER kiosks are a cross between a community centre and a general store - providing access to internet connection, electricity, water, and commerce opportunities **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** Created over 500 jobs across Africa **Year Founded:** 2013

Background/Key issue EkoCenter is Coca-Cola's global sustainability initiative, which aims to bring four main benefits to the local community: clean drinking water, women empowerment, the development of cultural and spiritual life, and environmental protection. As Coca-Cola's first Integrated Community Support Center in Vietnam, EKOCENTER was established with the mission to improve local people's life quality and financial dependence as well as to create practical impacts on the economy, culture, and society. **Solution provided by The Coca-Cola Company through their innovation and activities** The Ekocenter project integrates Coca-Cola's sustainability priorities of well-being, women and water. Powered by solar energy and run by a local woman entrepreneur, an Ekocenter brings basic necessities to millions of people in some of the most remote and distressed areas of the world, mainly in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. It is an "off-the-grid" modularly designed kiosk that becomes a hub of community activity by providing a place of commerce as well as safe drinking water, solar power and wireless communication. Other functionality that can be added to jump-start community development includes social facilities and entertainment; power generation for charging phones; cooling/refrigeration of vaccines; education opportunities; and much more. They're solar powered and designed to meet the basic needs of some of the most remote and distressed parts of the world. EKOCENTER kiosks are primarily run by women from local communities and rely on partnerships to operate sustainability. They sell a wide range of products –everything from Coca-Cola beverages to solar lamps, mosquito repellent, household products and toothpaste. **Impact** There are currently more than 150 Ekocenters, mainly in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Ghana and Vietnam, with plans to continue to expand globally. Ekocenter has created 500+ jobs, generated 490,000 kwh of solar power. By the end of 2018, the project had provided 2 billion litres of clean water to over 70,000 residents, as well as supported the conservation and restoration of 450 hectares of flood-based livelihoods. **Learnings** Fostering sustainability and social responsibility is one of the key learnings from The Coca–Cola Company's Ekocenter. The eKOCenters are designed to be environmentally sustainable, using renewable energy sources and reducing waste. Additionally, the initiative aims to promote social responsibility by providing access to clean water and other essential products and services to underserved communities.

Key Barrier: Lack of gender-disaggregated data hinders decision-making quality

Table 29: Case study of a global initiative - Multiple Countries

	**Name of the initiative:** Collecting Gender-disaggregated data **Owner of the initiative:** Country governments **Country:** Multiple countries **Overview:** Norway, Spain, Sweden and Israel have implemented comprehensive data gender-disaggregation systems, allowing for informed and evidence-based decision making **Number of Direct Beneficiaries:** Millions of citizens of the respective countries **Year Founded:** N/A

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Background/Key issue

Gender-differentiated data and information is required for policy-makers to be able to assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies. Such data should be collected and analysed within the policy-making process, ideally covering several years to track changes and take corrective action. Civil society organisations, including NGOs and women's groups, can be precious allies in gathering information about the potential or actual impact of government policies, and they should be consulted regularly. Surveys, interviews, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking are also effective methods for obtaining and analysing data on diversity policies, as well as desk review, household interviews, focus group discussion. Finally, building public servants' awareness and expertise through information campaigns and training is also important.

Solution provided by Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Israel through their innovation and activities

Since 2008, **Statistics Norway** has published national gender equality indicators, including gender distribution in the workforce, distribution of income, gender distribution in part-time work, use of fathers' quotas; gender distribution in business structures, gender distribution in the public sector; gender distribution in the private sector, gender distribution among leaders, and gender distribution in educational programmes. Results are published on a national scale and are also available by county and municipality to allow policy makers to address regional and local issues.

Spain's Gender Equality Law states that public authorities must systematically include the sex variable in their statistics, surveys or data. The National Statistical Plan, which covers a four-year period, is the main instrument to organise the statistical activity of the General State Administration. The National Statistical Plan covers the 2017 to 2020 period. On the other hand, the Women in Figures database of Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities (IWEO), contains more than 300 indicators, showing the situation of women in different sectors. Furthermore, the IWEO collaborates closely with the National Institute of Statistics to jointly carry out the online publication Women and Men in Spain, which provides updated data on the situation of men and women in the main social and economic areas.

Statistics Sweden is commissioned by the Government to regularly follow up and present on the web a total of 88 indicators for the development of gender equality in Sweden. These Indicators cover the four sub-goals for gender equality that Sweden has. In November 2016, Sweden added two new sub-goals for education and health, with new indicators being developed to follow up the new goals. Statistics Sweden also publishes the book "Women and men in Sweden – Facts and figures" every other year, presenting the situation and development of gender equality in Sweden based on the indicators. The Swedish Government has introduced a requirement in an ordinance that all governmental public agencies must present individual-based statistics in their annual reports disaggregated by sex, to ensure that access to gender disaggregated statistics improve. This is needed to make gender inequality in society visible and to facilitate an effective process of change.

The **Department of Gender Equality in Israel** conducts two yearly reports on gender equality across the governmental offices and public sector. These reports comprise of gender indexes which provide a statistical analysis of each governmental office and ministry, as well as of the public sector as a whole. The detailed data collection offers thorough and comprehensive insights to the condition of gender equality within each governmental office and unit, thus enabling extensive practical actions. In light of the gender disaggregated statistical data provided, governmental offices and units are stimulated to take appropriate actions to implement the recommendations of the Department of Gender Equality.

Impact

Gender-disaggregated data allows policy-makers to make informed, nuanced decisions that accurately and comprehensively address the needs of women in their respective nations and regions.

Learnings

A key lesson learnt from these examples is the use of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). This is a process of analysing and adapting government budgets to promote gender equality and address gender-based inequalities. Applied at different levels of government, GRB involves the participation of a range of stakeholders and can be used to identify specific gender-based inequalities related to education, employment, health, etc.

Gender Centre of Excellence