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CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND SDG 5 IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality is a global phenomenon that necessitates ongoing discussions among scholars, professionals, advocates, legislators, and other relevant stakeholders. Gender inequality persists in society and in the workplace despite the establishment of institutional and legal structures. The article's goal is to investigate gender equality (focus) within the African region (locus). Gender equality is closely related to Sustainable Development Goal 5, which all nations must attain. The data for the article is gathered using qualitative desktop analysis. Document analysis is used for the information analysis. The findings show that there are challenges to achieve gender equality, such as structural implementation, social and cultural resistance to legal reforms, the burden of child marriage, to state a few. The article offers policy recommendations emphasising strengthening legal enforcement and accountability systems, focusing on transforming harmful gender social and cultural norms, reducing unpaid care burden through public investment, and abiding to legal frameworks. The study contributes to the disciplines of public management, development studies, and gender studies.

KEYWORDS: Africa, Gender, Gender Equality, Qualitative, Sustainable Development Goal.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Efforts to end discrimination remain slow and uneven in Africa. At a global level, the World Bank reveals that men enjoy about 64% of the legal rights available worldwide. This shows the large gap that persists despite reforms having begun in many countries (World Bank, 2024). In Africa, the persisting gaps are a result of the coexistence of statutory and customary legal frameworks especially regarding cultural aspects such as inheritance, marriage, land rights and economic participation. In these areas, legal protections are weak as customary practices sometimes take precedence over statutory provisions (Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], n.d; World Bank, 2024). Thus, the major issue under SDG5.1 in Africa is not the absence of legal frameworks but failure to enforce them due to weak institutional changes. There is a gap between quality legal provisions against weak institutional practice and implementation.

Feminist Institutionalism intent to comprehend and explain how power is distributed within institutions, emphasising gender as a primary unit of analysis (Holmes 2020:214). It seeks to disrupt existing power settlements within institutions and bring about change by detecting and challenging institutional barriers that maintain gender inequalities and other forms of discrimination (Holmes 2020:214). This study draws on feminist institutionalism to offer a critical view on how institutions are, both formally and informally, gendered in their design, operation, and outcomes (Mackay, Kenny & Chappell 2010). Formal institutions refer to laws, policies and organisational mandates, while informal institutions include cultural norms, practices and unwritten rules (Helmke & Levitsky 2004). Unlike traditional institutional approaches that treat institutions as neutral arenas, feminist institutionalism focuses on the ways in which rules, norms, and practices are infused with gendered assumptions that privilege masculinised forms of power and knowledge (Lowndes 2014). In some of the African countries, while formal institutions strongly support gender equality, informal institutional dynamics often undermine these commitments. Patriarchal norms within bureaucratic cultures are one such example and can limit the prioritisation of gender issues, even in the presence of progressive legislation (Hassim 2006). When mainstreaming is implemented as a procedural or technocratic exercise, it fails to engage with the informal institutional norms that sustain gender inequality (True 2003). Consequently, gender considerations are either marginalised or reduced to symbolic gestures, reinforcing gender blindness rather than addressing it.

Feminist institutionalism introduces the concept of path dependency, which highlights how historical institutional arrangements constrain contemporary policy choices (Findlay 2012). In some African countries, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid have produced deeply entrenched inequalities that intersect with gender, shaping both access to resources and institutional responsiveness. These historical dynamics complicate efforts to gender mainstream, as existing institutional pathways may resist transformative change. Feminist institutionalism also emphasises the role of institutional actors, including policymakers, bureaucrats, and gender advocates, in shaping outcomes (Krook & Mackay 2011). The effectiveness of gender mainstreaming is therefore contingent not only on institutional design but also on the agency, capacity, and commitment of those responsible for its implementation. Where there is limited gender expertise or political will, mainstreaming initiatives are likely to be superficial, thereby perpetuating gender inequality.

The qualitative approach will be applied in this article. According to Cropley (2019:5), qualitative study is utilised to examine and comprehend the daily experiences within civilizations. Since the goal of this study is to gain a deeper comprehension of how the Sustainable Development Goal 5 is being implemented in Africa, qualitative research design may help with this process because it clarifies the phenomena and their daily coherence to society (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Utilising qualitative data collection techniques through a literature study, research design is used to comprehend and characterize the SDG landscape in Africa. Selecting a research topic is the first step in this process. Next, a literature evaluation must be done, and a research design that answers the research question must be chosen. At this stage, decisions are made about the type of data to be gathered, how it will be gathered, who will be invited to participate, and how it will be analysed (Akhtar 2016: 68-72). Therefore, as suggested by Jackson, Durmmond, and Camara (2007:23), qualitative approaches can be used to demonstrate which issues merit investigation, how to gather data for the investigation, how to appropriately use the collected data to address the

issue, and, finally, how to reach a conclusion once all necessary steps have been completed. The information is compiled using literature review of secondary data in the form of articles, books, newspaper articles, internet articles, official documents, Acts, etc. The information was analysed using document analysis. A methodical process for examining or assessing printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) materials is called document analysis. Document analysis necessitates the examination and interpretation of data to elicit meaning, gain insight, and develop empirical knowledge, just as other qualitative research analytical techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; see also Rapley, 2007; in Bowen, 2009:27).

2. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY

The roots of gender equality can be traced back to early feminist movements. The growth and development of feminism can be described in terms of five waves which depict time periods. The "wave" as a metaphor is used to identify the phases of the feminist movement and assist to create a framework of periodisation (Johri 2023:3). The institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming cements the process into what is in existence today.

3. EARLY FOUNDATIONS: FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

The plea for gender equality can be traced back to as early as 1405 with the work of Christine de Pizan (Eisler 2007:72). The ideas of gender mainstreaming—the process of evaluating the effects on women and men of any planned action, including laws, policies, or programmes, in all domains and at all levels—can be seen as having its roots in and being supported by Christine de Pizan's work (Espinoza 2025:3). Pizan fiercely challenged the male-dominated literary tradition that distorted or neglected women by rewriting history to include their achievements to "mainstream" the female experience (Foran 2020:17-18). But it wasn't until the late nineteenth century that women's resolute pursuit of equal rights gave rise to a distinct and self-assured movement (Rampton 2015:1). The ideas shared by these pioneers created waves of feminism.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of first-wave feminism, which concentrated on legal rights including property ownership and suffrage (Rampton 2015). According to Enterprises University of Pretoria [EUP] 2018:2, the first wave focused on achieving universal suffrage and bettering overall working conditions for women. Working-class women did not profit from the first wave's accomplishments, which were criticized for largely serving the interests of the white middle class (EUP 2018:2).

Social, economic, and cultural injustices were added to the agenda by second-wave feminism, which started in the 1960s (Burkett 2026). With its emphasis on legislative and cultural injustices, the second wave of feminism became more radical (Robertson 2019:8). Women sought to join in and become more involved in higher education to challenge the stereotype of women as housewives who took care of the children, cooked, and cleaned (Vyas-Doorgapersad 2018:70). The rejection of all stereotypes related to the idea of feminism was the first indication that there was a shift away from the second wave.

The 1990s saw the beginning of the third wave of feminism. According to Rampton (2015:3), "the third wave supported equal rights but did not approve the usage of a name such as feminism to convey the notion." A key tenet of the third-wave discourse is that gender is a socially manufactured notion, whereas sex relates to an individual's biological status (EUP 2018:4). The emphasis changed to equality and appreciating differences (all differences), realizing that these distinctions make each individual special and neither better nor worse than others.

The broad incorporation of social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter into our cultural landscape around 2008 marked the start of the fourth wave (Grady 2018:14). During the fourth wave, the word "feminism" continues to have negative connotations due to its relationship with radicalism as well as the underlying belief that it is only for women (Rampton 2015:4). The fourth wave of feminism, which includes a wider awareness of discrimination, including sexual orientation, racism, ageism, and classism (Rampton 2015:4), is the first female revolution in the era of technology (Clarke 2018:5).

As a movement, feminism has come full circle (Jansen 2024:41) who further summarised that (Jansen, 2024), basic rights like the ability to vote and to be acknowledged as equal members of society were fought for by the first wave. The idea that women should be treated better than men was fostered by the second wave, which sought to completely reject femininity and insisted on being called women. Second-wave feminism created an impression that obscured the equality principle.

The third wave of feminism turned the emphasis to the other side, promoting acceptance as strong, independent people who can embrace femininity, wear high heels and lipstick, hold positions of authority, and have an impact on society. The third wave sought to achieve gender equality by striking a better balance. The fourth wave is on the verge of shifting the balance back toward unfairness and irrationality. The Internet's anonymity gives women power, which can once more give the idea that women who despise men think they are better than men.

4. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Gender, as cited by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2017; 2020:176), is "linked to the physiognomy separating male and female and is physically constructed". A most common concept linked to gender is gender equality that is defined "as a problem of achieving equality as sameness (this is linked to the strategy of equal opportunities)" (Verloo, 2007; Vyas-Doorgapersad 2020:176). Gender equality and women empowerment are included in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. However, Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023:258) stressed that despite continuous international efforts to advance Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), women continue to be under-represented in leadership and strategic roles. Additionally, members of this category often confront under-representation in decision-making processes, obstacles to acquiring bureaucratic jobs, and limitations on their ability to participate in political activities. The problems are caused by a lack of family support to boost self-esteem and confidence, the need to include factors in human resources (HR) procedures for hiring people for key roles, efforts to improve competence and knowledge through capacity-building programmes, the distribution of resources to improve talent, political will to set quotas for equal representation, and compliance with laws that promote equal representation.

This section explores information considering a few SDG 5 targets. All targets are impossible to discuss in one article. Other targets may form part of future publications.

Targets discussed in this section are:

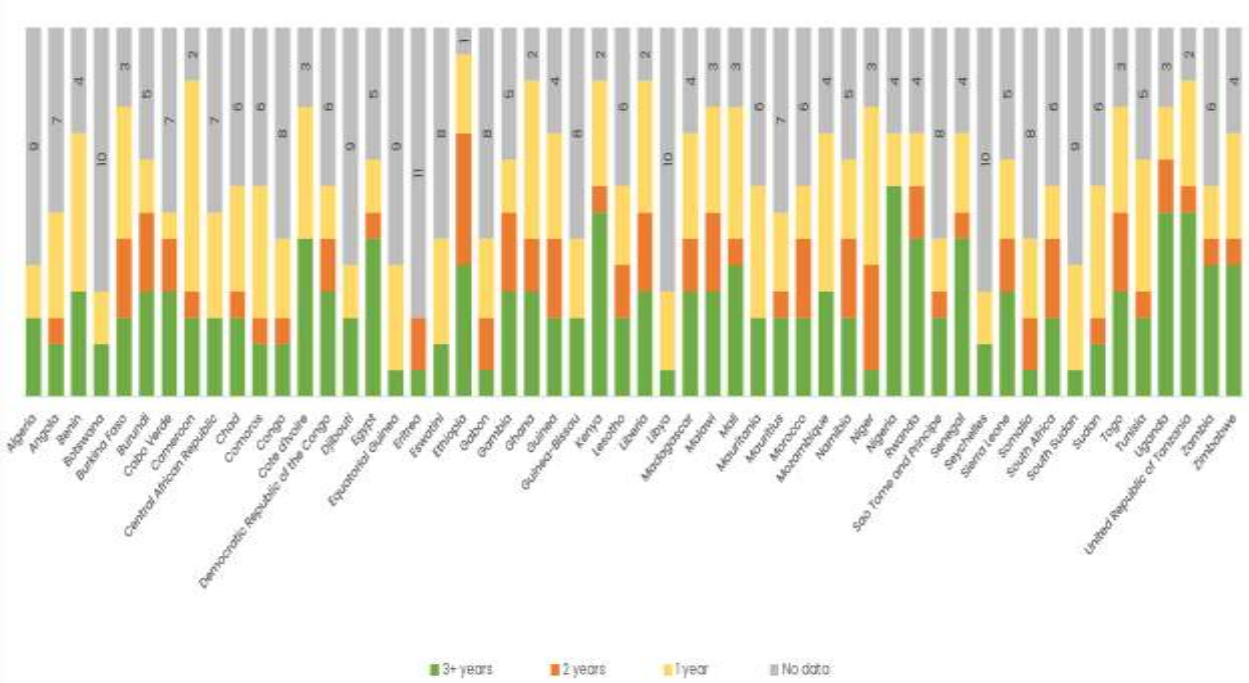
4.1. Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls in the Public and Private Spheres

Violence against women and girls is one of the most common problems in Africa. According to World Health Organisation, nearly 30% or 1 in every 3 women have been subjected to some form of violence by an intimate or non-sexual partner in their lifetime globally (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2024). This high global figure is due to Africa's high gender-based violence cases. According to Mabena, Mhele and Tsabedze (2025), WHO data shows that Africa regions remain among the worst affected with intimate partner violence as high as one third of women in many settings across Africa (Mabena et al., 2025).

The shocking reality shown per target is as below:

- "Target 5.2., Elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- Target 5.2.1. Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by form of violence and by age group.
- Target 5.2.2. Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, in the last 12 months, by age group and place of occurrence" (Nabukhonzo, 2025).

This evidence suggests that Africa' GBV problems require governance and service delivery considerations to ensure redress of the root cause of this scourge. For example, weak justice systems, under reporting due to poor data collection and management systems, limited survivor systems, accepted and normalised harmful gender norms and conflicts in some settings constitutes the cocktail of challenges that makes SDG5.2 targets difficult to achieve by 2030 (UN Women, 2025; WHO, 2024). A detailed version is hard to compile as data is not available in every African country to assess, see Graph 1.



Graph 1: Data Availability Assessment of SDG 5 By Country, 2000-2023.
Source: Nabukhonzo 2025.

Based on available information, it can be summarised at the regional level by Katende-Kyenda and Ani (2025) stating that: "in Eastern and Southern Africa, 42% of women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes, with rates in some countries exceeding 50%. The *regional variations* are that prevalence varies significantly by country. Recent studies in Sub-Saharan Africa show lifetime GBV prevalence as low as 10% in Comoros but climbing as high as 60% in Sierra Leone and 56% in Uganda".

4.2. Recognise And Value Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

In East Africa, the rate of informal employment is still relatively high. In contrast to Southern Africa, where fewer than half of the population works in the unorganised sector, women are overrepresented in agriculture, industry, and services in many East African nations (see figure 1). For example, in Ethiopia, 85% of all jobs were in the informal sector (agriculture and non-agricultural) in 2021. For males and women, the comparable percentages were 84% and 87%, respectively (UNECA 2025:32).

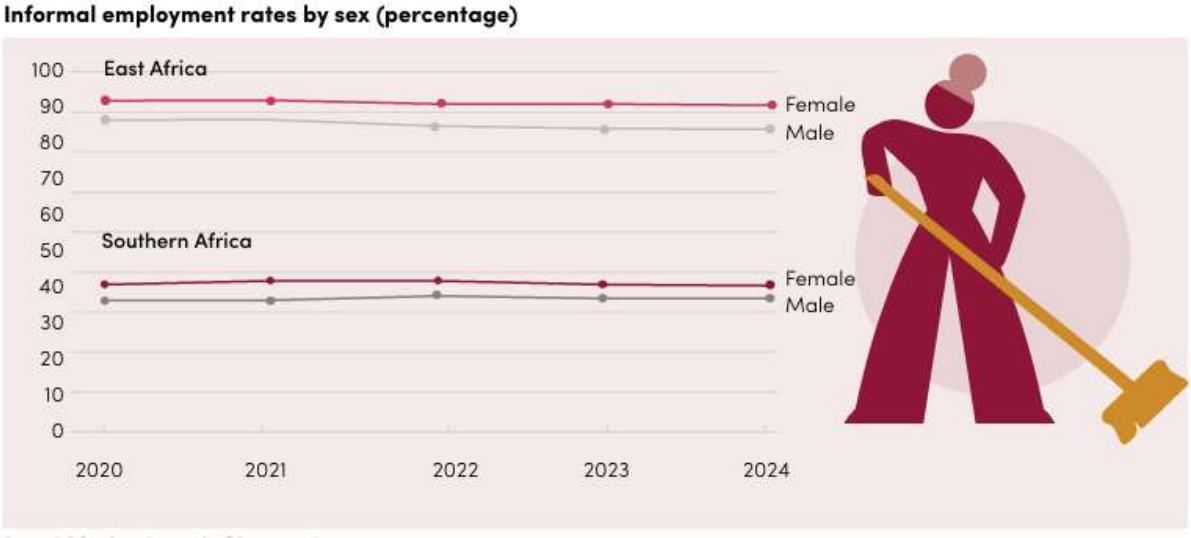
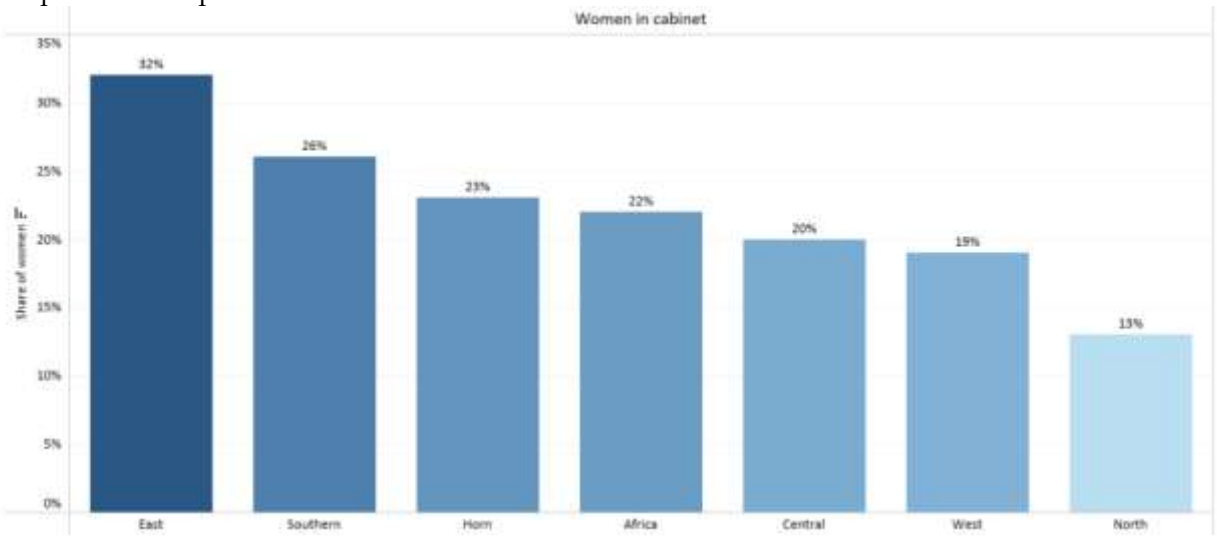


Figure 1: Informal Employment Rates by Sex (Percentage).
Source: UNECA 2025:32.

On the other hand, an important consideration under SDG5.4 is the role of unpaid care and domestic work in undermining women's active participation in economic activities compared to men. UN Women estimates that in Sub Saharan Africa, women spend 4 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work compared to men who spend only 1,4 hours (Hanna & Bantebya 2023). This translates to almost three times more hours by women in non-monetary activities compared to men which exposes them to economic dependency on men. This discussion is crucial due to the unassuming nature of unpaid care and domestic work in relation to gender inequality in Africa. When women and girls shoulder unpaid care and domestic work in Africa, gender inequality reproduces itself as they take care of children, prepare food, hew firewood, collect water and other domestic chores. These activities take away productive time for women to engage in paid jobs. Hanna and Bantebya's (2023) argues that Africa should address the unpaid care burden against women if the continent is to make meaningful progress towards achieving set targets by 2030. This argument holds policy and implementation relevance considering the amount of time women in Africa spend on non-productive activities.

4.3. Support Women's Active Participation in Civic and Political Leadership Roles

This point was built up from the previous discussion on support for women's active participation in civic and political roles. However, progress remains insufficient for any prospects to achieve real gender transformation and equality in the foreseeable future. While Africa has made important progress on SDG5.5 especially in women's participation in parliamentary processes, more work remains. In countries like Rwanda, 63.8% of parliamentary representatives are women as at end of 2025. Africa has made good progress in countries like Namibia, Cabo Verde, Senegal, and Ethiopia with regards to women civic and political participation (Inter- Parliamentary Union [IPU] 2025). Overall statistics shown in Graph 2 reveal that Africa is still far from achieving women's equal and effective participation in political decision-making. Women constitute only 24% of parliamentarians in Africa. Local governments are generally seen as a training ground for women in politics; however, women account for only 21% of African councillors. Also, African women account for a mere 7% of top executive positions (Yeboua & Cilliers 2026:2).



Graph 2: Women's Political Participation in Africa, 2021.
Source: Yeboua and Cilliers 2026:2.

As analysed by Yeboua and Cilliers (2026:3), "the situation varies across Africa's subregions. The Horn of Africa has the highest share of women in parliament at 33%, followed closely by East Africa at 32%. West Africa has the lowest share at only 16%. In North Africa, there are no women in political party leadership or top executive positions and no women as speakers of parliament or mayors of a capital city, probably due to a deeply conservative culture". It can be deduced that gender equality interventions are still required in all spheres of governance. For example, most of these countries still lack the institutional and implementation capacity to enforce their progressive laws in practice. IPU reports that's four countries in Sub Saharan Africa still had fewer than 10% women Members of Parliament in 2025 (IPU 2025). The gap in women representation tends to widen when women's participation in leadership

is analysed beyond the legislative systems to executive leadership, local government and corporate leadership. As noted earlier, the pattern remains one of meaningful but far from even advancement and transformative changes (IPU 2025).

A summary of all SDG 5 targets is stated below in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of SDG 5 In Africa.

SDG Target	Indicator	Latest Africa Statistic	Interpretation Note	Source (APA in-text)
5.1	Legal equality	Women have **~64% of legal rights of men globally** (proxy for Africa)	Legal reforms exist but **implementation gaps persist**, especially under customary systems	(World Bank, 2024)
5.2	Intimate partner violence	**~30% of women experience GBV globally**; Sub-Saharan Africa among highest regions	Indicates **systemic governance and protection failures**	(WHO, 2024; Mabena et al., 2025)
5.3	Child marriage	**~31% prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa**	Africa remains **global hotspot**; slow decline vs population growth	(United Nations, 2025a)
5.3	Regional variation (child marriage)	**32% (Eastern & Southern Africa)**; **~40% (West & Central Africa)**	Strong **regional inequality patterns**	(UNICEF, 2022a; UNICEF, 2022b)
5.3	Female genital mutilation	**144+ million affected in Africa** (out of 230 million globally)	Elimination requires **accelerated norm change**	(UNICEF, 2024)
5.4	Unpaid care work	Women: **4.0 hrs/day**; Men: **1.4 hrs/day**	Major **hidden constraint on economic participation**	(Hanna & Bantebya, 2023)
5.5	Women in parliament	**27.1% in Sub-Saharan Africa (2025)**	Progress visible but **below parity**	(IPU, 2025)
5.5	Best performer	Rwanda: **63.8% women MPs**	Shows **policy-driven success (quotas)**	(IPU, 2025)
5.6	SRHR decision-making	**36.8% of women have autonomy**	One of the **weakest SDG 5 indicators globally**	(United Nations, 2025a; 2025b)
5.a	Land rights	Women less likely to own land in **26 of 32 countries**	Indicates **structural economic exclusion**	(FAO, 2025)
5.b	Digital gender gap	**29% mobile internet gap (2024)** (down from 36%)	Improvement, but **persistent digital inequality**	(GSMA, 2025)
5.c	Gender data capacity	**48% gender data gap in Africa**	Weak data limits **policy effectiveness and accountability**	(UN Women, 2025)

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

Future publications will explore these targets individually to discuss the status quo in African context, hence contribute towards a comparative study base around SDG 5.

5. CHALLENGES AFFECTING SDG 5 IMPLEMENTATION IN AFRICA

There are varied forms of challenges restricting women to feel empowered and establish gender equality. Some of them are discussed in this section. These are:

5.1. Structural Implementation Challenges

The major challenge facing SDG5 in Africa is the structural implementation regarding socio-cultural barriers and traditional practices in Africa due to the deep-seated antagonism between statutory and customary laws. Resilient 'informal constitutions' of community life. Customary laws and institutions in Africa present 'bottlenecks' that are preventing high level international and national policies from translating into grassroot change. The persistence of plural legal systems is one key challenge in Africa. The existence of statutory laws existing alongside customary and religious laws is the major pitfall for Africa. Julius (2025) correctly noted that when national laws ban child marriages which are permitted by customary law, it gives room for the later to prevail since rural communities are largely far away from the scrutiny of statutory institutions. As a result, communities switch to or default to tradition (Julius 2025).

UN Women observed that the state capacity and the 'distance to justice' is one structural challenge as most governments in African countries often lack the budget and administrative capacity to implement and enforce gender laws across the various government hierarchies from national, and sub-national structures in remote areas. UN Women correctly observed that high legal costs, language barriers make the formal justice system difficult to sustain for the benefit vulnerable women in remote communities (UN Women 2026).

An important observation by the WHO is what they call the 'medicalisation trap'. WHO argues that the transition from tradition female genital mutilation (FGM) to medically assisted creates a unique challenge in FGM eradication. It creates a false sense of 'safety' and medical legitimacy, making the practice harder to criminalise and phase out (WHO 2026).

Another major barrier is the social cost that local women consider as social punishment for refusing to participate in cultural and social practices even they are harmful to them. There are real chances of being excommunicated by family and community members for defying cultural instructions even if harmful to girls and women. This includes to be excluded from utilising community resources and support networks. As a result, women comply to participate in harmful community practices like child marriages and FGM.

5.2. Social And Cultural Resistance to Legal Reforms

In countries like the Gambia, evidence shows that legal interventions trigger cultural resistance and pushbacks. As a result, the country's landmark 2015 ban on FGM has faced recent high-profile political and legislative debates in 2024–2025 aimed at repealing the ban. The proponents claim to 'protect religious and cultural values' (WHO 2026).

At the continental level only 46% of countries in sub-Saharan Africa have legal frameworks that fully protect women's rights. This implies that more than 50% of African countries still fail to guarantee women's rights in marriage and family, including the right to initiate a divorce on equal terms (United Nations Statistics Division [UNSD] 2025).

5.3. The Burden Of Child Marriage

In most African countries, child marriage is often used as a 'coping mechanism' for poverty. This is common in especially in regions facing climate-induced economic shocks. For example, in Niger, the implementation of SDG 5 faces a monumental hurdle as 76% of girls are married before age 18. In the Central African Republic, conflict has further stalled enforcement, leaving 61% of girls at risk (African Futures 2026). The European Parliament (2024) estimates that at the current pace of progress, it will take an estimated 300 years to fully end child marriage globally. If this happens, sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to be the last region to reach the finish line (European Parliament 2024).

6. LESSON LEARNT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDY

A case of Norway is used in this study to discuss gender equality challenges and measures considered towards improving the status of SDG 5.

6.1. Norway: The Case of Corporate Gender Quotas (SDG 5.5)

Norway's mandatory 40% quota for women on corporate boards is a significant learning strategy for Africa. This approach successfully changed the country's gender profile including in the private sector. However, its major limitation has been the failure of this strategy to filter down to lower management and operational levels of the broader workforce. The major lesson from this strategy is that legal interventions can lead to rapid increase in women's representation in corporate leadership. But broader systematic transformation is still needed to achieve gender transformation (World Bank 2024). The broader national goal is to ensure gender balance in all public and private sector spheres.

Some of the results of this intervention include the enforcement of the 40% Mandatory Quota. This intervention was originally applied to Public Limited Companies (ASA). This law mandates that boards with more than 9 members must have at least 40% representation of each gender. The policy provisions include dissolution of boards that fail to abide by this requirement (World Bank 2024). Since 2024, Norway introduced additional rules aimed at expanding this policy to approximately 8000 large and medium sized private companies. The expectation is that by 2028, 20000 companies should be complying with this regulation (Klea Legal 2025). On the political front, Norway consistently ranks in the top 3 of the Global Gender Gap Index. As of 2025, women hold 44.4% of seats in the Norwegian Parliament (UN Women 2025).

6.2. Persistent Challenges: The "Trickle-Down" Problem

However, the Nordic case study also shows concerning persistent gender gaps. The most significant finding is that boardroom equality does not automatically lead to Workplace equality. The case study reveals that there has been limited spillover. Studies in Norway's shows that the quota system's success in increasing female directors does not have greater impact on the percentage of female Chief Executive Officer (CEO)s or top executive roles in the 'C-Suite'. As of 2025, only about 12.5% of CEOs in Norway's largest companies are women (World Economic Forum 2025).

Another unanticipated challenge of the quota system is that it creates executive stagnation. Research by Seierstad, Warner-Søderholm, & Torchia, (2025) shows a 'contrasting effect'. The implementation of this statutory requirement led to a situation in which some companies ended up affected the executive gender balance when they moved some executives to boards to meet this requirement. This has affected the number of female

executive directors as women were moved from management to board roles to satisfy the quota. Another challenged faced was the emergence of what is called the 'Golden Skirts' Phenomenon. Early in the implementation of this legal quota, a small group of highly qualified women found themselves holding multiple board positions across different companies. This was due to lack of widely available corporate board skills among women hence a few were forced to hold multiple board roles in different companies. This affected on the diversity of women leadership (Chicago Booth 2025).

Norway's experience demonstrates that legal interventions can change the composition of leadership quickly. But this does not immediately transform informal networks that determine senior executive promotions. This experience provides valuable lessons for African nations looking to adopt quotas, that legislative success must accompany executive-level mentorship and support.

7. DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCELERATING SDG 5 IN AFRICA

This section provides suggestions for consideration by policymakers, strategic role-players and gender specialists as a contribution to the fields of public management and gender studies:

7.1. Strengthening Legal Enforcement and Accountability Systems

The first key recommendation is that African governments should ensure that its customary and statutory laws align to avoid ambiguity and confusion in policy implementation. It should be emphasised that in the event of policy or legal ambiguity, statutory provisions should take precedence over customary law. Strengthening judicial systems in Africa is a priority strategy to address GBV and gender-based discrimination (World Bank 2024)

7.2. Focus On Transforming Harmful Gender Social and Cultural Norms

The strategies will involve engaging men and boys and scaling behaviour change programmes in problematic parts of Africa where FGM and child marriages are high. Such interventions will lead to reduced child marriages, FGM and GBV (UNICEF 2024)

7.3. Reduce Unpaid Care Burden Through Public Investment

The third recommendation is to expand childcare systems, water and energy infrastructure and social protection programmes. Strategies that focus on addressing unpaid work could go a long way to address gender imbalance in Africa. This calls for African governments to invest in public infrastructures that improve women's domestic and household chores thereby freeing time for productive work. Studies have shown that such interventions will improve women's economic participation in Africa (Hanna & Bantebya 2023)

7.4. Abiding To Legal Frameworks

One of the reasons that African countries may not be able to achieve SDG 5 is the lack of implementation of gender equality based legal frameworks. This statement is substantiated by the statistics documented by UNECA (2015:22) emphasising that "countries such as Madagascar (30 per cent), Malawi (55 per cent), Mauritius (58 per cent), Seychelles (60 per cent) and Sudan (50 per cent) have scores well below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 67 per cent for having in place overarching legal frameworks that promote gender equality", see Figure 2.

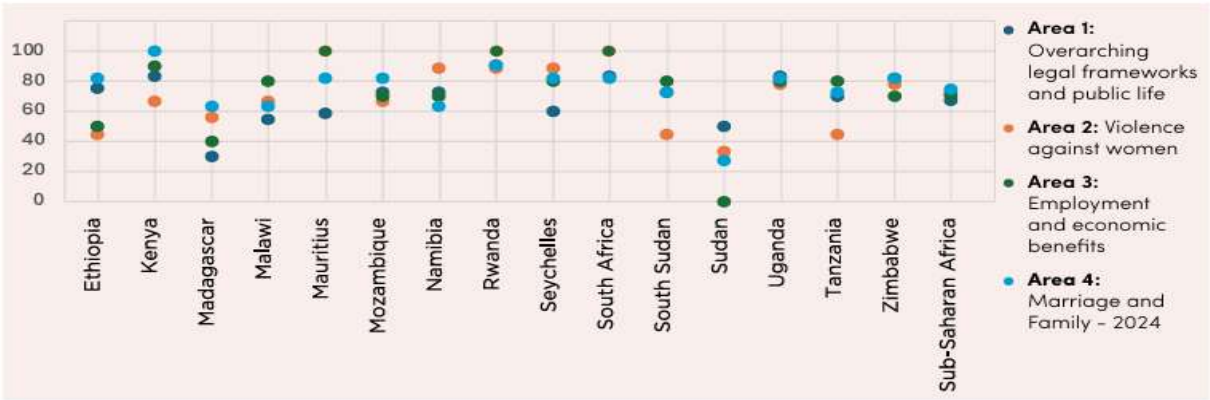


Figure 2: Legal Frameworks That Promote, Enforce and Monitor Gender Equality (Percentage of Achievement, 0 - 100).
Source: UNECA 2025:22.

Additionally, Moleko (2021: 4) states that support seeks to determine whether there is a national policy environment that supports actions for women's empowerment and gender equality. Promoting the use of the gender equality approach in public service planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and auditing at the local government level is equally crucial. Additionally, consider the need to support the discovery, analysis, and creation of gender-responsive policies and programs at all levels of government, including local, provincial, and federal. Finally, to evaluate the readiness of the internal environment to support gender transformation in terms of gender representation in senior and top management and decision-making roles.

Inadequate education and lack of training opportunities are one of the causes that women may not receive success in labour market. This statement is supported by the views of Parker (2009:1) who stressed that in Africa, women are much less likely than men to pursue careers in science or engineering. These jobs demand sophisticated information and communication Technology (ICT) and analytical abilities, which are becoming increasingly crucial in the digital age. Indeed, workers may need to have abilities that are likely to be enhanced by digital technologies, hence exclusion of any form may cause a well-known concept called "digital divide' and exclusion of women may precisely be considered as 'gender-based digital divide'. Such exclusion is further explained by Parker (2009: 2) stating that poor education and unfavorable job possibilities for women are believed to be the causes of this 'digital gender gap'.

8. CONCLUSION

The aim of the article was to examine the state of gender equality in the African environment. The successful implementation of SDG 5 and gender equality in the region was found to be hampered by several factors. Despite the implementation of institutional procedures and statutory frameworks, gender bias and exclusion continue to be prevalent. The article contributed to the domains of public administration, development studies, and gender studies by providing policy recommendations for strategic role-players and policymakers to consider.

At the regional level, the African Union may play a major role in starting conversations among African nations about gender equality initiatives. African nations may think about adopting and putting into practice such policies to further the realization of SDG 5, depending on their social, economic, and political conditions. To empower women, governments and political parties in each nation may create gender equality policies that are tailored to the particular circumstances of each nation.

Strategic role-players may start conversations to implement gender equality initiatives to empower female employees within ministries, departments, and public service sectors. Individually, women must recognize the gaps in their competencies and seek out opportunities to prepare for the workforce. Therefore, efforts must be undertaken to promote gender equality on both a personal and professional level.

The study is qualitative and relies on secondary source desktop analysis. Since the study does not include interviews, this could be a drawback. The justification is that the study's scope is broad and involves funding for travel and interviewing. Analysis of published data will also serve as the foundation for future publications, and a comparative database with a focus on selected African case studies may be developed.

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